

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

[Tape Six]

S: ... actual hours, that is another matter. But get whatever you need to keep you in optimum condition. You owe it to your centre. Don't go to bed late; don't get up too early. Well that usually amounts to ... (? laughter) ... don't go to bed too late. If you don't go to bed too late the rest will look after itself. If you need six hours of sleep every night, well you take it with a clear conscience. If you need eight take it with a clear conscience. It varies from person to person. A few people may even need ten but whatever it is you need make sure that you get it. I think this is really the foundation until such time as you are so advanced spiritually that you can sort of contact a kind of meditative state relatively easily and actually can dispense with sleep without doing any harm to your energy content, without detriment to the energy that is available to you. I really stress this, that those in positions of responsibility must look after themselves, however reluctant you may be to do it, in a wise sensible objective kind of way if you possibly can. I know sometimes it is difficult and there are lots of things to be done but make it a very high priority that you get a proper night's rest at least. Otherwise after a few days you'll just be like a wet rag, not very wet even at that.

Devaraja: Can you say more about that meditative state as which you can get sufficient physical ...?

S: Well it isn't any special meditative state it's just the Dhyanas themselves. If you are sufficiently experienced that you can get into a Dhyana state pretty quickly, well you've got an immediate means of refreshment that's at hand. But short of that even a definite relaxation will do you good, for instance before a class, even if you can't sort of pop into a Dhyana state, at least lie down, relax, close your eyes, just forget everything, even for 10, 15 minutes it will make a difference. Just be thoughtful enough to do something like that. But, of course, if you are actually able during that time to sink into a Dhyana state or rise into a Dhyana state, so much the better. But perhaps that isn't even necessary. It's more the capacity to drop everything. Sometimes if you are able to drop everything for 10 or 15 minutes that is really good. Or put in a broader context if you can just drop everything for say a weekend or a week, in other words forget all about it, don't think about it at all, this is quite necessary. Not that you are not thinking about it in a non caring sense; you just have the ability to put everything down, when you see quite objectively that that is the best thing for you and indirectly others, then you should do it.

It doesn't mean that if you go away for a weekend that you lug along a great file of stuff to look through, it doesn't mean that you're a conscientious chairman - it just means you're stupid. [Laughter] If you see what I mean, yeh? You really need to drop everything, especially if you're engaged in a lot of routine stuff. You do need to drop it all from time to time, just for a few days at least, at least a weekend. Anyway, I'm sure I'm saying what all chairmen know very well by this time. I'm saying it more for the benefit of those who might be chairmen themselves one day, just something for them to remember. Anyway, on to two.

(2) Seek a delightful solitude endowed with psychic influences as a hermitage.

S: It does seem incidentally that these ten things to be done are things to be done more by the person thinking in terms of a life of intensive meditation, which was of course the Kagyupa tradition. These precepts seem to belong to the Kagyupa tradition more. But anyway, "Seek a delightful solitude endowed with psychic influences as a hermitage." What do you think is meant by this "endowed with psychic influences"? Is there anything in this or is it entirely fanciful?

Devaraja: I think definitely, it's places where a lot of people have done retreats.

S: Is it just the human influence, so to speak?

Nagabodhi: It could be a place that's inspiring and harmonious naturally, mountain scenery, rolling hills, it could just be a conducive environment.

S: I did read a book some time ago in which it did say that there were certain spots on the earth's surface, in a quite ordinary sort of way, where the vibes - sorry to use that word - are better. For instance they'd observed the behaviour of cows and they found a pregnant cow would tend to have her calf in a field in a certain spot and when they looked into the matter more closely they found that the vibrations, as it were, were different, were more positive in that particular spot. Do you see what I mean? So it's as though there are sort of places or areas, spots, larger or smaller, where the sort of, as it were, geo-physical influences themselves are more favourable, are more conducive, more harmonious. Quite apart from whatever may be contributed in that way by human beings. So perhaps it's this sort of thing, or a combination of these two things, which is being referred to here.

Mangala: You mentioned in the (...?...?) better in New Zealand, didn't you, about some part of New Zealand and it's as if like forces of nature almost brought out a certain aspect of man to exploit the land in a particular kind of way.

S: I only offered it as my feeling as it were, not as a fully fledged theory that I'm convinced about but this is certainly what I did feel. That was the impression I got.

_____ : Could you include ley lines?

S: Possibly, it all ties up probably with that. On the other hand one doesn't want to attach too much importance or significance to this. But certainly perhaps it is to be taken into consideration to some extent that when you select, if you are in a position to select a place for your hermitage, well choose a place where it feels good, where the influences feel good, where the atmosphere is good, or whatever it may be; where the scenery is good, the view is good, inspiring, which is peaceful.

Nagabodhi: I know when Harvey Horrocks first made contact with us at 'Aryatara' he'd just got back, I think, from India where one of his teachers had given him very very specific instructions on where to buy their place; exactly what kind of landscape it should have.

S: Well, for instance, when I went to Tyddern Ryddrch first and walked along the trail to Tyn-y-Ddol I definitely felt that the atmosphere at Tyn-y-Ddol was much better than that at Tyddern Ryddrch, and I'm not speaking of the actual buildings but the spot. I'm not sure why it was but the atmosphere was quite different and much better, more peaceful in a positive sense, not just in the sense that it was quieter but there seemed to be more peaceful vibration there. I felt this quite strongly and after that I felt that Tyn-y-Ddol would be a good meditation centre.

Manjuvajra: My caravan in Cornwall which you have been to, I've always had a feeling that there's a definite kind of spirit around in that place.

S: Devamitra was saying only a little while ago that he really liked your caravan for meditation. Even though it was near houses he would prefer it even to a place which was isolated from houses but which did not have that sort of atmosphere or that sort of prospect even.

Manjuvajra: There's a story about that place. It happened to me a little while ago. I've told this once before.

S: I've not heard it.

Manjuvajra: No - I was down with a girlfriend at the caravan and we were indulging in a bit of fun and games (laughter) and there was, at one point there was a really strong feeling that there was a third being present and it was sufficiently strong to scare both of us.

S: You don't think it could have been a Gandava?

Manjuvajra: I don't know.

S: See what I mean?

_____ : Yeh. No.

S: A Gandava. We were talking about this this morning, this is why it springs to my mind, it is the consciousness to be reborn sort of hovering around as it were.

Manjuvajra: That's really what it felt like. I mean, I've never felt anything as strong as that. There was definitely a third being there, but I associated it as well, with the spirit of the place because I feel that there is something like that there.

Devaraja: What's the word, a Gandava?

S: Yes, a Gandava or Gandarva in Sanskrit.

Nagabodhi: Did you go into all that this morning, about Gandavas?

S: No, we were talking more about the point at which life emerges in the evolutionary process and a bit about abortion and all that kind of thing, if you see what I mean. It was from that point of view.

Manjuvajra: Women generally, quite often you find that women can tell when they've conceived, you know, immediately.

S: Yes, some women do claim this.

Manjuvajra: And I suppose that must be something of the same thing, they must feel that whatever it is coming into them.

S: So "Seek a delightful solitude endowed with psychic influences as a hermitage." This is obviously referring to a solitary retreat and the Kagyupa tradition. Well if you like, the Buddhist tradition generally attaches great importance to solitary retreat. And some regard it as the major spiritual practice. As everybody knows in the FWBO itself we attach quite a bit of importance to this, that everybody should from time to time have a solitary retreat, so when you are in a position to have a solitary retreat, seek a delightful solitude, a delightful solitude endowed with psychic influences as a hermitage. You must feel really happy to be on that solitary, really inspired by everything connected with it. I think this is quite important, spiritually uplifted even.

Right, let's go on to number three, then.

(3) Seek friends who have beliefs and habits like thine own and in whom thou canst place thy trust.

S: "Friend" would seem to be, well pretty obviously, spiritual friend but what about "who have beliefs and habits like thine own"? I think there is a possibility of misunderstanding here. What do you think is meant by, "beliefs and habits like thine own"?

Mangala: Well, they're trying to evolve. It is not a question of blind belief here, it's more in our case people who are committed to trying to grow and develop.

S: Yes. It's not a question here of seeking out people who are of the same sort of personality type as yourself or with whom you've got certain things of a worldly nature in common. This is something that we have from time to time talked about quite a bit, haven't we. That spiritual fellowship should be based essentially on what you have in common spiritually, not just on shared personal preferences, or anything of that sort. The personal plays a very big part, doesn't it, the personal in a quite narrow sense. Usually when you meet someone you have an almost instant reaction of liking or disliking, attraction or even repulsion. Do you know what I mean? Some people perhaps more than others. A few people seem just to have a positive reaction to almost everybody. But some people react very sharply one way or the other; they either like you very much or they don't like you at all; they either want to come quite close to you or have nothing whatever to do with you. They differentiate very sharply in that sort of way in accordance with, presumably, their subjective likes and dislikes and emotions and even prejudices. So this is rather out of place within the spiritual community. Within the spiritual community you get all sorts of people, but they're all equally committed spiritually, so one should relate to them on the basis of, and through, the common spiritual commitment and not allow oneself to be put off by, or too much influenced by, purely personal differences. Do you see what I mean? Including such differences as those of age, educational background, social background, accent and so on. It may be that in your earlier stages you will tend to associate more with those with a certain common background in a more ordinary sense. But eventually you should get over that and be able to associate with all equally, on the basis of your common spiritual commitment. But personal preference and likes and dislikes do play unfortunately a quite important role, I think, even within a spiritual community.

So all right, we just have to accept that provisionally but it is certainly something that we should aim at getting over sooner or later.

_____ : This is where the practice of the metta bhavana can help.

S: This certainly helps very much, yes.

Manjuvajra: How's the chemistry ... chemistry of people , chemistry of the group, how does that relate to personal preferences?

S: I'm not sure what you mean by "chemistry", whether you have in mind anything, say, literally chemical or whether you're using that as a metaphor or symbol for the liking or disliking itself.

Manjuvajra: I'm referring to when you've used it, actually.

S: I've used it more as a metaphor for that instinctive liking or disliking.

Manjuvajra: So it's something on the personal ...

S: I think why I've used this term - the chemistry of - is that it's so sort of instant and so sharp in many cases as though there was a sort of almost chemical element involved. It's like

the interaction of elements in chemistry. It really sort of seems like that, almost as though one particular person did have a sort of surplus of salt in his system and the other a surplus of sulphur or one person did have a surplus of gunpowder in his system and another had actually let off a few sparks of fire. It's almost like that. You see what I mean. It's sometimes like when dog and cat meet, it's that sort of reaction when the reaction is an unfavourable one, with some people. You can see two people meet for the first time, and you can see at least one of them sometimes is bristling immediately, they just don't get on.

But on the other hand some other people seem ready to fall into each other's arms the first time they meet. It's really strange isn't it? You are affected by all sorts of things; you are affected by their physical appearance, of course that's the first thing you notice - colour of their eyes, colour of their hair, their build, stance etc. Sex of course, this of course is perhaps from a worldly point of view the most important difference of all. Age, that's another quite important one. I mean, some people - if they meet someone ten years older than themselves, they just automatically dismiss them, don't want anything to do with them, don't give them a second look, in any sense. Or in some cases, if they're ten years younger they just dismiss them as of no account at all.

Manjuvajra: When you're involved in choosing people for a community or a co-operative should you take that into account, that personal element, or should you work from the ideal?

S: Well, what does it mean, "working from the ideal"? Eventually you want to have a harmonious, energy-full, inspired community, so the question is, well what is the best way of going about that? There may not be just one way. It also may depend upon you as say, the crucial person in the community, the person setting it up. If you are a very strong person and feel that you can well handle even explosions between people, yes, mix your community as much as you like. But if you don't feel able to do that, well maybe you should play safe and get in your community initially, not only people who are spiritually committed, but who are a bit compatible in the ordinary worldly sense at first, and only maybe admit, say, the odd person who is not quite so compatible in that way, later on when you get your community well established.

Mangala: That almost sounds a bit contrived somehow. I don't like this idea of choosing people for your community. It's something I've been thinking a bit about lately. Somehow you feel that a community ought to start because people, a group of people decide they want to live together rather than something you sort of form out of thin air, like you go around and create a sort of team or a unit of people - that's what I've seen - maybe I'm wrong but it does seem a bit artificial somehow to approach things in that kind of way. I mean maybe you have to start somewhere or somehow but I think in a way ideally people ought to sort of come together, be drawn together on some basis or other, so they kind of want to live together, you know what I mean?

S: Well there are two things. One is the common ideals and the other more worldly sort of wanting to live together, almost in a way irrespective of the ideals involved.

Mangala: Presumably if they are people in the Friends, they are people who will have certain ideals. Well, in a sense they could sort of naturally be drawn together and...

S: You mean naturally in the sense of on account of the ideals or do you mean in some other sense?

Mangala: I think that, plus a sort of personal liking for each other.

S: But it doesn't always happen. Perhaps it just has sometimes to be assisted to happen. If

people are a bit sort of dull or sluggish.

Mangala: Yeh, it's not sort of either/or - I see that.

Nagabodhi: It does seem to be our way in fact. What does seem to be happening now, I mean in the old days in Archway people just got together and squatted a house but now for example round the LBC every now and then a property will actually appear and then it's a matter of choosing quite consciously, maybe even in the centre team, who's going to live there. It doesn't seem to be operating in that more kind of informal way.

S: Well why not do you think?

Nagabodhi: Well partly because there isn't easy access to property, so people tend to just be aware that they'd like to move into a community but there's nothing they can do about it. It tends to be the council who hears about a property before the people who -

S: Yes and also who is in a position to take advantage of the opportunity in a systematic manner.

Nagabodhi: Yes, I mean but sometimes perhaps it is a lack of initiative on people's parts. They don't actually -

S: Yes. I remember back at Archway what tended to happen was someone would be prowling around and notice that a property seemed to be empty and then he'd sort of prowl around the back and he'd find a way in. Maybe he'd leave his jacket there and then whip round the corner and tell his friends and that same evening they'd all move in with a mattress and crockery and a few other odds and ends and there they'd be squatted without telling the chairman or anybody anything. He'd maybe know the following week perhaps in some cases. It was a quite different sort of way of functioning. It was just that often they were so concerned with squatting it quick before somebody else found out about it.

Nagabodhi: Perhaps, I'm pretty sure in time around say the LBC we'll have both. We'll have communities that have been consciously set up by the centre and there'll be also houses and communities that people set up off their own bat. But at least I suppose the ones that are set up by the centre at least will have a kind of purity to them.

S: Let's hope so.

Nagabodhi: People will maybe move from other communities into those.

S: Oh, there's room for all sorts of communities, of varying degrees of purity even, if you see what I mean.

Devaraja: Do you think that in a way if there are to be say mixed communities or communities that maybe allow members of the opposite sex to stay overnight, they should in a way occur outside of the...

S: That isn't a mixed community in the strict sense.

Devaraja: No I meant those as two separate types of communities. Should those occur in a way outside of the formal -

S: I'm not sure what you mean by formal or even what you mean by mixed.

Devaraja: Well, in the sense that, for instance, the centre's taken, or the LBC operation's taking an interest in certain communities. For instance, like yours, your future community and like both the new one and the old Amaravati, my personal feeling is that it should be, the general pattern should be, that we choose the set up, if it's going to become the centre's concern then it should be to set up a community that's say a single sex community and with no overnight guests of the opposite sex and that other communities of other kinds sort of set up in a way -

S: I'm not so sure you can draw a hard and fast line though in that sort of way. Because, for instance, a particular centre might feel that in view of the particular local situation and the kind of people who are involved, it might be the most skilful thing to set up a mixed community or a family community or whatever. So presumably they should feel free to do that. Though I think probably, other factors being equal, most centres will feel that single sex communities, especially the stricter ones, are more as it were productive spiritually speaking and that if the centre's energies and resources are limited, they'd prefer to help that sort of community. But you probably couldn't say more than that, I would say.

Padmaraja: I think we could say that on past experience that mixed communities do not work.

S: Yes. I mean, therefore centres are reluctant to invest energy and enterprise into setting up such communities just because past experience has shown so far that they don't work. But Devaraja's been speaking of let's say the overnight communities, so to speak, communities which permit overnight guests of the opposite sex. I would say, very broadly speaking, without laying down any definite sort of do's and don'ts, that probably it would be preferable to avoid that, if you see what I mean. It can be the thin end of the wedge and it can be very disruptive because it could mean in effect that you never had members of the opposite sex not on the premises, if you are not careful. So I think if, even though you do belong to a single sex community, if you don't want to lead a celibate life it is better to make arrangements for your sex life outside the community and just disappear for the odd evening or the odd weekend. That would seem to be a better arrangement to me.

Manjuvajra: I agree with you from the practical sense but I think there is, I've been one of those people myself, I found living in Sukhavati, although it wasn't practically inconvenient, psychologically I think it was, it had a bad effect. It meant that there was a kind of area of your life where you couldn't bring some of your friends. And that just made me feel very uncomfortable. So I felt that I would like to live in a community where I felt I could have visitors of the opposite sex; but at the same time realising that my first loyalty is to the sort of community.

S: Yeh, but what I was saying was that the main difficulty seems to be that if you had say eight or ten people - let's assume for the sake of argument that they all had girlfriends - unless you agree to always have your girlfriends staying over on the same night of the week, well if there are seven or eight of you and you each had a girlfriend and some might have two or three girlfriends, you know there is that situation too we know. If somebody always was entertaining a girlfriend you'd get a situation where as I said you always had a woman on the premises and therefore it was never a men's community. I think that should be avoided, or where women appear so frequently even if it's during the day, that actually the men are virtually never on their own together, never in fact have a men's community.

Mangala: Do you think the same would apply to men having boyfriends stay the night. I mean, do you think that the criterion is that it's a men's community?

S: I think it is more the difference of sex, the difference of sex rather than the actual sexual

factor itself, I think; though I haven't previously considered this, so I say that just tentatively. But it is the polarity which is set up by the presence of members of the opposite sex, even in the absence of any actual sexual factor. And that same sort of polarity does not seem as far as my observation has gone, to be set up by a member of the same sex, even from outside the community, even when the sexual factor is present. That is as far as my observation has gone so far. But I wouldn't like to be too sure of that.

For instance in the course of my travels I stayed in a men's community - this was in New Zealand - as far as I know they didn't have women ever staying overnight but women did come quite frequently during the day, under the circumstances then for quite legitimate reasons and they behaved perfectly decently when they were there. But it did make a difference in the community which was eventually noticed by the community members themselves. It meant that while they were there, even though they were there legitimately and in a quite decent sort of way, it wasn't to a great extent a men's community any more, or maybe not at all. So one has to take that into consideration.

Devaraja: Obviously it's a reflection of my own weaknesses, but I feel in a way it's a bit unfair, if you are in a community and you want to try and live in a single sex way and you, I mean that's your decision, that if other people in the community bring in someone to stay overnight it's not just them that's concerned, it does actually have an effect on ...

S: Of course it does.

Devaraja: And it does make it that much easier.

S: Right. Especially if someone is struggling to be celibate, not just discretely visiting his girlfriend round the corner but he's actually struggling to be celibate even if it's only for a month, it doesn't help if he can hear certain sounds coming from the next room (laughter). It doesn't.

Devaraja: It's not just even that, sexual activity itself, it's almost like there's a little bit of romance in the air. And that ... there's the emotional element as well.

S: There is that surely. Yes, well this is connected with what we were discussing - projection - no it was the other study group. There's going to be a quite interesting interweaving between these study groups. I think I'll have to edit these seminars, if I get around to doing it, the transcripts together. Anyway, that's by the way.

Nagabodhi: That then becomes a community affair though. If I decided to be celibate, the last place on earth I'd live is 'Golgonooza'; it's as simple as that.

S: I think one has to make up one's mind whether one wants a men's spiritual community or spiritual community for men, or whether it's just a lot of men living together for the sake of convenience even though they have individually got their spiritual aspirations and even commitment. If you've got a men's spiritual community I think on the premises that is to say within the area of the men's spiritual community, you have to virtually exclude women. I don't mean you need necessarily entirely exclude them. For instance here at 'Padmaloka' we often have women coming but it doesn't seem to interfere with the fact that the men's community is a men's community at all. They always behave decently when they come anyway, even if they do come quite frequently sometimes maybe for a week or two on end there's a woman coming every day, at least one, it doesn't seem to make any difference, maybe partly because it's a big place.

Mangala: Sorry, what did you say the alternative to that was?

S: You'd have to be quite clear in your own mind whether you want a men's spiritual community, a community within which - that spiritual community within which that inter-sex polarisation never occurs. Or whether you just want to be a lot of men living together, and not so much concerned with creating a men's spiritual community, in which case to some extent you go your own ways and you just share certain facilities, even though you are maybe individually spiritually committed - that's a different kind of set up and some may choose to go into that kind of set up, that is also a possibility.

Mangala: Can you see any sort of possible benefits to be gained from say a mixed community? Perhaps ...

S: Benefits of what kind? I'd only repeat what's been said so far, that they haven't been successful so far. I don't dismiss or exclude that possibility altogether. If certain people wanted to set up a mixed spiritual community I wouldn't stand in the way of that. I must admit I'd be a bit sceptical about the possibility of it being a spiritual community as distinct from say a commune. But if people wanted to try I'd have nothing against that. Unless certain individuals whom I knew it wouldn't suit wanted to be involved, I might possibly warn them against it.

Padmaraja: I can't imagine it suiting anybody, quite honestly.

S: Yes, from the spiritual point of view, in terms of a spiritual community.

Padmaraja: And that's what we're aiming to set up.

S: Well I'd just like to as it were not exclude the possibility altogether just because I think no possibility should be excluded *a priori*, whatever your past experience might have been. I mean, what about older people, I mean very much older people, committed spiritually. They might succeed in setting up a mixed spiritual community. I mean people to whom perhaps sex was no longer important for one reason or another and for whom the inter-sex difference might not matter so much - one could possibly imagine ... you're doubtful even about that I'm sure (laughter) You may well be right. But I just hesitate to absolutely exclude any possibility. We might have been a bit sceptical at one time about the possibility of a women's spiritual community, but it has happened. They've definitely got it. But a mixed spiritual community I must admit does seem pretty much a contradiction in terms. It would be a bit of a *tour-de-force* if it did ever come off. I'm sure you'd be the first person to be pleased but you can't help not really believing in it at present.

Anyway how did we get into this - we are really on because we made a distinction between a spiritual fellowship and simply naturally gravitating towards people of the same tastes and sympathies as yourself. So within the spiritual community we should be very careful not to do that. Relate to people on the basis of a common commitment.

Manjuvajra: Before we leave it, there is one thing that concerns me. I suppose it's a concern really of seeing certain types of community as being not valid or not as worthwhile or as a bit of a joke in a way. You've made a distinction between a men's spiritual community and a community of men living together. I think I would prefer anyway to live in a community of men living together. But I also feel that that is, I mean I feel that that is a valid way, a positive way to live, yet I get the feeling that one could develop kind of the stamp of second-rateness within the movement which ...

S: I think that would depend entirely upon the sort of individuals who were involved. If it was seen that some of your best and most alive and active and useful people were in fact

living in that way, it would certainly affect the way that people felt about that sort of set up. In the same way if for instance you had a number of men's communities and they were strictly men's communities and a member of the opposite sex never set foot within the door - but at the same time they didn't seem very active or very useful or getting on with it particularly well - well, men's communities of the stricter sort would soon start getting a bad name and sort of be downgraded to second rate as it were. So I think it would depend ultimately more upon the sort of people who are actually involved. At present the broad tendency seems to be for the more committed whether men or women in fact, to prefer usually, though there are exceptions, single sex communities of the stricter type as more suited to the sort of way in which they want to live as individuals and the sort of way in which they want to relate to other members of the spiritual community.

All right - it's tea time.

[Tea Break Chat follows]

S: Even if one is only taking a class, it's a sort of occupational hazard as it were that you are projected upon. I gave up resenting this long ago. One just accepts it as part of the job to be done. But in Brighton you are in a slightly peculiar position in as much as there are and have been especially so few Order members so in a way you're much more prominent than you should be, too prominent for your own good or even for the good of the centre in a way, through no fault of your own. [Pause]

Manjuvajra: I remember when I was teaching in a girls' school in Cornwall I really learned about projection because for the first six months they all thought I was wonderful. I got an incredible response from them. They were all in love with me. But after about six months it started to fade and then the resentments came in. And then it was all sort of resentful and you know, sneaky little backbiting things that girls get up to, and I took most of that fairly personally, but after a while I began to see that in a way it wasn't personal or anything to do with me, it was just totally, it's just like a process that people go through. And particularly when you're teaching meditation, when people first meet you they think you're something incredible. They then find out you're not and they resent you for it.

Nagabodhi: Only if you're not incredible. (laughter)

S: Well, sometimes they can't see that you are incredible but not quite in the way that they originally thought.

Nagabodhi: Difficulty I've had in my dealings with some people has been this thing of responsibility where - an example that springs most readily to hand is the *Newsletter* where perhaps I've said well I've got to check something over before it gets printed or I want to see a particular rough before I can give it approval or so on - I'm not actually talking about you Devaraja!

Devaraja: (laughter - unclear)

S: Could be any member of the team.

[end of side one side two]

Nagabodhi: You or that other one ...

Devaraja: At a hundred pounds for twenty days' work you can't complain!

Nagabodhi: The question - it's maybe been quite difficult to arrange that or to maybe make a change if I felt one is needed, but maybe there's been some debate as to why I should have that right and I say well ultimately I am responsible.

S: It's not a right so much as a duty.

Nagabodhi: And so the question then is, well to who? Who are you responsible to? And it sort of floors me - I mean in a way I usually sort of weakly say, well Bhante. It's not that really, but it's hard to say actually what, when you talk about ultimate responsibility for something, ultimate is ultimate. So it's not really a question of to whom are you responsible so much as, well, what? I find it quite hard to articulate what it ... I think I've got a feeling.

S: Well, technically who owns the *Newsletter*?

Nagabodhi: Well, in a sense the Dharma.

S: No, I mean simply technically, legally?

Nagabodhi: Legally? Oh the FWBO Publications.

S: And the chairman is?

Nagabodhi: Myself.

S: And the editor is?

Nagabodhi: Myself.

S: Well you as editor are responsible to you as chairman.

Nagabodhi: I'm not thinking of say just a problem of (line?)

S: No I'm not thinking of that.

Nagabodhi: I was thinking more a matter of taste, OK whether it's me as -

S: (interrupts) I think in the case of editing a magazine someone must have the last word and it has to be the editor, and if you disagree with his policy and his way of handling things sufficiently well you should just replace him. Those who are responsible should replace him. But as long as he is in the editorial chair he has the last word. I don't think you can run any kind of publication on any other basis.

Nagabodhi: So it's almost as if one is responsible, the editor if you like, is responsible to the process but without somebody actually making a final decision the process won't work properly, rather than going beyond the process.

S: You won't even get the thing out perhaps unless there's somebody to cut through and make decisions and do things quickly and take the responsibility. You may not even come out in time -- difficult enough even with you in the editorial chair -

Nagabodhi: But not just staying with the *Newsletter*, this whole idea of ultimate responsibility - to Centre, FWBO Undertakings - the chairmen.

S: Just as with regard to the movement as a whole the ultimate responsibility rests with me.

I can't avoid that, so I accept that.

Nagabodhi: It's not actually you or any chairman who is responsible to someone because they are responsible to their own vision.

S: It's both. You're responsible to your own vision, yes, but you're also responsible to those perhaps who have more vision than you have.

Nagabodhi: But you may not be in touch with that.

S: Well you should be.

Devaraja: Relating that to the *Newsletter* I feel that when you communicate an idea really well quite why you dispute something or disagree with something I personally don't find it difficult to change my idea in relationship to it. It's really more of a conflict between you and ***** that's what you're talking about.

Nagabodhi: I was trying actually not to be so - I'm not actually looking for some kind of new (analyst to fire?), it's more like there's been a problem sometimes with ***** particularly when I've said well ultimately I'm responsible, he's said "Well, who are you responsible to?" as if to say, Well what does it mean to say that in the context of the FWBO, because you're not responsible to shareholders. I feel there is a meaningful thing, that there is such a thing as ultimate responsibility.

S: Well, you're responsible to me in that case. This is the actual answer.

Nagabodhi: It feels weak to do that. I sort of said that sometimes because that's what I feel but it feels as if there is also another dimension there of responsibility, it's not just that I'm responsible to you.

Manjuvajra: Isn't there another area of just kind of personal individual responsibility, you know in a way ...

Nagabodhi: Not in the abstract?

Manjuvajra: No, that if you undertake to do something, just if you undertake to do it - not on anyone's instructions or maybe not even on anyone's suggestion - but if you undertake to do it then you have a responsibility to do it.

S: Someone in the case of the editor might not think that he is doing it, but that we are doing it and therefore we have an equal responsibility, an equal say, an equal right and all the rest of it, and they can't agree. So when a number of people working on the same project cannot agree, what are you going to do. There must be someone who can sort of end the argument and say, well look this is my decision, in a sense you've got to carry it out. They must all have sufficient trust in him that even though there's quite a bit of discussion and argument, when it comes to the point and a decision has to be made, they do accept the fact that he's the man to make it and abide by that, once it has all been thrashed out. There may not even be time to discuss if the presses are waiting to roll, someone's got to make a quick decision, then you've got to know, well who's that going to be. You haven't got time to spend an hour or two hours or a couple of days talking and arguing about it. It's well known that quick decisions cannot be taken by committees or by numbers of people, teams of people, and you cannot and don't go into anything where quick decisions are needed if you are hampered by a committee. You may make mistakes but your committee, if you've got one, must be prepared to back you up knowing that the situation is such that quick decisions are called for. They trust you that

you won't make a mistake. Perhaps you do one day but then they must accept that because you are only a human being and you're not infallible, you're just the best available. Just like, you pick up the 'phone and there's your agent at the stock exchange, he says "Shall I buy or sell? -this is the present position." You are to think in just - you haven't even got twenty seconds. That's your responsibility, you say sell, there we are, you might have made a mistake, you hope you haven't made. Well if you've got to call a committee and discuss it the chance has gone.

Devaraja: But it's in a way, I'm just trying to relate this to this thing of consensus of opinion deciding a course of action. So presumably consensus of opinion really only applies in establishing general principles and then you give the responsibility for the quick decisions to individuals.

S: Right, yes: in whom all of you have trust at least as the best man available. So if there's anything wrong with the *Newsletter*, anything I don't like about it I take Nagabodhi to task, I don't talk to anybody else - as he knows quite well - because I regard him as responsible. You might say, well that's the only person I have available to use and I know it's not all that good but it's all I could get done. Maybe they aren't a particularly good writer but there was no-one willing to do it. So all right, fair enough, it was the best that could be done in the circumstances. Or maybe I don't quite like the paper but anyway he explains, well this and that went wrong, there was promises on such paper, the promise wasn't kept therefore I had to look around quickly and it was either a question of printing on this paper or waiting and being a month later, I decided, all right it would be best to be out on time - all right, fair enough. These are the sort of decisions that are called for and it's only the editor who can make them, especially when they have to be made really quickly. And you must accept and others must accept that sometimes you may be wrong, may make the wrong decision either because you're not quite in the right mood or you didn't have enough information. Sometimes you know that you may be making the wrong decision, you know that you haven't got enough information but at the same time you've got to make the decision there and then even in the absence of that complete information. You can only just go by your own previous experience and your hunch, your intuition or whatever you may choose to call it.

So people shouldn't criticise you if under these circumstances you occasionally make a mistake. If you make too many mistakes then they may have to consider appointing another editor or whatever it happens to be.

Manjuvajra: Isn't it more a matter of the difficulty that arises out of not having any authority structures within the spiritual hierarchy? And someone in Nagabodhi's position obviously does have a kind of authority.

S: I would prefer to speak of it as responsibility structure rather than authority structure. It's the residual responsibility, not the ultimate authority.

Nagabodhi: It really works when everyone in the chain, if you like, is taking full responsibility themselves in their own part of the work. Actually it works at its best when they're also in touch also with the greater vision as well.

S: Which you share.

Nagabodhi: Some people if they're just responsible for their own area will actually maybe function quite individualistically. They may be very responsible. They'll pull all the stops out to get something done on time but it's not actually what you quite wanted.

S: Well sometimes they've got their own little axes to grind, haven't they? I mean artistic

axes. Someone did say - I don't know whether it was you or some other friend of mine - that one of the most difficult people to deal with is the designer who thinks he's an artist.

Nagabodhi: I don't know if I'd dare reply to that! (words drowned by laughter) Is the tape running?! [Laughter]

S: It must have been one of my friends in advertising then.

Devaraja: It's worse dealing with an artist who thinks he's a designer!

S: I can imagine that could be a lot worse!

Manjuvajra: I think all artists - full stop - all right, that was facetious.

[Tea Break over]

S: All right, precept four of the ten things to be done.

(4) Keeping in mind the evils of gluttony, use just enough food to keep thee fit during the period of thy retreat.

S: So we're still on retreat it seems. But this precept surely holds good generally. "Keeping in mind the evils of gluttony, use just enough food to keep thee fit during the period of thy retreat." Not only of course quantity but the quality, the kind of food. Do you think gluttony is a genuine evil? Do you think that many people - I mean especially in the movement - are actually gluttonous? Is it actually a real danger? What is gluttony?

Voice: Craving.

Voice: Neurotic eating.

Padmaraja: Overindulgence.

S: It's overindulgence. Possibly it stops short of actual neurosis but it's certainly something which is very greedy. It's extreme greed. But then what is ... it's extreme greed with reference to food. So I mean what are the characteristics of the gluttonous person. He tends to eat more than he actually needs. He tends to eat it, to swallow it with a great deal of gusto and over enjoyment, so to speak. You see what I mean? He doesn't sort of taste it and enjoy it, he sort of smacks his lips over it.

Padmaraja: That's not just even a healthy gusto is it? It's more.

Kamalasila: Does it even border on sort of self-hatred?

S: I'd say self-indulgence.

Padmaraja: It almost becomes like almost something very private, some secret sort of ...

S: Yes, that's also true.

Padmaraja: I remember seeing this death mask of Doctor Johnson and just seeing that gluttony there actually. Was he a glutton in fact?

S: He wasn't exactly a glutton but he was a very - Boswell confessed - a very unpleasant

eater, that when he ate he tore at his food and the veins stood out on his forehead and he perspired heavily. Yes, Boswell very reluctantly and guardedly describes this and was criticised for so doing, but apparently Doctor Johnson was like that. He could be very abstemious, he tended to go from one extreme to another, knew his own weaknesses so tended to impose certain restrictions on himself. But it would seem that he was naturally, yes, a gluttonous man and he would pay no attention to the company while he was actually eating. He was oblivious of all else. He'd just tear into his food almost like an animal and according to Boswell it was quite unpleasant to see him, to watch him. So yes, yes perhaps he was gluttonous. He was in some respects a quite neurotic personality. Though again very admirable in certain other respects.

There's something gross about gluttony. What's the difference between being a glutton and being a gourmet?

Kamalasila: One is more sort of aesthetic.

S: A gourmet is more aesthetic, more refined.

Kamalasila: I get the feeling that the glutton just eats great quantities of food whereas an aesthete might sort of have lots of courses in his meal.

Nagabodhi: There is that secretive thing. One person I lived with once who I'd catch eating at strange hours, somebody at Aryatara.

S: I knew somebody in the very old days in London, a member of a community that I happened to be part of at one time who after any sort of little entertainment or sort of small party used to get up in the middle of the night at two o'clock, to finish off whatever was left especially the liquor. So that may be a slight manifestation of gluttony. But do you actually find much in the way of gluttony among the Friends? Do you think you do?

Voice: I wouldn't have thought so.

S: No, I can't say that I've especially noticed it.

Derek: Do you not think that just people generally in the West including most of us in the Friends are sort of socially conditioned to eat more than we need? To a sort of marginal degree, it's not a real harm ...

S: Very likely. I think a lot of people, well I mentioned a little while ago that so many people that one saw around were grossly overweight, even quite young people. So it does seem as though either they are eating too much or they're eating unwisely, perhaps for neurotic reasons. Maybe they're just gluttonous. You see people going into the pictures with great bags of sweets and things, not to speak of papers full of fish and chips even. I have though noticed in the Friends that a lot of people are quite unrefined in their eating habits if I may say so. Has anybody else ever sort of noticed that? Maybe that requires some attention. It's connected with what we were talking about with regard to manners and customs. But this thing about private eating as it were: you notice that animals very often when they are given food, they seize it and then run away with it into a corner and consume it there and growl if anybody approaches. Some people that one sees are a bit like this.

Mangala: There are actually I think some tribes in Brazil where people still do this.

S: There's also of course the aspect of eating as a social thing. Perhaps it is in a way even quite good to cultivate this as an antidote to this private individualistic gluttonous eating -

make it more of a community affair, even a spiritual community affair. You know, more mindfully and more aesthetically so to speak.

Kamalasila: I actually find eating on my own and eating with other people very different experiences.

S: They are, yes. Have you ever had the experience of eating on your own with ten or twelve people standing around and all serving you and putting more things on your plate?

Voice: No.

S: That's quite an odd experience. [Laughter] I can have it in India.

Kamalasila: I've had the experience of eating alone in a restaurant and I found that quite uncomfortable. It's probably just me but it was very different.

S: When I was in Manchester last, six of us went into a restaurant and had a meal together and we were the only people there and we thoroughly enjoyed it. Nonetheless. But that was perhaps no doubt because we were six all together. All the other tables were empty. That is quite a different experience, eating on one's own, eating with others, and perhaps one should enjoy both. It's a quite different experience eating with just one other person, especially under certain circumstances.

So I think one should as it were savour all these different experiences and the ways of sharing food, so to speak. It is said conventionally that for a dinner party the minimum is eight and the maximum is twelve. You can see the reason for this. It is minimum eight, isn't it, or is it six? I think it's eight, between eight and twelve, let's say.

Nagabodhi: Don't look at me! (laughter)

Mangala: Looking up your copy of Debrett's.

Manjuvajra: I went to a Chinese restaurant the other day, a fairly ethnic Chinese restaurant and all the tables there were big, you could just get one in this room, every table in the restaurant and they were obviously designed for parties of eight to twelve people.

S: Right, this is what happened when I was in Malaysia. All the occasions on which I was entertained or we, that is to say Priyananda and myself, were entertained at a restaurant, there were twelve or fourteen people sitting round one of these large tables and all the tables were large. There were no twosome tete a tete tables. This tells you quite a bit about the social life of the Chinese. Another thing you noticed, I didn't notice it in Malaysia, but I've noticed it elsewhere in the world, that is to say Chinese restaurants are subdivided into cubicles. Quite large cubicles or at least as large as this room, each one with its one table and its ten or twelve chairs. So that you can be, it's like a sort of private room and they don't usually, well some Chinese restaurants, they don't have sort of public rooms where you've got a number of tables together so to speak in one very large room. Indians on the other hand do no entertaining in restaurants, they always entertain you at home unless they're slightly Westernised of course; but that's the Indian tradition, to entertain at home. It seems the Chinese tradition is to entertain in a restaurant.

So do you think this is something we need to give very much consideration to, this question of eating, for health and vigour? What, do you think most people in the Friends at least are pretty sensible in this respect or at least more sensible perhaps than they used to be? One can be food conscious in a slightly negative way, and food can become your whole sort of way of

life or even philosophy of life.

Mangala: That used to be the case more didn't it, in the macrobiotic days, you know, that most of us I think went through.

S: Kulananda was saying the other day that he'd just recently come into contact with or renewed his contact with people who are very much into food, health food, whole foods, macrobiotics and the like - and he said it was really strange to be in contact with them because they'd made that their whole way of life and it seemed in a very odd sort of way. They were totally preoccupied with food. It gave them their philosophy, in the case of the people who are into macrobiotics via the Yin-Yang philosophy. It is as though they lived in a world of food. What do you think that that represents? Has anyone got any ideas about that?

Manjuvajra: I find it's mostly women that adopt that kind of attitude and I think it's connected with sometimes for women the great mother archetype to use Jungian terms is their contact with the spiritual as it were.

S: You think it is a contact with the spiritual for them?

Manjuvajra: I think it, that's how it feels to them, yeh.

S: But is it? - on our terms as it were. Does it represent at least a degree of individual spiritual development? Or is it a very group oriented sort of thing?

Manjuvajra: I'd say it was a group orientated sort of thing.

S: But what about the men who are into it. There's quite a lot of them too.

Mangala: Actually in one of Trungpa's books, I think it's 'Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism' he talks about - I think it's the hungry ghost realm - he talks about like food this kind of craving for this it's like this is the way, their prime way of experiencing themselves is through food, it's through eating. It's not that they're actually hungry. I mean like, it's like if there is food there.... it's not as if they eat to satisfy their hunger and then be finished with it. In a sense it's actually the craving for food itself which is what keeps them going. It's not that they actually eat to satisfy their hunger, but it's the act of craving which is their prime motivating experiential ...

S: This is almost then, really.

Mangala: Oh yes.

Nagabodhi: Something I wonder about with men who are really extremely into that, it's like they're expressing a resentment at their mothers. They kind of care, it's almost like they're showing their mothers what food ought to be. It's a reaction against maybe a lack of care they felt. Something like that.

S: Is this just a sort of hunch or is it a sort of conclusion you've reached after studying actual individual cases?

Nagabodhi: It's just a hunch connected with sort of people I've seen in that state.

Derek: I've got a feeling in a lot of cases it could be people want to think that they're developing some way but they're not really and they project their ideas onto one small area, food. Whereas in order to develop, they have to change all their emotions and attitudes and

everything.

Mangala: Let's say people come into the Friends. They might give up smoking, they might give up drink, might give up sex might give up going to the cinema. But there's always food. Food's like the last thing in a sense. It's the most primary sort of thing in a way and you almost can't give that up in a way.

S: But people who are into food in a big way don't usually give up any of these other things do they. In a way many of them seem very indulgent.

Kamalasila: Perhaps it is a form of gluttony actually, a sort of rationalisation.

S: Almost vicarious gluttony. Maybe one should try and think oneself into that state of mind. What would you feel like? What do you think your experience would be if all day you were concerned with food whether it was purveying food or shovelling it across the counter? Or cooking it or supplying it or feeding it to people? What do you think would be your sort of state of mind then? Just sort of try to feel your way into that sort of situation.

Manjuvajra: Heavy.

S: Heavy.

Manjuvajra: Sluggish.

S: Sluggish. You'd feel like perhaps a big fat old woman, you know. Surrounded by lots of little brats or maybe you'd feel like a big old sow with about twenty little piglets you know sort of (drowned by laughter) See what I mean? Don't those images present themselves or are you rather lacking in imagination this afternoon?

Mangala: Like some of Breughel's figures.

S: Right.

Mangala: Dutch peasants, really coarse peasants.

S: What do you think makes people sort of get into that sort of feeling, that sort of area, that sort of state?

Manjuvajra: Well, maybe it's a desire for that very thing, kind of all engulfing ...

S: To me it doesn't quite feel like a desire for that. It's more like a feeling to give that, to distribute that. Though again, psychology can be so complex, it could in fact mean a desire to receive.

Mangala: Perhaps it's just like a very sort of dull animal like mode of experience. You haven't got the energy, the vigour, the intelligence just to make more of an effort to go for more refined modes of experience. It's just like the absolute least sort of effort is required. It's completely consumer, you don't give anything you just take in all the time, it's totally sort of passive.

S: Well it occurs to me it's as though the food sort of just oozes out of you when you're involved with it in this sort of way. You're giving it and distributing it and cooking it. You know, it's as though the food is actually sort of pouring out of you. You are definitely a sort of mother like figure. It's almost as though men who get into this would like in fact to be

mother.

Voices: Yeh. Yeh. Yeh. Yes.

Manjuvajra: What I was going to say about men: I mean I'm not actually convinced there are a lot of men involved in it but the ones that I've known that have been involved in it I've always felt as extremely weak and usually being under the dominance of a nearby woman who's also into food.

S: This is also true. Yeh.

Manjuvajra: So maybe they, going back to this great mother archetype which does have a bigger feel to it and so has the feel of being something spiritual because it's bigger than ...

S: Something powerful as it were on a biological level.

Manjuvajra: So they get into contact with that and this is an expression of -

S: Well, say, in Chintamani's terms it's as though if you're unable to fight with mother and kill her, you're taken over by her and possessed by her and she is sort of acting through you; you become mother; you become like mother. What an awful fate for a young man. (pause)

Anyway don't let it put you off doing the odd turn at cooking. (laughter)

Nagabodhi: How would you find the course towards operating through your, or working through your emanation as opposed to being taken over by mother? Because there is an aspect of relating and working and functioning through your feminine side which is psychologically, spiritually healthy and which might involve actually being a bit of a mother to people.

S: Right, yeh, yeh.

Nagabodhi: This would have to follow after you.....

S: I think that would mean being this sort of mother in a sort of almost metaphorical way. When you're giving food you're being mother quite literally aren't you because this is mother's primary function, to give food. Yeh? Which means at the beginning to give herself in that way. She is your food. You feed on mother. You feed off mother. You know, she gives you of her own physical substance quite literally. But when you're sort of developing, or you need to develop those as it were more motherly qualities within yourself, then you are being motherly in a more metaphorical sort of way. You're caring for people, you're nurturing people, looking after people. You need not necessarily be literally sort of cooking and giving them food. You're being more nurturant, more caring.

Mangala: It's like the same as being feminine without being female. In other words it's not something that only a middle-aged woman has but it's an aspect of all psyches.

S: Yes. Of all psyches. Maybe chairmen should sort of consciously go into this a little bit, sometimes trying to be mother instead of father. It might help the projections as it were or at least the projections might change which would make a bit of a change. Instead of trying to sort of be forceful and masculine always and lead and initiate and dominate, all that sort of thing, well just try to look after, to care, to nurture, maybe look at it more in that sort of way. Maybe that is a sort of complementary aspect which needs also to be developed. You shouldn't just be leading and inspiring, you should be nurturing and nourishing also.

Nagabodhi: What about the cleaning up afterwards?

S: We're doing that all the time anyway. Metaphorically.

Mangala: Yeh I found that sometimes you just get fed up sort of em prodding people and having to push, you'd just rather let somebody else do that.

S: Be a little bit indulgent as it were? I was going to say something else what was that? It's gone now. (pause)
Anyway perhaps it'll come.

Any other point in connection with the use of food?

Kamalasila: Yeh, what about sort of creative cooking and retreats and meditation?

S: Well the Indians of course traditionally do regard cooking as one of the arts. So yes there can be such a thing as creative cooking and that's where aesthetic considerations come in.

Kamalasila: Do you think there is a case for simple food when if you're say at Tyn-y-ddol? When you've got a programme of meditation do you think the food should be quite simple or do you think I mean there'll be a lot of energy available and in a situation ...

S: Well you know, I think it's a question of a bit, it depends a lot on the constitution of the individual. Some people, if the food is not attractive enough and varied enough don't eat sufficient, they don't eat as much as they actually need. Especially those who are not sort of very as it were physical types and don't do a lot of physical work - their palate needs to be tempted just a little bit. You see what I mean? If the food is too simple in the sense of being very plain they may just nibble at it and then they've no more appetite and they don't eat enough. So I think you mustn't ever make the food so plain and simple you don't feel like eating as much of it as you really require.

Kamalasila: So that would be one extreme.

S: Yes. Of course if you're really hungry because you do a lot of physical work, well, you'll just wolf down a whole loaf of bread. [Laughter] I've seen it. I won't tell you where but I have seen this. Well, in the army - you didn't think I was going to say that, did you? (laughter) You must use a little sort of almost common sense. Yes, let the diet be reasonably varied so that you feel like eating because I think it is not incorrect to say that when you really enjoy your food and relish it, it does in fact do you more good.

Mangala: That is actually fact actually. Apparently there have been tests done on children brought up in an unhappy environment and though they're actually given better food than people brought up in a happy one and yet the people eating with the less good food because their environment was actually happy they're actually better nourished, they actually grow up into stronger people. So it does seem that actually the atmosphere and things like that are just as important as the actual quality of the food itself, and it's very important to actually enjoy the food, for it to be properly assimilated and digested.

S: Otherwise your digestive juices aren't functioning properly.

Mangala: Enjoyment not just purely in terms of the taste.

S: It's the company.

Mangala: In terms of the whole experience.

S: Yes, right. Well some people can't eat in fact at all if there's any disharmony in the atmosphere can they. I think very often children can't. If there's been a violent quarrel between mother and father the child often goes right off his food or her food.

So I think one has to look it from this point of view also. Yes keep the food reasonably simple and even reasonably plain, but not so simple and so plain that you sort of go off your food and don't eat enough. And also pay attention to things like the circumstances under which you eat. I believe it has been said you should eat under quiet conditions, you shouldn't have the radio blaring in the room where you're eating or even next door. Things like that. And you shouldn't be trying to do business deals over your food or discuss anything of a very serious nature. The meal should be a relatively light relaxed happy slightly social occasion or if it's on retreat, well, tend to be perhaps a bit quieter or at least not try to continue the discussion about Sunyata over lunch. [Laughter] You see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: On our retreats what tends to happen is that as the days go by the meals get bigger and more elaborate. Usually sort of after about the third day sweets are introduced and the whole thing becomes I mean a sort of almost like a carnival event.

Kamalasila: People have so much energy they can put into it.

S: Yes but part of it is people are enjoying what they are doing, I think, including the cooking and they really put themselves into it. It's quite noticeable - I certainly notice it within the context of the Padmaloka community - the difference between the meal when someone has really enjoyed doing it and has spent the whole day happily in the kitchen, and when someone hasn't particularly felt like doing it or has been rather unwilling to do it but has more or less had to. There's quite a difference actually in the end result. (pause)

Nagabodhi: Do you think one should actually have a very slight edge of hunger all the time? I mean I've heard this said, I can't remember who by.

S: I'm not sure about this.

Mangala: Well I can tell you from experience. I was on a diet for about a year and a half. It's just like punishment. After a while I realised that it was just that I was kind of hungry all the time. It was awful. And (...) do it. It was terrible. And then when you do come to eat you're so kind of like a wolf that you're so tempted that you can't eat then

S: I think perhaps it is not a question of your actually feeling hungry all the time but that when mealtime does come, without sort of actually having been conscious of it before, you realise that yes you are ready for it, you are hungry.

Mangala: I think that's like the way that animals and probably men used to be in primeval times, so hungry they spent the whole day searching for food - they had to - but I think now we don't need to do that, so we can ...

Kamalasila: What about fasting? You used to mention in your lectures about things like that. We don't seem to do that sort of thing so very much.

S: Well some people still do. Only quite recently someone told he had a fast for five days and now he was thinking of doing a month's fast so I suggested he tried a ten day fast to begin with. So I think people are not unconcerned with this. I think it's a useful thing to try,

just to see how your mind reacts and you know, to experience personally what an important place food and the eating of food does play in your life. Because if you think of the number of times that we do eat during the day. And how much a part of the every day pattern of things it is. Well the first thing that strikes you is well if you don't spend time eating food during the day, how much time you have, how much extra time you have, extra hours and hours, especially if you don't do any cooking either. How free you are in a way. And then you realise the extent to which you are conditioned, the extent to which you do live in the sense world and are based upon the sense world and the extent to which your consciousness is bound up with the sense world. In other words the extent to which your existence is an animal existence. You realise that.

[End of tape six tape seven]

Manjuvajra: One thing I find with eating is once I start, I could just keep on going, unless I consciously stop myself.

S: Start eating. ah, start eating.

Manjuvajra: Here I've noticed at lunchtime, that I haven't actually particularly felt hungry, but once I've got stuck into a bowl of soup, I invariably go back for another one.

S: Well, you just like the taste. That is a sort of greed, in a way. (Pause.)

Nagabodhi: Sometimes I really regret - I start finding my stomach's bulging and just really regret it - I'm just so enjoying the flavour. I understand the Romans. (Laughter)

S: Yes I know what you mean, I know what you mean! [Laughter]

Devaraja: What about the Romans? [Laughter]

Nagabodhi: (Indistinct)

S: I think one of the things I've noticed within the Friends, -We've too great a tendency to cut everything up small and mix or mash it together, - you know, don't keep the different things separated out sufficiently so that one can experience the different qualities of the different food stuffs - especially vegetables. You know what I mean?

Nagabodhi: A lot of the cooking in the Friends is still a hangover from the old macrobiotic days, and we don't do much ordinary English style vegetarian cooking.

S: I've begun to think we should explore a little in the field of Italian vegetarian cooking. I mean that part of Italian cooking which is vegetarian - which doesn't include the use of meat.

Kamalasila voice: And French too.

S: And French - French I'm not so familiar with.Maybe that is so.

Kamalasila: They do a lot of vegetable cooking.

S: Mm, Mm.(Pause.)

Devaraja: I may be going slightly off at a tangent, but I went to a vegetarian restaurant in Barcelona, and it was quite interesting - normally Spanish people look very healthy and either brown or ruddy, but I went in there and almost everybody in there looked pasty...

S: Ah.

Devaraja: And there was very much the same atmosphere that I'd seen in a vegetarian restaurant called 'The Vegan' in Leicester Square, I remember something similar in there, the same sort of pasty feeling...

S: People look as if they are also made of white pastry, huh?

Devaraja: And I wondered whether it was just - I thought possibly it might be a kind of guilt thing, that...

S: Well I think that in the case of British vegetarian cooking, so-called, I think it was more that you just subtracted the meat, and that you took a double portion of cabbage and potatoes and/or a dumpling made of white flour, or something like that.

Mangala: Not quite, you add a nut cutlet!

S: It's not so much that it was vegetarian, but it was just not a balanced diet. But on the other hand there could be something in what you say, in that a certain kind of person is attracted to that kind of diet, as it were, and that sort of diet nourishes that sort of person, if you can call it nourishing.

Mangala: I think that it is very noticeable about the macrobiotic people, they always look very thin and white and pale and a bit weedy. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: Vegetarianism, just by itself, in isolation from anything else, does attract some really quite strange people.

S: Yes. For some people who are vegetarians, who follow vegetarianism, as distinct from being simply vegetarians, it has become a sort of religion for them, as though in not taking meat they are fulfilling the whole of the law, so to speak. One must say that in India also among Hindus one does find people of this sort - people who are concerned solely with whether you eat meat or don't eat meat. That is everything to them. If you do eat meat you are written off instantly. If you don't, well O.K. you belong to the spiritual brotherhood as it were, and nothing further is asked or required of you. That is all-sufficient. It's as though you've reached the pinnacle of virtue just by being a vegetarian. (Pause)

I think we're very right within the movement, in concerning ourselves with such things as vegetarian restaurants, because it's a very basic thing - everybody has to eat, hm? - so if there's going to be any change in your whole way of life, surely it must include a change in your eating habits. But I think we do make the mistake of just thinking that if we don't eat meat or fish and possibly not even eggs, that's enough. So it isn't only a question of what we eat but how we eat and our general attitude towards what we eat, even the company in which we eat and the circumstances under which we eat, the Place where we eat, the utensils that we use. Even these things really ought to be considered. The way we serve food, especially in our restaurants. I must say I got a bit of a shock fairly recently when I was told that in one of our vegetarian restaurants - I won't mention which one! - the food was sometimes served by people in a very surly, unfriendly sort of way, with it being almost slapped down in front of the customer, and I expressed some surprise - I just happened to hear some incidental remark -, and they said "Oh yes, that happens quite often, it happens quite a lot." And I thought that this was really quite undesirable so I thought we have to take steps to rectify this. It's very important if you're working in a Friends vegetarian restaurant or cafe', that you really do relate to people through that properly and serve people properly.

Manjuvajra: Bearing in mind what you said earlier about working with food all day, how far do you think it is Right Livelihood? working in a restaurant in that way?

S: Well, you don't have to work, or you don't necessarily work, with food or in a restaurant in the way that I described. Do you see what I mean? You can work in quite a different way, I'm sure. And if that is your particular means of Right Livelihood etc. you should try to work in a really positive way, in that particular situation.

Mangala: Do you think we ought to be maybe making steps towards veganism, rather than merely vegetarianism, that is giving up eggs, butter, milk, cheese, and even honey, I think strict vegans don't eat?

S: I must say I'm not very sure about this. I don't personally feel any need to move in this direction, but I certainly wouldn't discourage people from moving in this direction. I'm so very happy about us, for instance, having vegan restaurants, unless we had a hundred vegetarian restaurants, then by all means have one or two vegan ones.

Mangala: I wasn't so much thinking of vegan restaurants, because financially I think that would be pretty disastrous, but I was thinking more in our communities and things - because there is apparently quite a lot of cruelty involved in producing eggs and even milk. Cows are kept pregnant all the time - the calves are taken away from them.

Manjuvajra: Those are things that can be got round, actually, I mean if we had our own farm, when we have our own farm

S: Farming of course, raises problems of its own.

Mangala: But at present we are in no position to get round it.

S: I think the tendency is to use these things less and less. For instance, I know that at Padmaloka, eggs are not regularly used. we usually have eggs if someone particularly asks for them. That happens, in fact, quite rarely. But I remember formerly in communities where I stayed, eggs were a regular part of the menu, but it would seem not so much now. So perhaps there has been a bit of a move in that direction.

Mangala: Because it does seem a bit that people say, "Yes, well we're vegetarian" and sort of stop. The matter's closed now, that's the end...

S: Don't have to think about it any more.....

Mangala:whereas it can actually be extended without too much inconvenience. Butter can easily be replaced, perhaps do without butter.....

S: There is a bit of a difference of opinion, I think as to whether human beings need animal protein of some kind, hm?. If not in the form of meat or fish, certainly in the form of eggs, or milk, or butter, or cheese, - what do you say about that?

Mangala: Well, I think that from my knowledge of what I've read that's not the case. I think there is only apparently one substance, which is vitamin B12, which you won't apparently get from any vegetable, although some people do claim it can come from seaweed and things, or you can take it synthetically.

S: Vitamin B12 - what does that come from normally?

Mangala: Normally you get it from things like milk, and meat and stuff - liver I think, but apparently it has got no vegetable source, although I think apparently some people say you can get it from seaweed. I'm not sure about that.

S: So if you didn't have enough vitamin B12 what would happen to you?

Mangala: Well, I don't think it's like an immediate sort of thing, but the B vitamins affect the nervous system, so a lack of B12 eventually would - I'm not quite sure what the symptoms are, but result in some sort of nervous debility, I suppose, or something like that. But apparently you can take that. I think vegans recommend that you take capsules. There are some things which have that put into it synthetically.

S: Is that vitamin B synthetically produced? Where does it come from?

Mangala: I'm not quite sure how it is produced, - probably chemically. You can get it in things like some yeast spreads have it put in. But I think apart from that you can live quite well.

Campbell: Can you get it from comfrey?

Mangala: I don't know, from what I read you couldn't get it from any vegetable source.

Campbell: I believe you can get it from comfrey.

S: To go back to what I was saying a little while ago, the fact that we run vegetarian restaurants shouldn't simply mean that we purvey vegetarian food and we leave it at that, as though that was enough in itself. We also have to consider how we prepare it and how we serve it and in what sort of way, the mental and emotional attitude of the people who work there and especially those who come in contact with the customers, because they serve the food. And even pay attention to (as far as we can, and as much as we can) to the general even decor of the place and look of the place and feel of the place. That is also very important. It should be a total eating environment as it were, carefully thought out. In fact this should apply to all our activities. We haven't even begun to consider this seriously, except to a very minor extent - the colour scheme of the shrine room etc. etc. just a few things like that. We should extend this as much as Possible. (Pause.)

Anyway, it's gone six. Any final points about the ground we've covered this afternoon? (Pause.) Oh yes, I remember the point I was going to make, in connection with men doing cooking. One or two of the people who were full-time cooks at Sukhavati did mention to me that they got a bit fed up with the job because people used to come to them - people from within the community - as though they were mother. I found that quite interesting.

Nagabodhi: In what way did they come to them as if they were mother?

S: Well, to come to talk to them and maybe tell them their troubles, and get an extra cup of tea and a bit of comfort, yes?

Mangala: Is this during working hours?

S: It was very often during working hours, yes, when they were in the kitchen, yes.

Mangala: Especially on a cold day....(laughter.)

S: Possibly, yes, though I think it could happen in the warm weather too. There was definitely that association with the provider of food and mother.

A voice: was one of those ***** persons?

S: I don't remember, actually, I'm not sure, but with ***** perhaps one could understand it. but it was certainly other people as well. You don't have to be plump and roly-poly to attract that sort of projection, it seems.

Padmaraja: Even on retreats people tend to gravitate towards the kitchen, especially at night after the puja.

S: Yes, that's true. So why do you think that is?

Padmaraja: warmth and food.

S: warmth and food.

Manjuvajra: To get your cocoa. (laughter.)

Padmaraja: But they don't, they don't just get their cocoa.....

S: They tend to linger...

Padmaraja: Yes, they hang about.

S: I think this is a sort of reaction to the opposite extreme. You've made your effort, you've done your meditation, and you've been a good boy during the day, you almost feel that you deserve a bit of time off from that, yes? Do you see what I mean? You almost deliberately allow yourself to backslide a little bit.

Mangala: I don't think it has to be that way. I think it can be often kitchens are just warm, you're kind of warm and relaxed, and I don't think it has to be backsliding exactly, although I know very often that does happen.

S: But it is almost like the unconscious slide back into warmth and comfort, almost mother, after you have made that sort of more strenuous effort, perhaps. If you do it consciously and deliberately, well, it doesn't do any harm, but if it just happens without your realizing what is happening, perhaps it isn't so positive.

Mangala: The conclusion I've come to is that I think, on the whole that, quite decidedly, women are much better cooks than men.

S: When you say better, what do you mean?

Mangala: With our restaurant in Brighton, and I've been around a bit, I've seen a few other places and so on, I think they're better and I think they seem happier in it, and they seem to work better together in that situation. And I just think they cook better, I think they present it better.

S: But they do say the best chefs are always men!

Mangala: Yes, but I think that's a whole different scene altogether when you get onto that

kind of French cooking level.

S: You mean on the more homely sort of cooking women are better.

Mangala: Yes.

Padmaraja: I'd certainly disagree with that. My experience of 'The Garden Cafe',- the men are the best cooks - not only that, when it's a single-sex situation it's brilliant there -the atmosphere's clean, wholesome - beautiful food, clear, very quick, simple, uncomplicated. Possibly, if we had the manpower I'd like to keep that a single-sex situation the whole time, for men. Keep women out of the kitchen, you get more than one woman in the kitchen, you get them (indistinct.)

Mangala: That's because they're working with men, isn't it.

Padmaraja: Even when they're working by themselves.

Mangala: No, I've seen women together,-I think they're much better, I think they've got a much better sense of, well just the whole thing - much better.

S: It is, in a way, more in accordance with their nature, but that nature is not absent within men, it is only underdeveloped, or that aspect of one's total psyche. When I was in New Zealand and I was invited out for meals quite a bit, the best meals were certainly laid on by the women. But that is New Zealand, and the men don't usually dare concern themselves with that sort of thing, though they do a bit more within the context of the Friends. But the meals I was invited to by women Mitras and Order members were really quite superlative - quite the best meals I got in New Zealand. I hope I'm not going to offend anybody with this statement.

Padmaraja/Oscar Wilde: It's as if, in my experience, the women - they can produce good food, it's O.K., but somebody like Nigel, or John, they go beyond that, they are almost like artists, there's that edge, that something special there. You never find this in women's cooking.

Mangala: I think perhaps among men you get an occasional artist, somebody really outstanding, but I think by and large for a really good average or even above average cook - give me a woman any day! But perhaps you won't get a woman of genius who will make something really outstanding (Laughter.)

Padmaraja: Maybe that's true but we're arguing really within the context of the cafes in the Friends.

Mangala: Well I think on that level - women any day of the week!

S: Perhaps you ought to invite Mangala to lunch!

Devaraja: Problem is he's got ***** working in the cafe. (Laughter.)

S: Well, he is a bit heavy-handed I would imagine. [Laughter]

Mangala: I've been to quite a few fairs and festivals and that kind of thing, and you see stalls with maybe a couple of women on them, who've really got it together, really in a way that the men just haven't, You know.

You've been working on the fairs, Campbell, what have you got to say about it?

Campbell: I didn't find that at all.

S: Didn't find what?

Campbell: The women had got it together better. It's a wee bit sort of - they get a bit hysterical - a bit of hysterical energy about.

Nagabodhi: I find it's usually a grumpy kind of energy, usually, I associate with a kitchen full of women, slightly lumpy, slightly - rather than hysterical. The L.B.C. kitchen, the L.B.C. cafe is run by women - it's sort of - it's all right, but it's...

Padmaraja/Oscar Wilde!: Earthy, heavy, yes? But with John and Nigel at times it's pristine, the atmosphere in that kitchen. Beautiful, light...

S: Well, for women to be able to create that sort of atmosphere they would have to be young goddesses, as it were. You'd have to have dakinis in there. It's not so easy to get dakinis, is it? Not even at Aryatara, hm?

Devaraja: I think I agree with you about that sort of thing, I think, the quality....

S: The truth probably lies somewhere in between the pair of you, if you look, say, in the world generally, yes? In the sense that probably there are more women, or a higher percentage of women than men, who are averagely good cooks. There are a far higher percentage of men than women, who are really good cooks.

Nagabodhi: I think that nearly all commercial - above the kind of 'Joe's Cafe' level,- almost all commercial restaurants are run by men.

S: Kovida and I went into 'Jarrold's' restaurant the other week.

Nagabodhi: Who's?

S: Jarrold's, in Norwich, yes? And....

Padmaraja: You mean to day you don't know?

S: You can't get much of a vegetarian nature, so we each had an omelette. And I don't think I've ever had a better omelette in my life, -it was beautifully cooked. It was almost like spun, - not this heavy, leathery sort of thing that you usually get. (Laughter) designated an omelette. It was thick and spun, and so light, and I had cheese, you know I hope I'm not being over-poetical but the cheese was sort of spun into fine threads (Laughter.) - not the great knotty lumps that you usually get, and the threads of egg and threads of cheese were so sort of subtly interwoven, that it was a (Laughter) sort of poetic experience, almost a spiritual experience! (Laughter.) So I said to Kovida, 'Good heavens, I've never had an omelette like this in my life.' So he said 'well, that is extraordinary - mine is pretty good too!', and he looked into the kitchen. He could see into the kitchen from where he (Laughter) he was sitting and he said 'That's strange,' he said 'The cook is a really good-looking young man.' So there you are you see, but was really beautiful and I've never had an omelette like that in any restaurant or anywhere else, come to that - not even in a community, so perhaps it does...it doesn't prove Padmaraja's point but perhaps at least it illustrates it.

Devaraja: How were the chips? (Laughter.)

S: There were no chips! (Laughter.), yes. There was a very small plate of really tastefully, artistically, arranged salad, with that omelette. It was not polluted with chips! Kovida was a bit disappointed, actually! (Laughter.) But I was quite happy not to have the chips. (Pause.) Well anyway, that's a little lighter note on which to - , well no, it isn't lighter, actually it's really quite serious , on which to end. (Laughter.) (Indistinct.) those glorious visions. I don't know whether we do have any young men in the kitchen or whether it's the older hands who are responsible.

Devaraja: It'll be bloody rissoles, tonight! (Laughter.)

S: Using up all the spare bread!

Devaraja: Yes, and the old beans. (Laughter.)

NEXT SESSION

S: All right, the 'Ten Things To Be Done!' Now we go on from precept five.

(5) Study the teachings of all the great sages of all sects impartially.

S: What do you think the expression 'all sects' means here in this context?

Mangala: Perhaps the Tibetan schools.

S: Yes. Though perhaps one should remember that not all these schools of Tibetan Buddhism as we at present know them had arisen at the time that these Precepts were compiled, yes? But the principle nonetheless still holds good. What do you think is behind this sort of statement, this particular precept? Why do you think it was thought necessary to say 'Study the teachings of all the great sages of all sects impartially'?

Devaraja: Was there almost like a sectarianism based on regional groups and things like that?

S: There is that possibility, yes.

Devaraja: And also the fact that at one point the Nyingmapas were put down quite a lot, as being rather degenerate?

S: This seems to have happened rather later on.

Padmaraja: There does seem to be a tendency towards sectarianism in Buddhism, in what I've managed to see.

S: Then what does one mean by 'sectarianism'? Perhaps that should be discussed first. What is a sect in Buddhism? Perhaps that needs to be understood properly. I mean, the word used here is 'sect' which is an English word. So what does one mean by a sect in Buddhism, and what are the divisions in Buddhism, let us say?

Devaraja: Aren't they those related to the Five Spiritual Faculties?

S: Yes, 'psychologically', inverted commas, yes, one can look at them in that way, though that is not a traditional classification.

Manjuvajra: wouldn't 'schools' be a better word?

S: 'Schools', - and what about the Sanskrit terms, what have you got there?

Manjuvajra: We've got 'yanas'.

S: You've got 'yanas', yes, and what have you also got?

Devaraja: Vadas.

S: You've got 'Vadas', yes, and what have you also got? (Pause.) You've also got 'darshanas', haven't you, you've got 'Paramparas'. So maybe we should go a little bit into these things. You've also got 'nikayas'. Maybe nikaya is in a sense the basic one. Nikaya means a separate body of people. 'Kaya' is 'body.' 'Ni' suggests division, separation. Nikaya is 'separate body'. This refers to the Sangha, especially the Bhikshu-Sangha. I'm not going for the moment into the question of to what extent the particular kind of Bhikshu-Sangha organisation which is

represented, or which is suggested by the word 'nikaya', does in fact represent the original set-up -I'm not going into that at the moment, but 'nikaya' is a term of the as it were fully developed coenobitical form of monastic life in early Buddhism. So what does 'nikaya' mean here? Maybe I should give you an example from say, present-day South-East Asia, especially from Ceylon. You find that Bhikkhu-Sangha is divided into several nikayas. In Ceylon there are three nikayas. You need not bother about the names though I'll mention them. The 'Shama-nikaya','Amarapura-Nikaya' and the 'Ramaniya-Nikaya'. So a nikaya means a separate body of monks within the one Sangha, hm? You see what I mean, hm? How they came into existence is a historical question. There are no doctrinal differences between them. The differences in fact are very, very small indeed. For instance, one difference is that they wear robes of a slightly different colour. Again, for instance, they use umbrellas of a different type. The 'Shama-Nikaya' people use black, modern umbrellas, and the 'Ramaniya-Nikaya' people use the Burmese sunshade-type umbrella, and the 'Amarapura' people use the palm-leaf umbrella, which is the oldest type of umbrella. So the differences are quite minute. But, nonetheless, they do externally distinguish these three nikayas. What makes them basically a nikaya is that they do not - members of the different nikayas do not - sit together for what is called a 'Sanghakarma', - an official act of the Sangha. There are a number of what are called 'Sanghakarmas' or official acts of the Sangha. Do you see what I mean?

The most important of these is ordination, Bhikshu ordination. That is to say, a number of monks from one nikaya will not sit together with a number of monks from another nikaya, and together Perform the Sanghakarma of Bhikkhu ordination. They do not perform in fact any Sanghakarmas together, either monthly uposatha meetings or any other. That is, they may remain personally on friendly terms, they may co-operate in certain ways for the sake of Buddhist activities. There may not be any doctrinal differences between them worth speaking of, but nonetheless they do constitute separate nikayas, and they do not perform their ecclesiastical acts, as they are sometimes called, jointly.

So this is what is meant by a nikaya. And some, at least, of the early Buddhist schools, the main early Buddhist schools, were nikayas. That is to say, the 'Sthaviravadins', the 'Mahasanghikas', the 'Sarvastivadins', and the 'Sutrantikas', - these were separate nikayas, though in those early days sometimes, of course, the different nikayas were associated with different philosophical points of view. But the philosophical point of view was actually distinct from the ecclesiastical difference, if we can use that expression. And sometimes there was a bit of admixture. Say someone who by ordination really belonged to the Sarvastivadins would actually adopt some Sutrantika points of view. We find this happening for instance with Vasubandhu. So the philosophical tradition is usually indicated by the word 'vara', or 'darsana'. Do you see what I mean? So you could say, for instance, of someone, that as regards nikaya, he belonged to the Sarvastivadins, but in respect of his vada or darsana he inclines more to the Sutrantika point of view.

Mangala: Could you say that again?

S: You could say of somebody that as regards his nikaya, that is to say, the branch of the Sangha to which he belonged by virtue of his ordination, he was a Sarvastivadin. He observed the Sarvastivadin version of the Vinaya. But perhaps he did not always adhere to the view, the point of view, the darsana or vada associated with the Sarvastivadins, but inclined more to that associated with the Sutrantikas. That would be possible. Do you see what I mean? It is rather like say a parallel example, in the churches in Britain. You might, for instance, be a low-church Church of England vicar, but inclined towards the religious views and attitudes of the Methodists. But your ordination would stem from the Church of England, even though you might share certain convictions, say with the Methodists. Or with the Roman Catholics. Do you see what I mean? (Pause.)

Mangala: Could you translate it into say modern-day Buddhist terms? Could you see an equivalent in modern Buddhist terms?

S: Well yes. You might, for instance, be a Gelugpa, be ordained and trained in a Gelugpa monastery in Tibet, but actually, you might be quite sympathetic towards the Nyingmapa way of doing things, or looking at things, and even go so far as to receive some of their tantric initiations.

Mangala: why should these schools have started at all?

S: Schools in what sense?

Mangala: Well in Tibet, say the Gelugpas and the Nyingmapas and Kagyupas.

S: Well, these are due to historical reasons. I mean, it's difficult to go into this thoroughly. The Nyingmapas were Buddhism as introduced in Tibet originally. Then another wave came. That remained a bit as it were, separate, and eventually gave rise to the...

Devaraja: Kagyupas?

S: Not the Kagyupas, no the Kadampas. Then came another wave, which was the Kagyupas. Then a sort of reform movement amongst Kadampas come Kagyupas resulted in the Gelugpas. And then political questions were also bound up with it.

Nagabodhi: Where did the second and third waves, - the Kadampas and the Kagyupas, come from? From outside?

S: From India. They came from India. The Kadampa movement was initiated by Atisha. The Kagyupa movement was initiated by Marpa, who had studied in India. So the Tibetans, - the Sakyapas also, of course originated in India. So all the Tibetan schools except the Gelugpas represent different waves of Buddhism flowing in from India at different times. The Gelugpas are really the only indigenous movement, and they represent an attempt on the part of the Tibetans to sort of systematise at least a part of what they had received, and in a way, from their point of view, to reform it. Do you see what I mean? (Pause.)

The whole question of schools and sects in Buddhism is quite complicated. I have written the beginnings of the third volume of what was to be a series, of which the first is 'The Three Jewels'. In that I've outlined seven principles of classification for application to the sects and schools of Buddhism. I'll never finish that particular volume but I'll have to bring out these chapters some time, just for people's information.

Anyway, to go back to India, you've also got the yanas. Yana originally meant, of course, either Shravaka-yana, Pratyeka-Buddha-yana or Bodhisattva-yana. Then afterwards the term was used in the sense of Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana. Broadly speaking, though, it refers to the distinction between the Arahant ideal and the Bodhisattva ideal. So you can see these different principles coming in. Your sect could mean the branch of the Sangha to which as a monk you belong, i.e. nikaya, or it could mean the spiritual ideal which you follow, that is to say whether the Bodhisattva ideal or the Arahant ideal - sect in that case would mean yana, or corresponds to yana.

It could mean your philosophical position. This is indicated by the term vada. You could be a follower of the Madhyamika, for instance, or the Yogacara, or of the Sarvastivada or Sutrantika, philosophically speaking. So you could be, for instance, someone - this is what

often used to happen, who by monastic ordination belongs to the Sarvastivadin tradition. He, as regards his religious ideal, he followed the Bodhisattva ideal, he was a Mahayanist. In respect of his philosophy, he was a Yogacarin. Do you see what I mean? Then to this was added the Vajrayana, later on. Then you get the Guru parampara - the particular tradition of tantric practice according to the lineage of teachers. So, in say Tibet, you get a situation like - well you get someone who as regards his monastic ordination, basically he belongs to the Sarvastivadins. It's mainly the Sarvastivadin monastic ordination which is perpetuated in Tibet.

So all right, he belongs to the Sarvastivada nikaya. All right, as regards yana, of course he follows the Bodhisattva ideal. As regards vada, there is a sort of combination of Madhyamika/Yogacara teachings, which is sometimes called Madhyamika/Svatantrika. This is the school propagated by Tsongkhapa. Philosophically speaking, he could be following that. As regards his Tantric lineage, well, he could be following one or another of - even a number of different lineages going back to various Indian teachers, which are, say, at present transmitted by the Gelugpas, but which go back in some cases to Nyingmapa and Kagyupa lineages. Do you see what I mean? That is the sort of situation.

Mangala: Could you apply this to your own case?

S: You can in a broad way, because I took Theravada monastic ordination and then I took the Bodhisattva ordination from Dharpo Rinpoche which makes me, you could say, in addition a Mahayanist, in a sense, and also various Tantric initiations, mainly of the Nyingmapa school. As for my general philosophical point of view, you could say that's my own, if you see what I mean.

Mangala: So what would you say your yana was in that case?

S: I would say, well, if I have to say, I would say Tri-yana. Tibetan Buddhism, strictly speaking is Tri-yana. It is not Mahayana as opposed to Hinayana, - it incorporates the Hinayana as a stage. This is over-simplistic - actually, I would not describe myself as a Triyanist in quite that naive traditional way, but that is another question altogether, what I would in a way describe myself as. I prefer to take the view, - and this brings us back to this particular precept - that one should study the sutras, the teachings, of all the different forms of Buddhism and cull from them, - take from them whatever one finds useful to oneself in one's spiritual development, as an individual, here and now in the West, in Britain. So I would take 'Study the teachings of the great sages of all sects impartially' not in the sense of trying to have a sort of even encyclopedic knowledge of the teachings of all the great Buddhist teachers of the past in the East -not that - that is a bit academic, as it were, but just keep an open mind, and if you find you get, say, some inspiration from Milarepa, yes, get inspiration from Milarepa. If you get inspiration from reading Buddhaghosa's 'Path of Purification', yes, get that too. If you get inspiration from some of the Chinese Chan teachings, yes, get inspiration from that, be open to that too. Don't bother too much how it all hangs together intellectually. If it inspires you it inspires you.

But some clever person sooner or later, will work out all the interconnections and systematise the whole thing for the Movement, so to speak. What I think we should beware of is a premature synthesis. Do you see what I mean? Beware of a premature synthesis. A lot more people have got to draw a lot more inspiration from a lot more Buddhist teachings and Buddhist teachers of the ancient East before we can make any sort of final synthesis. Perhaps no synthesis will ever be more than provisional. You see what I mean? So, we should 'Study the teachings of the great sages of all sects' - Tsongkhapa, Milarepa, Padmasambhava, Kukai, I-Chi, the great Chinese T'ien T'ai teacher, and all the others, with a view to drawing upon them in the interests of our own spiritual development, as they become available in English

translations.

Mangala: Would you say in this respect, maybe Zen schools and or perhaps even Tibetans are a bit narrow and a bit limited?

[End of side one side two]

S: Yes, they are, yes. That is changing a bit. Many of the what I call geographical forms of Buddhism, culture based forms of Buddhism, that is Tibetan Buddhism, South-East Asian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism - they developed in isolation to a great extent because they just had no communication with one another for purely, as it were, historical and practical reasons. But now, in modern times, for various reasons, they are coming in contact with one another, they are beginning to learn about one another, hear about one another, know about one another, so their attitudes are changing subtly. They've even changed during the time I've been involved with Buddhism. The attitude of some Theravadins is much more tolerant now, as regards say the Mahayana, than it was twenty or thirty years ago. I remember, in my early days in Kalimpong, for many Theravadins, Mahayana was just a dirty word. But it's not quite like that now.

Devaraja: What drew you towards the Mahayana originally? Was that before you had contact with Tibetan teachers?

S: Well my original.... you could say in a sense, I was originally drawn towards the Mahayana, because the first Buddhist texts that I read were Mahayana texts. That is to say the Diamond Sutra, and the Sutra of Wei-Lang. But I wasn't drawn to them as towards the Mahayana rather than any other form of Buddhism, if you see what I mean.

So one has got this very rich tradition, which has lasted for 2,500 years, and it is very rich in teachings and practices and insights and so on. One can't hope to master the whole of it, one doesn't need to. One takes from it whatever one needs. And people in the west, people living under modern conditions, will probably take from that tradition what they especially need to meet their needs as developing individuals, within the situation that they actually find themselves. We may find that we are attaching importance to teachings which were extant in the East, which were given in the East, but which were never developed there because the situation there did not render them particularly important. We may develop those particular things much more than they've ever been developed in the East. On the other hand, certain teachings which were quite important in the East and for people in the East, we may not find especially significant. An example which I gave in India was with regard to the Buddha's teachings about the caste system. To the modern ex-untouchable Indian Buddhist these teachings are tremendously important - the Buddha's teachings about caste. In fact, so far as the average ex-untouchable Buddhist is concerned, those are the most important teachings of the Buddha - the teachings which matter most. But we don't pay them any particular attention in this country, do we? Because we don't have a caste system, we haven't suffered from living under that sort of system. So we read what the Buddha says about the caste system but it is just a sort of historical curiosity, unless we've had our own actual living contact with the ex-untouchables. But that's tremendously important to them, what the Buddha said about caste. What he said about meditation is not especially important - that's old hat, as it were.

Mangala: Buddhism does seem very unwieldy,- it even seems to be getting that way in the West. There are so many different sort of approaches and

S: This is one of the reasons why I'm not too happy with the traditional Tri-yana approach. What seems to have happened - Buddhism is tolerant in principle - it doesn't reject any teachings. At the same time it has to make sense of them all. So what tended to be done in

India - and this tradition was continued elsewhere - was to try to relegate all the different teachings of Buddhism to different stages of a single spiritual path. So the Tibetans ended up with this fully-fledged conception of the three yanas - the Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana - and the standard teaching, especially standard Gelugpa teaching, was that in the course of your spiritual development you traversed all these three stages, and you practised first of all, all the teachings of the Hinayana, then all the teachings of the Mahayana, then all the teachings of the Vajrayana. But actually there were so many teachings that the whole thing became, as you say, unwieldy, and even a bit artificial. Do you see what I mean? Because had to be found for everything, and it wasn't always possible to arrange ALL the teachings of ALL the yanas sort of end to end in one continuous series. The Tibetans did try to do that. The Chinese tried to systematise in another way by attributing, for instance, the teachings contained in the Sutras, to different periods or phases of the Buddha's career. I've tried to systematise in the *Survey* in terms of the Five Spiritual Faculties, i.e. psychologically. In that way the whole thing hangs together, and I suggest that each of the major developments of Buddhism represents a specialisation in a particular spiritual faculty. But I also suggest that you need, as the Buddha originally said, to develop all those spiritual faculties in balance, in harmony. Therefore you need to draw something from all of those main traditions. You need the devotion of the Shin, you need the meditational expertise of Cha'n, you need the wisdom, say, of the Madhyamikas, you need the energy of the Vajrayana tradition, the Tantras, and you need to hold all of these in balance, with the wider, more synoptic view, or vision that you get in such 'schools', as it were inverted commas, as the T'ien T'ai.

But you can't practise the whole of Buddhism. It has become absolutely impossible. So what is your principle of selection? According to me it cannot be a purely abstract intellectual one. It can only be the needs of your own development as an individual. Therefore, all right, acquaint yourself as widely as possible with the entire Buddhist tradition, but just take from it here and there whatever you find genuinely helpful and useful - that is the criterion.

So we may end up with what may seem an odd kind of patchwork, but it will not be a patchwork for us. The integrating factor will be our own experience. The fact that it all helps us will mean that it must have a certain pattern for it to be able to help, or for all of it to be able to help us. That will give it its pattern. Do you see what I mean? But this may take - well, will take - a long time. So therefore we must beware of a premature synthesis. There are certain teachings and certain scriptures that already most people in the Friends find very useful. Everybody finds the Mindfulness of Breathing practice useful. Everybody finds the Metta Bhavana practice useful. Everybody finds the visualisation practice useful. So, no doubt these things will be very definitely parts of our particular, as it were, synthesis, elements in that synthesis. I think I can say everybody finds the Bodhicaryavatara inspiring, and the Udana, yes? Not many people find, say, the Digha Nikaya inspiring, as a whole, compared with the Udana. Not many people, as far as I know find the Madhyamika Karikas inspiring, Madhyamika Karikas of Nagarjuna. So these things perhaps will be of more peripheral interest. or of interest to a few specialists.

But those teachings, those traditions, those scriptures, that the broad mass of people in the Movement find definitely helpful, in their spiritual life and spiritual development, will constitute the nucleus, as it were, of that new synthesis. Further than that, no doubt there will be included in the synthesis, at least peripherally, teachings and traditions that we incorporate from the West. We're not going to throw that away entirely. There are certain aspects of western cultural, even spiritual, tradition that we also find useful and helpful. So we won't hesitate to incorporate those as well.

Mangala: Could this be called an eclectic approach?

S: No, I try to avoid the word 'eclectic'. It's even been suggested to me that the FWBO is

eclectic and I repudiate this term because 'eclectic' suggests you just pick and choose a little bit from here, a little bit from there, not in accordance with basic spiritual developmental needs, but just according to, almost sort of your whim and fancy and your intellectual presuppositions and so on. I would not say that it is eclectic. There is, in a way, no proper term for it in English. One of my friends outside the Movement used to try to refer to what he called 'my personal synthesis', and I'd say 'No, I'm not concerned with a personal synthesis.'

Some people find it quite difficult to make out where the FWBO is at. Some people are convinced that we're a Vajrayana Movement. Some think that we're predominantly Theravadin, which is really quite odd, but in a way that is good, that we get these various labels, because it means that we can't be very easily categorised, which means that something new is developing, from which sooner or later there will just have to be a new term.

Nagabodhi: Something that does seem to be part of our 'armoury' in spiritual terms - philosophical approach, is the 'individual' - the ideal of true individuality. I would have thought that that was - wherever Buddhism has been there has been the group and the individual, and yet no-one - I mean I haven't read all that much of the scriptures obviously, but nobody seems to have put things as bluntly, as clearly as you. It's as if you deduce the individual from things that you read, but only you, so far as I know, have actually really isolated the point.

S: That is true. I sort of wonder why it is. It may be, because in modern times, living the way that we do, under the conditions that we do, the pressure of the group on the individual is so strong that we just have to articulate and make more explicit this particular difference between the group and the individual, make it more articulate and explicit than ever before in Buddhist history. The distinction's been there before, but the individual has not become so conscious of the difference between the individual and the group, just because the group perhaps hasn't leaned on him so heavily in the past. This is the only explanation I can think of.

Though I must say that in my own personal life I haven't been especially heavily leaned on by the group. I can think of a lot of people who have been leaned on much more heavily than I have been. In fact I've got off rather lightly. It's more that's what I've observed than what I've personally experienced.

Nagabodhi: I wonder, It just occurs to me, when you say that, whether it's almost like the opposite might be true, that maybe in a sense, the individual is very surrounded by and leaned on by groups, but we're less aware of it, than say if, you were a caste Hindu, or if you lived in an extended family. It would be enough for someone to say, well you leave home, that would have sort of said it all. Whereas perhaps now to some modern person like me, well, that's not actually going to mean much - it needs to really be spelt out because the effect of the group on me is much more subtle.

S: Well, there are more groups now, and say in ancient India perhaps the group that really concerned you was your family-cum-caste group. You gave up family and you gave up caste you'd virtually given up the group. But that is so no longer. I mean you can leave home, you can leave your parents, you can leave the parental roof, you can even try to dissociate yourself from your class, but you're certainly not free from the group, because the state, the corporate state, is now so omnipresent, so ubiquitous in its operations, that you are still under the influence, even under the control and pressure of the group in so many other different forms. It isn't enough to leave home and to become a bit sort of class-free, that isn't enough any more.

Mangala: I've seen it with this word 'individual' just recently, and in some ways I don't think it's entirely satisfactory.

S: I agree.

Mangala: I think that the little card actually downstairs about what the FWBO is - to encourage people to become, individuals to form a New Society, and well, I know what that means, and I think that's great, and in one way I appreciate the simplicity, but for somebody else reading that, it might not sound all that - "what's so special about that?" kind of thing because the whole implication of what the individual is, they don't really perhaps fully appreciate. So almost like a creative individual would be better, but again that's.....

S: The word 'creative' is so widely and so loosely used nowadays. You get creative this and creative that and creative everything. Something did occur to me yesterday after one of our discussions, which was this:- It has been mentioned quite a number of times, especially say in connection with the Festival of Mind and Body, that we use, within the FWBO, terms which are used by lots of other, let's say other, for the moment, groups. We use the term 'individual', we use the term 'creative', we use the term 'enlightenment', we use the term 'meditation', we use the term 'transcendental'. So, to the superficial observer, what is there to distinguish us from these groups? There is nothing. We seem to use exactly the same language, and therefore we seem to have exactly the same ideology, exactly the same philosophy.

So we have been discussing this and people are quite rightly not quite happy about this state of affairs. But thinking it over it occurs to me, this is exactly what the state of affairs was in the Buddha's day, with regard to the Sangha. Yes? The Buddha himself, and his followers were using exactly the same terms that other teachers and other groups, other 'ganas and acaryas', - you've got the same terms even - were using. And the point has been made, that to the people of the Buddha's day - those outside the Buddha's movement - the Buddha and his movement appeared to be just like - to be one of just a number of movements which were very widespread. He was just an acarya leading a particular gana - a teacher leading a particular group. So the Buddha and his disciples were using the terms like Karma, Brahmana, Dhyana, Prajna, Pandita. They were using the same terms as everybody else. But what happened was this. That in the course of a few generations, Buddhism became more and more distinctive as an organisation - again to use that term. The Sangha of the Sakyaputta samanas gradually distinguished itself from the other sanghas, or differentiated itself from the other sanghas by virtue of its greater spiritual cohesion - its greater success in a way, and also it differentiated itself by developing its distinctive - not only by developing, by expressing its distinctive outlook and philosophy in a terminology that was more distinctive and expressive. You see what I mean?

So that in the end it became easier to see that yes, Buddhism was something quite different, whereas originally, neither organisationally, nor terminologically, was it distinguishable from what appeared to other people to be dozens of similar little movements.

Mangala: I suppose the Buddha was just another holy man as well.

S: The Buddha was just another holy man to people who weren't particularly involved with any of these movements, and his followers were just another band of followers of a holy man, and their teachings were all much the same - they all used the same language.

Mangala: I suppose in a way I'm not sure if things might be a bit more complex now, because it's not just like you've got Buddhism in the West plus Christianity etc. You've got all the different things of Buddhism that you've got up and down the country now as well.

S: Yes. So I think there's no sort of short-term solution to the problem. I think the solution will come about in exactly the same way that it did in the Buddha's day. We should differentiate ourselves as an organisation on the one hand. People will know the FWBO as an organisation, will know that for instance it is, let's hope, bigger, more successful and more positive than the other 'Buddhist', inverted commas, organisations. And then they will gradually realise that we have, in fact, a distinctive point of view, and we ourselves will gradually either evolve a special vocabulary, or as it were, insist on giving the words which we all use - which everybody uses, a special meaning of our own, which comes to be recognised as the meaning that we as a movement attach to those terms. So, to take this word 'individual', either we shall find another word to cover what we now mean by individual in our sense, or we shall, as it were, impose our usage of the word generally and make it generally acceptable.

Devaraja: It becomes the thing by which that term is measured.

S: Yes. And of course all that will be supported by our sort of independent development as an actual concrete movement.

Nagabodhi: The Buddha, obviously in his lifetime.....

S: But even the word, Buddha, itself you see was common.

Mangala: Was common?

S: Yes, common. It started off just meaning a sort of wise man.

Mangala: So there were probably lots of Buddhas in the Buddha's time? People called the Buddha?

S: Yes, right. See in some of the more archaic scriptures, you get the word used in this very loose, early sense, - very general sense - not in the sense which it later..... After all, nowadays, if you ask people, even in India, what term is more Buddhist than the term 'Buddha', what term is more specific to Buddhism than the term 'Buddha', well originally it was a quite common general term used by everybody in a very broad sense. So maybe, after a few hundred years, the FWBO usage of the word 'individual' will become generally recognised - who knows?

Nagabodhi: I was going to say the Buddha did try to redefine the word 'Brahma' or 'Brahmana'.

S: Yes.

Nagabodhi: But that obviously hasn't stuck.

S: It didn't work, no, because the caste system was so strong, yes, so it may be that our attempts to re-define certain words, or use them in our own way, will not work, or may work in some cases and not in others.

Mangala: Do we need words like Buddha and Buddhism in that case? That's one way....

S: Time alone will tell, I think.

Mangala: We could further separate ourselves from other Buddhist groups.

S: Well, it may happen. I don't want, personally, to try to do it in an artificial or contrived way. It may well happen. It may happen in a couple of generations' time. You may yet, as an old man of eighty, you may hear the pupils of your pupils saying among one another 'Don't know why we call ourselves Buddhist, we haven't got much in common with these Theravadins and Tibetanists etc.' They might decide to call themselves something else, who knows?

But it's premature I think for us to consider that sort of question. We may succeed in giving a much better significance to the term 'Buddhist' more in accordance with the Buddha's own teaching. People might start saying 'These Theravadins and Tibetists they're not Buddhists at all, - wonder why they call themselves Buddhists? They don't deserve the name!' It might work that way round.

Manjuvajra: we've got a bit of that already, haven't we?

S: Perhaps we have. Perhaps.

Manjuvajra: I think, generally, we tend to think of ourselves as like - well - I tend to think of the FWBO either as THE Buddhist movement, and the others are, as it were charlatans almost.

S: Well, it's not so much what you think of yourself, but what the Public, the general public - the non-Buddhist public, thinks or considers. It will ultimately depend upon that, so far as general language is concerned - general terminology. If the Public decides, well, the FWBO, well, no doubt eventually there will be a decision, or a feeling, that the FWBO, - what we now call the FWBO - is of one kind, everything else is of another kind. It'll be I think touch and go, whether it is sort of decided that they're the real Buddhists, but Buddhism isn't worth very much, and the FWBO is something other, whatever people start calling it, and is worthwhile, or, that the FWBO is the real Buddhist movement, and the others are not Buddhists at all!

It'll be touch and go which it is, and in a way it won't matter very much. We just don't know at present, we can't say.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes it does seem true, that, for example, that now that Sukhavati is built, and things like the *Newsletter* is looking better and so on, it's obvious that people do take the movement more seriously. (laughter)

S: Some people take it more seriously, Yes.

Nagabodhi: Well, for example, *The Buddhist Society*. It seems a bit crude in a way that it is very much the material success that actually is making people look at us a bit more seriously. In other ways, and I suppose there is really no alternative.

S: No. I must say, personally, I was very aware of this, very conscious of this, almost from the minute that the FWBO was started. In the light of my experience in India, I knew that we would not really be listened to unless we had something tangible in the material sense to show, especially until we had property, then people would begin to take you seriously, even allegedly religious people. Not before.

Devaraja: Maybe that's not all that unreasonable, because in a way that's a kind of an indication of the degree of energy....

S: That's true. It says nothing about your spiritual condition at all.

Nagabodhi: Look at Rajneesh.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: True, but if there was absolutely nothing, if there were no Centres, it would be hard to take the spiritual energy in the situation....

S: But even the fact that there are Centres, in the sense of buildings, even that doesn't mean that you can really take it seriously spiritually, though actually that is what people do. Well, people who only a few years ago, I know from what I've personally observed, even experienced, people who a few years ago were patronising, are now deferential, and it's only because there's a bit more in the way of bricks and mortar, and a few more pounds in the bank, not because you have changed or developed remarkably, no not that. It's just on account of these material considerations. But as I said, I was quite aware that this is what would happen when the FWBO was started, and sure enough, it has happened. But anyway, there's another question perhaps we ought to consider in connection with this precept, and that is, why people want to belong to sects in the narrower sort of sense. I mean, in the FWBO as we've made clear, our attitude is to take what we need from the different traditions, from the different schools, different teachings, teachers, of the past - even of the present, and to apply them to the business of our own spiritual development. So why is it that people want to identify themselves with a particular sect, whether in the past, or even in the present, say within the Buddhist context let's say?

Manjuvajra: Isn't it group-hunting - identity-hunting?

S: It is that. I think it includes that. Perhaps it wouldn't be quite fair to say that it was only that. What other factors do you, think might be involved?

Derek: Laziness.

S: Laziness, yes. It could be laziness. You just take the first that comes to hand.

Nagabodhi: You get addicted to a particular view.

S: You get addicted to a particular view.

Manjuvajra: Do you get stuck with a particular view because it suits your temperament?

S: Ah! I think there could be a lot of that in it. That some people by temperament - whether positive or negative, seem drawn to the Theravada. Others by temperament to Tibetan Buddhism, others by temperament to Zen.

Manjuvajra: There's also that it's easier to command an understanding of a limited view, so you can feel that you've achieved something, you've got something.

S: Yes. There's a definite structure.

Mangala: In a sense that can be positive, can't it? You can see it as like a working hypothesis.

S: I think that formerly there was, in a way, a justification for belonging to a sect, just because it was perhaps, even practically, difficult to contact many sects apart from the one that you were already in contact with or found it easy to contact. But I think in the West, now

that we are new to Buddhism or Buddhism is coming newly, to identify yourself with a particular sect of Buddhism, or school of Buddhism or Buddhist tradition, is deliberately to close your eyes to the others, which was not quite the case before. For instance, say a hundred years ago, how could you blame a Theravadin Buddhist in Ceylon for being just a Theravada Buddhist? What possibility had he of contacting any other form of Buddhism? Practically speaking, if he wanted to be a Buddhist, he had to be a Theravada Buddhist. But that is not the situation now, even in Ceylon, and much less still in the West.

So that now, if you identify yourself with a particular sect, it's as though you do that quite deliberately, closing your eyes to all the others. Which means very often that you have to adopt a negative attitude towards them, in order to justify the fact that you are identifying not with them, but with the one that you are identifying with. The only alternative is to say that it is purely a matter of subjective Preference. But a lot of people would not wish to do that. They would wish to make it more a question of their judgement, that they had chosen the best sect, or that they belonged to the best one - not that they just happened to fancy Zen, or happened to fancy Tibetan Buddhism - they wouldn't like, I think, to say that that in fact was what was happening. So they would almost be obliged to say, well, Zen is best, or Tibetan Buddhism is best.

Nagabodhi: Is there not some practical point, that you do have to commit yourself in some way exclusively to a particular teacher or approach - sooner or later you do have to, to be able to practise. You've got to narrow things down?

S: Well this is what people say, and this is in a sense true. You have to commit yourself to a particular practice, but it's in a way more than just a particular practice. It's a whole way of life, and as I've said, you may be able to draw inspiration from so many different sources within the total Buddhist tradition. And it may be that none of the sects as at present organised, can really provide for all your needs. You may have to, as it were, stifle some of those needs, so as to keep yourself within the limits of a particular sect.

Mangala: But people may not actually realise that.

Kamalasila: Unless they know about the FWBO they won't know that.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: Sorry, I didn't quite listen properly, but did you say that one should stifle certain needs, or....?

S: No, no, if you identify yourself with a particular sect, and that the sect doesn't provide for that particular need - for instance, the Theravada doesn't provide for music, let's say, the need for music. If you happen to have that particular need within the context of your spiritual life. Music is OUT so far as the Theravada is concerned - So, if you wanted to identify yourself with the Theravada, you would have to stifle that particular need. But in the case of the FWBO it isn't like that. At present the FWBO certainly doesn't cater for all spiritual needs, of all the people who might come along, because it is growing, so this is sometimes one of the things that I have to make clear to people - people say, 'Oh, I really wish that in the FWBO, we could have this, but the FWBO doesn't believe in this', and sometimes I have to say 'No, it isn't that the FWBO doesn't believe in it, but so far no-one has come along, who felt the need of that particular thing.' But there's no reason why the FWBO shouldn't provide that particular thing, if people want it. It's just that no-one has demanded it so far.

I'll give you an example of this. I've given it before, but it'll bear repetition. When I was in Christchurch, two people came to see me separately, each of them saying that they liked the

FWBO very much. There was just one thing that they weren't happy about - that the FWBO was against poetry. So I said 'Well, what gave you the impression that the FWBO was against poetry?' They seemed to think the FWBO had banned poetry, you see, so, well, what it actually turned out to be was that none of the Order members that those two people were in contact with, and none of the Mitras or Friends, had any interest in poetry. So these two people had got the impression that poetry had in fact been banned by the FWBO - was under some sort of cloud as being unspiritual, and that if you wanted to be involved with the FWBO, it meant virtually giving up your interest in poetry.

So when I told each of these people that in England in fact we had our own poetry readings and a lot of people were very much into poetry, and actually wrote it, they were really both overjoyed - it was almost a sort of revelation to them. So you see what I mean? So this also illustrates the point, you have to be so very careful generalising about the FWBO from contact with a limited number of Order members, Mitras and Friends. This particular person had only had contact with - well, regular contact I think with ONE Order member and very occasional contact with 2 or three others, and there were perhaps four or five Mitras around. None of them had happened to be interested in poetry.

Manjuvajra: Can you see anything within the movement as a whole, that you can see will need to be injected in the future?

S: I can't really say. I've emphasised one or two things. For instance, I've sometimes talked about developing our own theatre and our own (indistinct) studio, and all that sort of thing, but that is comparatively peripheral - that isn't anything specifically Buddhist in the traditional sense. We just have to see. We didn't even think of communities at the beginning. We didn't think of co-ops. We didn't think of single-sex communities. All these things come along just because people started feeling the need for them, and no doubt lots of things will develop that we can't even think of now, just because people feel the need for them in the course of their spiritual life and development. Some of the younger people who are around now may look back one day to the good old fashioned days when all that you had were Centres and communities, and co-ops, and wonder how on earth they managed just with those few things.

Devaraja: Sometimes I wonder, when reading about in the early scriptures, that it was so simple, just wandering around in the bush, and how did they manage without elaborate shrine rooms.

S: Yes. well, a lot of things in Buddhist tradition have been developed just because people found them useful. They found it useful and inspiring to have an image of the Buddha or Bodhisattva - They didn't have those things at the beginning. Of course they had the Buddha, which was, maybe rather better -(laughter) but after a couple of hundred years of not having the Buddha or any of his immediate disciples, they bethought themselves of creating images, and those occupied a very important place in people's lives and gave them a lot of inspiration. But they weren't around at the beginning. Nor were Thangkas and things like that. Nor were scriptures. People find it convenient and useful to have the words written down in a book which they could consult whenever they wished, instead of having to trot off to Elder so-and-so, and ask him, if he was in a good mood, to recite it all to them. He'd sort of rattle his way straight through and they couldn't stop him and say 'Oh no, would you mind repeating that passage again'. No, they'd just have to listen and hear it all the way through. Do you see what I mean.

And suppose Elder so-and-so had gone off on pilgrimage, or he'd died, well you couldn't consult him then. So it was quite inconvenient. So people must have found it really convenient to have had all the words written down in a little book, you know, written by

hand, of course, on palm leaves which they could actually tuck under their robe and carry around with them, and consult it whenever they wanted. It must have been a tremendous convenience. But that was developed because people felt the need of that sort of thing. But I think, to go back again to this question of why people identify with sects, I think people really want to identify with something, with a group even. It gives them an identity. And one really has to watch this. On a certain level, yes, the FWBO is a positive group, so people will identify with it. But the Spiritual Community is another thing. Strictly speaking, you can't identify with the Spiritual Community as though it was a group. Do you see what I mean? You can only relate as one free individual to other free individuals. But free individuals don't have a sort of collective group identity really, though it may look like that from the outside.

Mangala: Isn't it true that even Friends might be attracted initially by a positive group?

S: Oh yes, of course, yes, indeed.

Mangala: Which could be a healthy thing.

S: Oh yes. One has to accept that. I think a lot of people are, and more and more people will be as the whole thing gets bigger and hopefully more positive. But it's very important that a sort of balance is kept between the Spiritual Community and the positive group, and the positive group doesn't, as it were, overwhelm the Spiritual Community - that the Spiritual Community isn't influential enough, let's say, to keep the positive group really open-ended.(Pause).

Manjuvajra: The same with St. Frances, wasn't it, really?

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: He had to (indistinct) (pause)

S: One or two extra points, going back to the Sangha. People in this country sometimes have the impression that the Sangha in the East is completely monolithic. One of the questions that arose in our study group at Sukhavati, people asked, well, 'Does the Sangha in the East recognise the FWBO, or the WBO for that matter?' And I had to elucidate that and say 'There is no Sangha in the East'. There are a number of nikayas, which may be on friendly terms but which in a sense do not recognise one another, in the sense that they will not sit with them to perform the Sanghakarmas, - the ecclesiastical acts. It is not as though there is a sort of monolithic Sangha rather like the Roman Catholic Church as it were, and that you're either recognised by that or not recognised by that. That is not the position at all. There is a whole lot of mutually exclusive Sanghas, which remain in varying degrees of friendly contact with one another. So one should bear this in mind. For instance, people sometimes say the Western Buddhist Order is exclusive. Well, ALL the Sanghas in the East are exclusive - this is what makes them what they are. Do you see what I mean?

For instance, if a Zen Buddhist, - a Zen Buddhist monk, let us say, was to walk into a meeting of a particular chapter of a Theravada Sangha, of a particular nikaya, he would not be permitted to remain and take part in the ecclesiastical acts, even if he was around he would not be invited. But they would remain on personally quite friendly terms with him. But, technically, so to speak, he would not be invited to participate in that particular function, whether of an ordination or so on.

There are signs here and there of trying to get over this, even in Ceylon. But they are still quite small signs, and not very much is happening. So actually what I'm saying is the Western Buddhist Order is in no different position from any other nikaya, so to speak, in the

East. The majority of them are nikayas of Bhikkhus, in one sense or another. In other cases they're nikayas of people who've taken the Bodhisattva vow. And there are other nikayas where the bond of union, so to speak, is of a different nature, as with the Shin people. Well, they have sort of ministers, because they don't recognise any distinction really between monk and lay. So if people try to scare us by saying, well, the FWBO or the WBO is not recognised in the East, that is all just nonsense - it is based on a complete misunderstanding of the situation.

[End of tape seven tape eight]

Mangala: Buddhist monks just thought that they could walk into this retreat and just be welcomed with open arms - he told them to go.

S: Yes, right. I must say that this is partly Indian. Indians tend to have the impression that anyone can walk into anywhere. They've no sense of privacy, so to speak. I think it's more than anything Buddhist. Now the Theravadin bhikkhus do have the sort of views that wherever they go, any occasion of a Buddhist nature, they sort of take over, they are in charge automatically, because they are bhikkhus. (That is to say, just ordained).

So, what was originally developed by Buddhism, which differentiated it from other little groups, was its own distinctive organisation, which was as it were the steel frame of the whole thing and its own distinctive spiritual attitude, which gradually developed a language of its own, and was, therefore, eventually seen to be a very definitely different attitude. So this is what's going to happen in the case of the FWBO in the West, or in the world, so to speak. It's gradually going to become clear that we are a different kind of organisation and that our attitude is different, and in both respects we differ considerably from other groups in the West, which also call themselves Buddhist. (Pause)

S: All right lets go on to 6:

(6) Study the beneficent sciences of medicine, astrology and the profound art of omens.

S: We ought to have had Virabhadra in this group, didn't we?. What do you think about this? 'Medicine, astrology, and the profound art of omens'. Well, medicine you can understand, presumably. What do you feel about medicine and Buddhism? You might say, well, which form of medicine.

Mangala: I think it probably means knowing how to keep one's body in reasonably good condition.

S: Well there is a precept to this effect immediately afterwards. It is said, I don't know how truly, that in China, in ancient times, you paid your doctor, your personal doctor, so long as you remained well, and you didn't pay him when you fell sick. In other words, his function was preventative, to prevent you from becoming ill, not to allow you to live in any old way that you liked, so that you fell ill, and then cure you, so that you could go on living in the same way that you were before.

So maybe Medicine doesn't require much discussion. What about astrology? I mean, the original Buddhist attitude, as far as we can see, the Buddha's own attitude, was that astrology was a low and lying art. But it certainly figures very prominently in Tibetan Buddhism.

Nagabodhi: I've heard that the Buddha forbade astrology for occupation

S: For monks that is.

Nagabodhi: Yes, as a means of livelihood. Apparently that is a very common means of livelihood for monks in the East.

S: This is true, even in Theravada countries. They are very interested in astrology.

Nagabodhi: The whole things obviously got much more weight to it in the East than over here.

S: But what makes one interested in Astrology?. Why is Astrology so popular?.

Dharmamati: Because it affects the psyche in some way. The position of the stars, they believe it affects the psyche.

S: All right, but why do they believe that, or what makes them dependent upon that belief.

Nagabodhi: The desire not to take responsibility for themselves.

S: I think there is a lot in that, though I think it also must be said in fairness, feeling unable to take responsibility for themselves. I think it must be said that belief in the occult flourishes, belief in things like astrology, at times when the political situation is very uncertain, and you don't seem to have any control over your own life, and there's no means of knowing what's going to happen. Then it is said that people become more interested in things like astrology.

Derek: Is that true in the East and West?.

S: Both in East and West, one would imagine.

Mangala: There seems to be a lot of that today, doesn't there, a lot of interest in astrology. I think perhaps more than ever.

S: Though it does seem that in the West, despite the disapproval of the Christian church, to a great extent, astrology has flourished, even during the middle ages. It really flourished very intensively during the Renaissance and during the 17th century, which of course were periods of great upheaval.

But just imagine yourself if you ever have taken an interest in astrology, or you've sort of consulted the stars, or at least the stars that feature in the daily paper, well, what are you actually doing, and why do you do it?.

Mangala: It's as if there's maybe something fortuitous, or something, a stroke of good luck which might happen to you, which, in a way is not to do with you or your own efforts, but which will change things.

Manjuvajra: I've used the I Ching a few times when I've felt completely helpless about mental (word unclear) or when I've been strongly emotionally affected.

S: I think the I Ching is a bit different, because that perhaps seems to function by sort of suggesting possibilities that you might not have thought of yourself. But astrology doesn't seem to work like that because it's - I mean, people take it as predicting. Astrologers often say, well, no it is not predicting, and you shouldn't take it like that, But actually, it seems, people do take it like that; That this is going to happen, or that is going to happen, and it is as

though they are looking for certainty, some kind of certain knowledge with regard to their own lives.

Mangala: It depends on the level again, doesn't it?. Some people sort of read theirs everyday, sort of thing - it says you mustn't go out today or you mustn't spend any money today, but there is a lot of people who see it in a much more general - Character traits and indications of the sort of person they might be, which doesn't lay down any hard and fast lines of conduct. Just gives you more a broad indication as to where you might best function, for example. I think it's only the very, sort of, lets say uneducated uncultured people who read the sort of 'today you mustn't see anybody today' or 'you mustn't spend money'.

S: But don't you think such people are in the majority?. I mean among those who do read the astrological features in papers?

Nagabodhi: People read the, but do they actually -

S: (interrupts) Well, why do they read them?. All right, well you could say, why do you read the newspaper anyway. Maybe, read it just because it's there, and you're the sort of person who just reads through it from page one, maybe skipping only the sports section (laughter). Maybe it suggests perhaps something good is in the offing, perhaps it's something like that, that life is a bit dull, a bit routine, it would be nice to know that there was something quite special coming. You look at the stars feature just in case something particularly good is going to come your way, and that would make life more interesting and hopeful. Perhaps there is something of this sort in it.

But what about the relation of astrology and that sort of interest in astrology to the spiritual life. The Tibetans concern themselves with astrology for quite practical reasons. They want to know whether today is a good day for selling a horse or whether tomorrow is a good day buying a house or for starting a journey. This is what the Tibetans want to know. And they do actually believe that astrology gives them that knowledge, as in fact, Indians do. So if you believe that literally, well from a Buddhist point of view, yes, it is good to know, to be acquainted with astrology, because then you will be able or better able to do the right thing at the right time, and help other people also by advising them. So if you take astrology in this quite literal, matter of fact sort of way, well, clearly it is a useful thing to know about. It's almost like, well, knowing almost anything else of some practical value. But if you don't take that rather naive, as it were, common sense view of astrology, well, how does an interest in astrology relate to the spiritual life? Can an interest in astrology be detrimental or incompatible with the spiritual life?

Mangala: I think it depends, I think perhaps, for some ,if to say some, housewife maybe just reads it every day, it perhaps would be detrimental, because it would just be like a distraction, it wouldn't be encouraging her to perhaps look deeper into her own life, and come more to grips with her own life and what's she's doing.

But I think there are some people who do actually use astrology in that way, in fact, who are actually using it, with some method, with some higher sort of aim in mind.

S: It depends to some extent on whether astrology is a science, if so, in what sense - even astrologers seem to differ about this, or to what extent it is a science, or to what extent it is a system of symbols which can spark off certain reflections or even insights in you as you consider those symbols. It depends on that to. But the Tibetan attitude does seem to be, well certainly on the popular level, so far as the vast majority of people are concerned, including the vast majority of monks, it is literally true and it has a definite practical value.

Manjuvajra: If you didn't actually believe that, objectively, then they are living their lives according to a falsehood, aren't they?

S: Yes. Yes. Though very often, perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps the important thing is not what you decide, but that you should come to a decision, Yes? Supposing for instance, your astrologer tells you that today is a good day for selling horses, you go and sell your horse, or try and sell your horse, in the confidence that you are doing that under reasonably good conditions. It doesn't mean that you will lose your natural shrewdness, or accept a lower price, in fact, you might hold out for a higher price thinking it's a good day for selling horses. But it would perhaps give you a bit of extra confidence, and it would make up your mind for you. Otherwise you might be very undecided - shall I sell today, or shall I wait till tomorrow? But the astrologer says No today is the day it's a good day. So you go out and sell your horse or try to sell it with that sort of confidence. Or maybe you can't make up your mind which day to start your journey. The astrologer says, well for journeys, Thursday is the day, but avoid Saturday. So you go off on Thursday.

Manjuvajra: But doing that a lot of the time, you would lose your sense of decisiveness.

S: I think you would. I think this is mainly the Buddha's original basic objection to astrology, that it tends to deprive you of your initiative. I don't think as regards the nikayas - this is nikaya in a different sense, a body of text - as regards the nikayas, I don't think there is any statement of the Buddha's that astrology is false. In the Jatakas, the Bodhisattva is represented as saying it is useless. I'm not quite sure, I don't recollect that the Buddha himself actually said this. But he definitely discourages the Bhikkhus from practising astrology as a means of right livelihood, and he does seem to have believed that dependence upon astrology stultified individual initiative, and individual endeavour, and that may well be so.

Derek: There's also a difference between teaching astrology or giving people predictions from using it yourself. Because if you are using it yourself when you are also making a conscious effort to develop, then it can be in it's own perspective, but if someone's just using astrology on it's own is much more likely to be detrimental.

S: It is basically a question of personal responsibility. Most astrologers say that the stars don't determine your destiny, they only influence it. But very often, I think, people do not remember that comparatively fine distinction, and they act, or don't act, as though the responsibility was not with them but with their stars. And, therefore, a belief in astrology, it would seem, very broadly speaking, would tend to undermine one's sense of personal responsibility, even though certain individuals might conceivably use the symbolism of astrology, if in fact it is symbolism rather than scientific fact, in a positive way. But the Tibetans, judging by this precept also regarded astrology as a beneficent science, just because they took it literally, and believed it to be useful, and to give actual information.

I believe there is a symbolical side. I have not gone into this at all, I believe it is connected with the Kalachakra tantra, but that is quite a different aspect of the whole thing, which doesn't seem to concern the ordinary Tibetan, or even the ordinary monk.

Dharmamati: Do you think it could be easily misused as a form of power over other people, or influence in a wrong way?

S: Perhaps it could, perhaps it could, yes.

Dharmamati: Just through popular belief in it.

S: For instance in India, it's quite remarkable how many prominent politicians have a

profound faith in astrology, and in India, behind the scenes, certain astrologers have got a great deal of power, of an entirely undemocratic and unparliamentary nature, because they are the personal astrologers of certain leading politicians. For instance the former prime minister, Maharshi Desi, was a firm believer in astrology, and his personal astrologer was said to have had a great deal of influence with him. Pandit Nehru incidentally had no faith whatever in astrology and spoke out against it on various occasions.

Devaraja: His daughter seems to have gone in for astrology.

S: She seems to have done. Perhaps because when you are sure of yourself - and Nehru was very sure of himself - perhaps you don't need astrology, but when things are really difficult, and you are not quite sure what the outcome is going to be, the temptation then, is to consult the astrologer and find out. For instance in medieval renaissance Europe, I believe in England, it was a capital offence, certainly under Henry VIII, to try to find out from an astrologer, and I think similarly under Elizabeth 1st, whether the sovereign was likely to die. That was regarded as a capital offence, to make that sort of enquiry. It was bordering on treason. Because supposing the astrologer said "Well, the king is very likely to die on such and such a day, he could be killed on that day", which is almost suggesting to a group of potential conspirators, that if they wanted to kill the king, they'd better try to do it on that day.

And for much the same reason - I speak about modern India - but in Renaissance Europe, kings and princes of various kinds took a very keen interest in astrology. Queen Elizabeth the 1st, Catherine de Medici took a keen interest in astrology, they had their private astrologers, they consulted them from time to time.

_____ : Hitler had astrologers.

S: Hitler had. We are told that the war office during the war in Britain retained a couple of astrologers, not for actual guidance, but so that they might know the sort of advice that Hitler's astrologers were likely to be giving him. (laughter) Yes!.

But I think the upshot of the discussion would seem to be that unless one is actually using the symbols of astrology to stimulate self-knowledge, self understanding, as a means to spiritual development, then an interest in astrology is likely to be incompatible with spiritual development, inasmuch as it tends to undermine ones sense of personal responsibility, despite what the precept says.

"And the profound art of omens". What sort of omens do you think are meant here.

Manjuvajra: Black crows and -

S: Black crows. I remember in this connection, when I left the vihara in Kalimpong, the moment I left it to leave for England, in 1964, I had two friends with me, one of whom was a Sikhimese, and he was really delighted, because the instant I emerged from the gate, so to speak, there came past a women bearing pails of milk, and this was considered to be an extremely auspicious omen, so he predicted that my visit to England would be entirely successful, But again, we regard a black cat as lucky, don't we?, If a black cat crosses your path The Nepalese regard it as unlucky.

Devaraja: Every other country in Europe regards it as unlucky except England. And in America too. America it's unlucky, a black cat crossing your path.

Dharmamati: I've always taken it as unlucky

Devaraja: Yes, but it's a lucky thing in this country

Dharmamati: I've always thought it was unlucky.

S: It's generally considered lucky. They say black cats for luck you get black pussy cats on birthday cards and things like that.

Dharmamati: In the sense of them walking across your path, I thought it was unlucky.

Devaraja: No, it's lucky.

S: Oh dear! (laughter). But there is this thing, just to diverge a bit, there is this thing of what Jung called synchronicity. I don't know whether this has any actual significance in this connection, but sometimes there are rather strange coincidences, for what they are worth. Quite a number seem to happen to me from time to time. I don't do anything about them, but I just notice them. For instance, I might be reading, suppose I'm reading 'adopt such devotional practices as will conduce' and someone comes in the door, and says, "I'd like to ask you about devotional practices." This sort of coincidence happens time and time again, with me, and so you can't help wondering, perhaps, whether it has any sort of significance. And whether there is a sort of subtle tie up between all these simultaneous factors, and therefore, whether you can't for instance, get to one from the other. Do you see what I mean? This is basically what the science of omens is based upon.

Nagabodhi: It seems, to almost come, I don't know whether the coincidences happen more or whether I notice them more, but it seems as if in certain states of mind, I find that if I do a lot of metta bhavana practice, I start experiencing a startling incidence of coincidences. But it's almost as if I feel I'm entering a slightly charmed realm, as if I'm just open to another dimension of reality. It feels like that. I don't know whether I am or not. Where connections seem to happen, I'll think about somebody, and I'll get a letter from them five minutes later.

S: Yes, well you could explain that in a way, as not sort of quite synchronicity in Jung's sense, because synchronicity, is sharply distinguished from causality. But when you think about something, and somebody else thinks about something, it could be a causal connection inasmuch as your thinking about them establishes the actual contact with them, which sets them thinking about the same thing. But that is causality not synchronicity.

Nagabodhi: No. What I get is more the coincidence. I'll think about somebody in my meditation, I'll come out and find a letter waiting from them - oh I suppose they might have thought about me.

S: Why yes. so you see that is causality rather than synchronicity in Jung's sense. You see what I mean? So certainly one gets those sort of causally based coincidental experiences as one practices Metta Bhavana and becomes more sensitive through meditation. But synchronicity seems to be - well is, by definition, a different kind of thing.

Devaraja: It makes me wonder whether it's sort of something -I think I've seen some reference to it - everything is always happening at the same time. Its something almost like sort of- it's something like an access to -

S: It's as though there's a sort of reason why all these things happen at the same time, even though it is not a direct relationship or a relationship of direct causality, or cause-effect relationship, within the present dimension, as it were. But they are actually interconnected. So that, even if you can't see a particular factor at a particular moment, the fact that another factor is there which you can see, means that the second factor actually is there, and can be

inferred by the presence of the first. So omens is based on that sort of thing. Again it could be simply the means by which a sensitive mind tunes in a bit, it's very difficult to tell.

Manjuvajra: These occasions of synchronicity or even causality, they never seem to follow any particular pattern. In other words, you couldn't really make a science of them, as such.

S: You could only make a science of them - it's claimed of course, you can make a science of them - if they do follow definite patterns, regularities which it's possible to observe. Sometimes of course causal explanations are possible, for instance the behaviour of animals. The behaviour of animals and birds occupies a very important place in traditional omen lore. But we know now that animals are sensitive to actual physical happenings, in some cases, minutes or even hours before we are sensitive to them, or experience them. So it isn't that the appearance of certain animals, or a certain kind of behaviour on the part of animals, is an omen, no, it's actually casually connected. As when you can foretell the weather by the behaviour of animals, is not a question of omens, really, though it probably would have been looked upon as such, originally, in ancient times.

Manjuvajra: So looking for omens could be a way of heightening your awareness?

S: It could be, or at least reflecting upon omens or what seemed to be omens. I mean, as with the I Ching, you become aware of possibilities that perhaps would not have occurred to you otherwise. This is what I meant by saying that you use the omens as it were, symbolically to spark a series of reflections which might not have otherwise occurred to you.

Padmaraja: Could you give an example of that?

S: Well, for instance, supposing you see a crow, suppose that's suppose to be an omen of bad luck, but you weren't anticipating anything bad happening, but seeing the crow it makes you think. You think what bad luck could have happened to day. Then 'ah, yes, there's that!', I did this and I did that therefore such and such could happen. And then you start giving some consideration to it, maybe taking some action. You see what I mean?

Devaraja: Have you had things like that happen to you?

S: No, I can't say that I have, but I notice what seem to be omens and coincidences. But I can't say that any reflection upon them however, as far as I can remember, caused me to become aware of something that I hadn't previously been aware of, or caused me to take a certain line of action. Not that I remember.

Manjuvajra: I went through a period where my whole life was full of omens and particularly crows. I used to enter into conversations with crows.

S: You've been reading 'Crow' perhaps! by Ted Hughes, I mean.

Manjuvajra: But that actually opened up a wide area to me, mainly my sort of feeling response to things, and before that I only really related to things rationally. I'd never realised that part of my response to things was emotional. So considering all of those omens made me realise that one does react to situations with feelings.

S: Do you think that actually there are an unaccountably large number of crows around you at that particular time? Was it that something in you, that was sort of crow-like, or of which, or for which the crow was or could be a symbol caused you as it were to pick out the crows, say ignoring all the pigeons and sparrows and so on.

Manjuvajra: Yes, I think the latter.

S: It was almost as though the crow was your personal totem, and you were contacting something in you through the medium of the crow.

Manjuvajra: The medium of the crow, right.

S: Somebody remarked the other day that they thought I had a think about peacocks. Actually it wasn't so. It's just that the peacock is the bird associated with Amitabha, the Buddha of the West. So naturally, one thinks a bit about the Buddha of the West and Padmaloka is also connected with that, and I did one think of keeping some peacocks here, but didn't take any steps, because I realised that peacocks were noisy creatures - they might disturb peoples meditations. You could say, well yes, in a way I take up the peacock rather than any other particular kind of bird. Maybe it does have some kind of, what shall I say, resonance with one's own psyche.

Mangala: When you gave me my name Bhante, you said that it meant good omen.

S: Well in the Buddhistic sense. The Buddha reinterpreted this whole question of 'Mangala'. a Mangala meant a good omen, that something good was coming. You saw, say, a cow meant it was an omen of something good coming. But the Buddha's point of view is that if you meditate, that's a Mangala, because if you meditate something good will surely come. If you follow a peaceful livelihood that's a Mangala. Because as a result of that, something good will come. So he tried to reinterpret and revalue the Mangala. Do you see what I mean? He didn't succeed so far as the population of India was concerned. They didn't take the Buddha's view about what was a Mangala, they went along with their own view.

Mangala:sitting back and waiting for things, signs, to happen which indicate you should act. But more a matter of taking action.

S: Yes, I think in my own case, I've tended not to be interested in astrology or anything like that, just because I think by nature I'm quite self reliant and take my own decisions. But perhaps a person who is maybe a bit uncertain of himself and hesitates to make decisions, might well consult astrologers, or something of that sort.

Mangala: I think that's probable a Virgo trait!

S: It could be, I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps it is!. Are you self-reliant and independent, Devaraja?

Devaraja: Oh yes, yes! (laughter)

S: Always take very clear cut decisions.

Devaraja: Oh definitely!

_____: Are you a Virgo?

Devaraja: Oh, yes.

Devaraja: There's the famous triad, Sarvamisra, Devaraja and Bhante.

S: Chintamani, who is also very decisive.

Devaraja: Sarvamitra's birthday's the day before mine, and mine's the day before yours

S: One of them coincides with Goethe's birthday. Yours. He was a very decisive person. Anyway That brings us to coffee time.

(Break in recording. Resumes with discussion of next precept:-

(7) Adopt such regimen and manner of living as will keep thee in good health.)

S: You shouldn't allow that sort of situation to occur unless it's absolutely unavoidable. And stress doesn't mean doing a bit more work than usual, no, stress is a much worse thing than that, in a way. It means really taxing yourself in a way that you shouldn't be taxing yourself, straining yourself.

Padmaraja: I feel that for chairmen there's no alternative actually. I think almost without exception in the movement we've the most-

S: To subject yourself to stress?

Padmaraja: Yes. To be a chairman is to be under stress really. I don't think there is any way around that at the moment.

Nagabodhi: I know what you mean, and I'd agree, in my experience that being a chairman has subjected me to a lot of stress, but that's partly because of the nature of the job: it's so all involving-

S: (interrupts) But something that is involving doesn't have to be stressful. It's not stressful by definition.

Nagabodhi: I think it has also something to do with a level of maturity. I mean there are certain responsibilities that I've had, that for me have been stresses which if I'd had more maturity and been able to actually take a deeper perspective, or a more relaxed -

S: Well sometimes it's also a question of organising your time and even your own energy in a better sort of way, a more thoughtful way.

Nagabodhi: That's sometimes is impossible to achieve.

S: Well it depends what you are chairman, or who you are chairman of. I can understand being chairman of publications and being dependent on the whims of typesetters and so on, what to speak of other people, that it isn't always possible to organise your own time in the way that you would like. But I'm sure very often, more could be done than actually is done, by most people. Perhaps chairmen are a special case. But I wouldn't like to think that a chairman, by definition, had to be under stress, unless it was a situation perhaps in which other people just weren't up to giving the chairman the necessary support and cooperation, either due to lack of lack of experience or just paucity of numbers. I would not like to think that any sort of job, so to speak, within the context of the friends, is stressful by definition. I think it would be quite a sad thing if we had as it were to accept that.

Padmaraja: I don't think we should accept it, but I think we should work to alleviate it, but that just seems-

S: (interrupts) Ah, well that suggests it can be alleviated. it's not stressful by definition.

Padmaraja: No, but at the moment it appears that way.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes we do talk about people taking on a certain job. you say: well, that job would really stretch him. In a way what you're saying is there are stresses involved in that job. I know that's how I've-

S: I think there is a great difference between being under stress and being stretched. You can even enjoy being stretched. You don't enjoy being under stress. Perhaps I shouldn't invoke the fine shades of difference here, but one is tempted to do so. But perhaps they are two really radically different things, being under stress and being stretched.

Nagabodhi: There seem to be so many factors involved. If you are feeling really positive, something that normally may be a stress will feel like a -

S: Well, there are certain things that you need always to make sure of: For instance, to safeguard one's own regular meditation; to safeguard one's occasional being on one's own; to make sure as regularly as possible that you get to bed at a reasonable hour; that you have regular meals. I think all these things are quite fundamental, quite foundational. I think sometimes we neglect them not so much for objective reasons, but because we are not sufficiently conscious of our bodies and the needs of our bodies. So I think this needs quite careful consideration. I would go even further than this, I would say - I've been talking about this on and off the last few years - that one needs actually to develop the body quite consciously, much as one develops the mind. In the sort of way that the ancient Greeks developed the body. And I think that this thought or this idea hasn't yet sufficiently caught on in the movement - do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: Maybe this is one of those areas that has to come into the movement.

S: Yes indeed. This is say one of the areas where I'm not in a position to give a lead personally. I've left it rather too late. I had nobody in my youth to give me any sort of lead. Also there were various health reasons that one need not go into. But I must say quite frankly that I underestimated the body and its needs, theoretically and practically for all the early part of my life. And so it's partly for this reason I say I can't offer any sort of personal lead. I know nothing about gymnastics, I know nothing about physical training, or anything of that sort, but nonetheless, I would like to see them developed within the Friends. I do now, on reflection, regard those things as very necessary, and as having their own part to play in the spiritual life. I think it is not enough to keep yourself in good physical condition, in the sense of good health, you must maintain yourself in an aesthetically pleasing shape as well. Here again I can't offer any lead!. But at least I can offer advice, armchair advice, as it were. But you see what I mean? Young people in the movement they shouldn't have pot bellies, young men, they shouldn't droop etc., etc. You know what I mean. They should be ashamed of looking like that. They should pay attention to their physical appearance, and their physique for want of

[end of side one side two]

a better term, as well as to their mental state and emotional state. There should be an ideal of all round development. Not that you're going to be obsessed with your biceps in the way that some physical (enthusiasts) are. We all know that particular brand of the phallic narcissistic type, as I call it (laughter). I am not suggesting that you should all blossom forth into phallic-narcissists. It sounds pretty horrid doesn't it. But you should give due care and attention to yourself on all levels. If you don't as it were love yourself physically, well, you haven't really much hope of loving yourself in any other way. It's a manifestation of metta towards oneself, that one keeps oneself in good condition, keeps oneself looking good, and just even takes

pride in one's appearance in an positive sort of way.

Manjuvajra: It's also connected with - both keeping yourself physically trim, and the relaxation thing, well, chairmen having the space. I've recently got back into that I really used to love was just sort of walking in the country and camping, being around mountains, and I often felt over the last few years, looking back on it, that those kind of activities were unspiritual, they were sort of something that one didn't really do within the Friends, rather like the poetry-

S: Yes, right.

Manjuvajra: But now I'm beginning to change my views on that, I think maybe it would be good for a group of people to go off walking in the mountains or camping ,or -.

S: Cycling. Well, two Order members in the summer did go off cycling together for ten days. That was Ananda and Gunaprabha from New Zealand. They went off on their bicycles for ten days together, camping and cycling around. So I was quite pleased to hear that, in fact.

Mangala: But it's also significant that here we are on a ten day retreat, yet there's really no provision made for physical; exercise at all.

S: Well there's walking. You can bring your bicycles.

Manjuvajra: I've brought my bicycle.

S: Several people in the community here at Padmaloka go for long cycle rides now, sometimes together. This is quite a new development over the last two or three months. But partly because I was getting at some of them because of little pot bellies - [Laughter] when you're in your early or middle twenties you shouldn't have a little pot belly, or a beer drinker's belly. [Laughter] Once you are into the degenerate thirties, well, I can understand it, not when your in your bright and sparking twenties!. As for the unforgivable forties and the horrific fifties! [Laughter]

Devaraja: So how did Kulananda take it? (laughter).

S: Very well, very well! and others to whom I addressed a few rude remarks. But you see what I mean? I have mentioned for, instance, that if, or when, we get this school in Bethnal Green, there should be a gymnasium there. But as I say unfortunately I'm not in a position to take a lead here, so I have to urge others. I've left it too late, because I had to find things out for myself. As it were, sometimes I did find them out too late to be of any personal benefit to myself.

Devaraja: Maybe it could be combined with something like dance, as well.

S: Yes

Padmaraja: Well, a tap dancing academy! (laughter) Just going back to your point, Nagabodhi. Personally, I don't feel stress from taking responsibility. I can do that, and I also appreciate the benefits of going into the country. But I just don't find the time, personally. There's just so much that needs to be done. I think chairmen find this generally, I know Subhuti does, Devamitra does, probably Mangala does.

S: I think the only thing one must bear in mind though is that if you are too busy in the sense of never having any time, it may be all right now, when you are still reasonably young, but if

it has an undermining effect on your health later on when maybe there is still more to be done, you may have sort of a breakdown in your health, and be absolutely forced to take time off, because you'll be flat on your back somewhere. Do you see what I mean?

Padmaraja: I'm not kind of complaining or anything. It's just towards the end of session, a long session, you start to feel a bit - it's such a relief just coming up here. Within days of being here I feel totally refreshed and ready to go back.

S: Well this is also a good sign, if when you get the opportunity you're refreshed after a couple of days it means actually you are not under stress. You are maybe working very hard but you're not actually under stress. If a few days, or a week, or ten days, sort of puts you right. But I think also one must be careful to remember the future too, in a way, and not over work so persistently that you are put out of action when perhaps more needs to be done than ever. But yes sometimes life is very full and there is very little time, not enough time, to do all the things that it seem really need to be done and also of course chairmen must delegate as much as possible. I'm sure most of them are only to willing to actually. It's sometimes more difficult to find people to whom to delegate. But look after oneself physically. This is the message which seems to be spelt out here. As I said, I don't think it's enough simply to keep oneself healthy, or free from illness, free from disease, but as an expression of one's love for oneself, one's metta towards oneself on that particular level, the physical, the bodily, you should keep yourself, not only healthy, but developed to the optimum possible, as a human being with a physical body. Have as pleasing and presentable a body, as it were, as you have a positive mind.

But I think that one must really be suspicious, in a way, of a metta towards oneself, that does not express itself in care of or even delight in the physical body, one's own physical body. So those who are young are in a position to heed these words, some perhaps have left it a bit too late, unfortunately (laughter). Some, not all, not all by any means!, some are pretty well preserved, I will admit!. But even health is not enough. The precept exhorts health and the regimen that suits one. I say even more than that. Take a leaf out of the book of the ancient Greeks. As you go around you its really discouraging in a way to see the number of people around you who are not pleasing in appearance, who are stout and overweight and gross looking, and unhealthy, and round shouldered and stooping, and bent, and bowed, and crooked or disfigured or too fat or too thin or whatever. Of course you start of with your inherited physique, that is known, but it's up to you to make the best of it that you can, not only from a practical health point of view but even aesthetically speaking. Again I hold myself up as no model in this respect. but I just am warning those who are in a position to do something about it.

Nagabodhi: On a more psychological level, connected with that, I heard of - I just heard it 2nd or 3rd or 4th or 5th hand, but apparently a team of doctors in America, of course, split up a group of people who suffered from similar depressive symptoms, and subjected half of them to ordinary therapy, drugs, ordinary psychiatric treatment, the other half were given an absolutely straight down the line course on running- that's all they were given, they were just taken to an athletes course and trained by a coach. Within a couple of months all the runners were discharged whereas the other people were just stumbling on for years.

S: Well we have within the context of the friends found physical work very therapeutic haven't we? I shouldn't perhaps say 'we', haven't you!?' [Laughter]

Nagabodhi: I still haven't done any! (laughter).

S: There was a time I remember once at Sukhavati 2 or 3 people in running shorts used to dash out and round two or three blocks and dash back, have a quick shower. But that didn't

last many weeks, did it.

Manjuvajra: Oh, it's a regular thing now

S: Is it now? Revived? Oh that's good, that's fine, I'm quite glad to hear that.

Manjuvajra: I remember the first time. Dave Living did it, and the first time he did it I came in one day and he was lying on his bed, and he looked dead, except he was glistening...

S: Like a fish?

Manjuvajra: Yes, exactly like that, even with his tongue hanging out. Then he told me he'd been running.

S: Well, perhaps we shall have that gymnasium then.

Nagabodhi: Subhuti and I play squash once a week

S: Well but - I have played squash, in the States. I used to play with my students there. It was very good, but very strenuous. Just a word or two about 'regimen'. Do you know what is meant by 'regimen'? It's a sort of regular systematic sort of way of life which you observe. I think this is quite important. -That you should try to find out, try to discover what way of life. The Indians, the Hindus, have got a term for it. They call it (dinacha?) - the daily practice, or daily routine we could say - what daily routine suits you. Whether going to bed early suits you and getting up early suits you, or going to bed late and getting up late suits you, or a good lunch suits you, or instead a good breakfast and a light lunch. I mean if you just consider these things you'll probably find, especially as you get a little bit older, that one particular regimen definitely suits your whole system better than another and you should as far as possible try to stick to that. Some people find that they absolutely need daily exercise. Other people can go along quite happily and healthily for months at a time without any exercise. You have to find out what your particular needs are, and do your best to meet them, just to keep yourself in optimum condition.

Any other thing you shouldn't do, for instance, in the interests of health? Can anybody think of anything while we are on the subject? I can think of one thing which I advise women not to do, and that is not to use cosmetics, because most cosmetics are cheap, and the chemicals do have a quite disastrous effect in the long run upon the complexion, not to say the skin itself. And also to shampoo the hair too frequently destroys its natural gloss in due course.

Devaraja: Teeth.

S: Yes teeth another thing. Here again when I was younger I didn't look after my teeth properly. I had to pay for that recently last year when I had quite a few of them out, what was left of quite a few of them. So what I'm blossoming forth in now are not my own, as it were. (chuckles). So these things too really do need to be considered when one is young. When you're young you don't think of these things. You don't bother. But it isn't altogether a healthy not-bothering. It's partly due to the fault of one's parents. You should be sort of trained properly when you are a child. Many people aren't and have to think for themselves later on, hopefully before it's too late. I think young men are in a very fortunate position in that they don't use cosmetics and don't dye their hair. Though I see that some young men do dye their hair nowadays. I'm not referring just to our punk friends. That's a bit different. But those who do sort of seriously try to change the colour of their hair, maybe from brunette to blonde or whatever. These dyes do no good at all to the hair, and people will regret it in the end. Even young men have their hair permed and waved nowadays - that is very harmful to the hair. You

see elderly women who had their hair permed when they were young have sort of dry brittle dead hair by the time they reach middle age. It's a great pity to see men also going the same sort of way.

So don't get your hair waved or permed or dyed.

Mangala: I was just using a mild rinse!. (laughter)

S: But women call it bringing out the natural colour of the hair.

Devaraja: Well blondes have more fun!

S: But you see what I mean? All these things ought to be attended to as well, or at least one should be a bit mindful of these things.

Devaraja: Another thing I think is important is footwear..

S: Yes, some people do cripple their feet with unwise footwear. Sandals are said to be very good in this connection actually if one can possibly wear them. They allow more free play in the toes, as often modern footwear compresses the toes and distorts them in fact.

Mangala: High heels are bad too!. (laughter)

S: Well again you can see some young men wearing high heels which seems ridiculous and you see some women wearing such awkward uncomfortable not to say ugly shoes with such high heels sort of tottering along. I remember overhearing one sweet young thing of about sixteen, who was painfully tottering along on a pair of platform soles, I believe they are called. She was saying to her friend 'Oh there are so comfortable!.' [Laughter] You see they really do believe, they kid themselves that they are comfortable, yes? It's amazing what people can kid themselves into.

Derek: The area of physical exercise is quite interesting. I know Brian in Glasgow - he's a black belt karate and he went back to his teacher to learn again with a view to teaching for the Friends, but he found that just after a couple of weeks training again that that kind of energy it was bringing up was not conducive to his meditation.

S: Several people seem to have found this in connection with karate. I was discussing it recently with Kovida, because he was thinking with connection with his own personal health and beauty effort to perhaps take up karate, so I said this is what I had heard from a number of people, that they found that the energies aroused in the course of karate were incompatible with especially meditation, and perhaps with spiritual life generally. He then discussed the matter with Dharmapala, who at one time had taken a serious interest in karate, who said that he had not personally found this. So it does seem that opinions differ. It may also depend upon what sort of karate teaching you get, even what sort of teacher, even. I imagine, what sort of karate tradition the teacher follows. Maybe we do need to do quite a lot of exploration in this field before coming to any definite conclusions. But I do really feel that yoga has its limitations, by the way. I feel that yoga - I mean, our yoga teachers tend to disagree with me here - but I do tend to feel that yoga is not sufficiently kinetic for a lot of people, do you know what I mean? Perhaps some form of dance even would be better. I feel the Tai Chi Ch'uan isn't vigorous enough but I think quite a lot of people, especially young people need something which is enjoyable and as it were spontaneous into which they can put quite a lot of energy.

Derek: Actually you can put quite a lot of energy into yoga though I can see what you mean

by not as many fast movements

S: Yes, Some people, as it were need to be able to move fast on certain occasions in a harmonious and rhythmic sort of way, which is what dancing essentially is.

Manjuvajra: I think yoga, although it seems to give some people a lot of energy, I always feel there's a sort of alienation there somehow. If a person's got a lot of energy to start with, it sort of integrates that energy and so you feels there's an energetic person, but it's like they cut themselves off from the source of it.

S: That's interesting. I'd like someone, sometime to investigate eurhythmy, which is part of the Steiner tradition.

Devaraja: What about prostrations. I remember Sagaramati saying that prostrations were much better than yoga.

S: Ah! yes, right. A lot of people, I believe, find prostrations, really energising, quite apart from the devotional and spiritual value generally. The Tibetans believe that prostrations can cure TB. In other words they have a healthful influence on the whole organism, which they may well have. This was one of the most pleasing features of the last convention we had, to see so many people in the shrine doing prostrations together and clearly getting so much out of it. I couldn't help noticing, they were so absorbing - maybe I shouldn't sort of say this - but I couldn't help noticing that the women didn't even have time to flirt, if you know what I mean, they had no time even to look at the men, they were so totally adsorbed in the prostrations. It's not very often that you see women completely oblivious of the presence of men, and totally absorbed in something else. Do you see what I mean? And that was really quite pleasing to see. Well everybody was absorbed in those prostrations and the amount of energy and devotion that there was around. They certainly improved everybody's appearance in every way.

Dharmamati: I've found since I've been doing mime, a lot of the physical exercises we do in that, form quite a balance between dance, that sort of energetic movement, and also very slow movements like the Tai chi and in yoga. In fact a whole cross section of different movements are used and it suits me. I found with yoga, it's too slow, too contrived, whereas mime gave me the more energetic side.

S: I think it is movement. A lot of people need to experience themselves in motion, in movement.

Dharmamati: It's quite important, for me, anyway.

S: Walking. Yes you do experience yourself in that way walking, but walking isn't perhaps, as it were, artistic enough, if you see what I mean. Some form of dance seems to come much closer to what is required. So here again is a whole field that we need to investigate and explore and experiment with, I mean keeping our fundamental principles clearly in view, and constantly relating the dance or whatever we are exploring to the needs of our individual spiritual life.

Padmaraja: Would you like to see prostrations being taken up more in the movement, outside of the Order, that is?

S: No. I'm quite cautious about prostrations outside the Order, because I feel it must be real. It's a natural expression of your Going for Refuge. So I prefer to keep that as an expression of somebody's actual commitment, rather than of a provisional commitment, lets say, or

rather they take it just as an exercise.

But probably there are various other things, like eurhythmy, various forms of dance, which could be encouraged among those who weren't actually order members.

Devaraja: I found, I don't know if I'm doing anything wrong, but I found when I was doing prostrations, I used to get quite painful sort of (?) on my Knees.

S: You've got bony Knees!

Devaraja: And a bump here as well.

S: Well Tibetans often wear padding. They wear knee pads and elbow pads, because, yes, you go down with quite a bump and you can graze yourself after a while and draw blood. So they do this. I have seen them with all sorts of pads and things almost like cricketers sometimes. (laughter) Some have special smooth boards to do it. So you should just pad yourself a bit and make up for nature's deficiencies. [Laughter]

_____ : Or land on your stomach!.

S: So adopt such regimen and manner of living as will keep thee in good health and good shape and good trim generally. Another thing of course is over-hasty eating. One should avoid things like that. There's a whole area, a whole range of things which we should take note of and adjust where necessary.

All right. Someone like to read precept eight.

(8) Adopt such devotional practices as will conduce to thy spiritual development.

S: Well, we could consider the prostrations as leading on to this. as it were. The prostrations practice being very definitely a devotional practice. Just to begin, what devotional practices, could we say, are generally current within the Friends?. There is the prostration practice, especially within the Order, there are pujas, chanting, what other things do we have?

_____ : People recite sutras

S: People recite sutras

_____ : Reciting mantras

S: Reciting mantras. The pilgrimage is a sort of devotional practice. We don't exactly have pilgrimages, but people do go of to India and visit the holy places, even make a tour of the Centres in that sort of way, don't they, sometimes. A couple of women did this recently, two Friends I think they were. Did anybody hear about this? Two mitras perhaps. It was connected with there fund raising, sponsored walking, or maybe sponsored travelling, sponsored hitch-hiking. I think they did visit every centre in the movement, and the did a puja in the shrine of each centre that they visited. That was, you could say, quite a devotional practice. It would be good perhaps to encourage that sort of thing, whether in connection with fund-raising or not.

Manjuvajra: Are there any other traditional ones that we could think about incorporating?

S: Well, they've got feeding monks!. But I don't want to take that sort of full time job, being fed all the time! That's probably the most important of the popular devotional practices that we don't observe. But perhaps we could regard feeding one another as a devotional practice if you do it in the right sort of way. I mean invite your chairman for a special meal, or your

mitra convener, or your kalyana mitra, or just your favourite order member.

Devaraja: Was the giving of clothes

S: Yes, giving of robes or equivalent

_____ : Giving in general

S: Giving in general.

Devaraja: I think that would be particularly helpful for chairmen, like devotional practice, as chairmen a very practical example.

Nagabodhi: What do you mean by that! Practical example

Devaraja: Well, I think for instance -

S: Well, he might need some clothes.

Devaraja: Right, he's probably got to have a lot of contact with the public and that sort of thing and to have a good suit or something like that -

S: Might be difficult to buy it out of his pocket money.

Devaraja: Exactly.

Mangala: A decent car, maybe! (laughter)

S: Or at least buy him a new jacket so that he looks a bit decent when he's hitch hiking! (laughter). But probably most people would agree that the puja is the main devotional practice, or perhaps I should say the central devotional practice. It does seem to be growing or being elaborated in a natural sort of way. It does seem that the making of the eight external offerings in kind, and one by one, is becoming more widespread. Is that not so?

_____ : At festivals

S: At festivals. And we've had it at the end of retreats here. People have asked for it.

Padmaraja: The offering goddesses?

S: Except that we on men's retreats, we have no goddesses, but we make do with what we have, if you see what I mean.

_____ : Young angels.

S: Well, young devils sometimes. [Laughter]

Nagabodhi: The offering of incense after the first verse has become....

S: Yes, This is something that's developed over the last few years and has become....

Nagabodhi: In the last year or two it's become really commonplace now for everyone in the shrine room to make an offering.

S: I hope nobody feels obliged, especially new people, because sometimes one may not feel in devotional mood, especially some new friend. One shouldn't sort of create the impression that it's *de rigueur* as it were, expected of one. Perhaps this should even be mentioned when there are new people, ordinary Friends, present, that if you feel like it, it's just as you feel.

_____ : I feel it already happens in centres anyway during classes - that natural timidity stops a lot of the new members from actually going up until they really feel ready to do that.

Mangala: What do you think about having the offerings before the puja rather than after the first section.

S: Well, this is what happened in the case of the puja at the end of the last retreat, and I was informed that this was the way in which it was generally being done, so I followed that quite happily. It seemed to fit in. We had also a mitra ceremony to incorporate. So we had that at the end of the first section of the seven fold puja. So for that reason at least, it seemed more appropriate to have the eight offerings made in advance.

Mangala: I think personally that having the long chanting and offering incense sort of breaks up - the puja has a sort of rhythm going through the verses, and it's nice to carry on. Having that break breaks up the rhythm I think. I think it's better to have it before the worship section and then let it carry straight through.

S: What about the individual offerings.

Mangala: Have them before.

S: With the Avalokiteshvara mantra chanting.

Mangala: Before the worship section.

S: I think the reason why we started having them included in the seven fold puja is to be able to take the seven fold puja as the total framework for the whole devotional occasion, as it were. This is what the Tibetans do or try to do. Though it must be admitted here that there are certain things that are outside the strict framework of the seven fold puja, though the seven fold puja provides the framework for most of what is happening.

_____ : It could be seen as a sort of introduction.

S: It could be seen as a sort of introduction, yes. You put your offerings there, etc, and then of course you do your puja.

Mangala: Its a bit like preparing the shrine, setting the scene.

S: Yes, you could take it in that sort of way, yes.

Manjuvajra: There's a thing I've noticed about the pujas here, there's lots and lots of energy going, but it seems to me to be a little bit insensitive, and I noticed in myself what was happening last night was that I was just getting carried along by the storm of the puja and I'd forgotten my own individual offering of those words, and particularly the mantras, I thought they were just it's good to feel that energy, but on the other hand, it wasn't refining in any way.

S: Yes well, this does seem to tend to happen on a retreat, certainly on a men's retreat. I think it probably happens less on a women's retreat. Just because there is so much of this relatively coarse but still quite acceptable energy around. It takes time to refine it, and also, of course, attention and awareness, and the understanding that this is what needs to be done.

Manjuvajra: Do you think that if one has that sort of situation, we sometimes get it at the centres as well, it's worth actually pointing it out?

S: I think it should be pointed out, so that at least people are aware of the situation, and can take whatever steps may be necessary, so far as they personally are concerned, to refine the energy. I'm not too much concerned with this, because I can remember when pujas and chantings were very weak and feeble affairs. I think if one is into the spiritual life and one's individual development anyway, a process of refinement can naturally be expected to take place. But still, an understanding of the situation is also needed, so that one may take actual concrete steps to change or develop if necessary. I think also quite a lot needs to be done in the field of images. Not all the images in the movement are yet sufficiently beautiful and inspiring. I think this is quite important. Chintamani's made a tremendous advance in this respect, but there is still a lot more to be done. This is just the first big step, as it were. We haven't finished yet by any means.

Nagabodhi: I found it quite strange here actually being used to Chintamani's rupas at the LBC. Although the rupa here, is in a way a better made rupa, isn't it - the ones at the LBC a bit rough. I'm getting quite used now to the more western rupa. I find really quite hard to feel anything for that rupa downstairs, frankly. It sort of it seems quite alien to me in a way it didn't used to.

S: I personally prefer a big image anyway. If you've got used to a big image, a little image doesn't seem quite adequate. I think it is no accident that throughout the far East people have gone in for these gigantic Buddha images. I think there's a definite psychological, even spiritual, significance in this. I think it is quite good to feel the image of the Buddha as bigger than you. I think this is quite positive. Obviously attention should be made from the devotional point of view, attention should be made to the decor of the shrine room and ideally the whole centre, the whole set up. It should all be inspiring.

Devaraja: I think it's very nice, a really lovely shrine, really beautifully done,

S: which one

Devaraja: The one downstairs.

S: This was redecorated just recently, as part of the general redecoration scheme. You might have noticed there is still a lot left to be done.

Manjuvajra: The other thing I've noticed about pujas, not only here, but also at the LBC and other places. It's my reaction to the Padmasambhava mantra. I remember once when I was doing it a long time ago, I had this image of hundreds of people walking in a long line behind someone carrying a flag at the front - Padmasambhava.

S: Perhaps we should have that sometimes!

Manjuvajra: But ever since then, the mantra conjures up that image and I don't actually like it very much. It's almost like being in the sixth happiness with all the kids walking across the mountain. That kind of feel to it.

S: Well, maybe you need to give it a rest for a while. If you see what I mean. Or maybe just chant it on your own. Sometimes, in your own way, or in the way that you feel it should be chanted, or that you would like it to be chanted.

Manjuvajra: I don't know. I don't actually have a way.

S: Well a way might emerge.

Devaraja: I find that invocation - it's your translation, is it?

S: Which one is that.

Devaraja: 'To the north West of Urgyen, in the calyx of the lotus flower Oh, wondrous, the highest siddhi has been attained.'

S: Ah yes, this is a very well known verse, yes. This does occur in the Tharpe Delam. I've made a version of that. There are various others.

Devaraja: That's your version is it?

S: I think it is. I'm not sure.

Devaraja: I assumed it was yours because you think some of the way of putting it.

S: It probably is mine. I'd have to check to make sure.

Devaraja: I think that's really excellent. It seems to sort of invoke Padmasambhava. And I feel personally that it would be very good to always prefix the chanting of the mantra with that. And I wonder what the possibility was of there being a version that could be chanted.

S: At least for use within the Order, I would say.

Devaraja: Well, it would be nice if it was of use generally in pujas.

S: I'm a bit cautious about presenting Padmasambhava as it were publicly. There could be a lot of misunderstanding. I believe there is a little bit of misunderstanding about my talk at Sukhavati. Sagaramati wasn't present and was quite keen on hearing what I'd talked about, and asked a number of people afterwards. And they all said the main point was 'Bhante said the passions are OK!'. So, I said No, I didn't say anything of the sort, and I explained what I said, and he was really quite surprised. So I started checking up on other people, but luckily I did find someone who did give me a quite neat little summary of what I'd actually said. But quite a few people seemed to be under the impression that I was saying the passions are OK.

So it's as though almost anything in connection with Padmasambhava and the Vajrayana can be misunderstood. So I really prefer that we don't bring this forward very publicly, as it were, but keep it amongst, as it were, ourselves, those who really appreciate what it is all about. And for the same reason - to touch upon another topic - I'm not very happy that in the public rooms of centres we have tantric design posters with yab-yum figures. This is almost bound to be misunderstood. I feel that outwardly it should be just the figure of the Buddha, not even Bodhisattvas perhaps, but just the Buddha figure - which is sufficiently well known. Because it's the simplest conceivable figure of an enlightened human being. A human being in the simplest possible dress, just sitting there enjoying the happiness of enlightenment. The image should communicate that instantly. Chintamani has written something about this, hasn't he along these sort of lines for the current Newsletter, you probably have read the article.

Otherwise we know that the four armed Avalokiteshvara has a beautiful symbolism, but it looks simply bizarre to the average newcomer, and yes, we understand the significance of the Tara figure. But the newcomer cannot but see it as a sort of goddess. A sort of motherly

figure, a bit like the virgin Mary, perhaps, and can't see anything more than that.

_____ : Maybe those ones in Aryatara should be

Padmaraja: Well when we get the new rupa, we're going to cover them over with brocade and just open them up for regular classes.

S: Right. I went into this especially in New Zealand. In New Zealand in one of the centres, I found their reception room was lined with tantra posters, tantra design posters, and I just suggested that they took most of them down and just had a simple Buddha figure and a wheel of life.

_____ : How do you feel about the symbol of the sphere which is used I believe in a lot of Zen monasteries.

S: Ah, the sphere tends to be used by the won Zen people. There's a whole school. The sphere is quite a simple universal symbol.

[end of tape eight tape nine]

It means the Absolute, so to speak. That is I think, more sort of universally intelligible, and less open to misunderstanding. The sphere has completeness, wholeness, perfection.

But I think especially the yab-yum images - which in case anyone doesn't know is the Buddha or Bodhisattva figures in sexual union as it appears to be, as it were to the uninitiated - like that one - one should not I think, keep these, exhibit these sort of posters. I said before that I'm not even happy that we should sell them. In fact, I think we don't sell them know, we only sell the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures of the more straight forward kind.

Derek: A point about chanting: Quite often I have the impulse to picture the Bodhisattva when I am doing the chanting. Is it OK to do that?

S: In a way, this is the idea. This is what one is supposed to do. As you hear, or as you chant the mantra, the image - the corresponding image - shall sort of float spontaneously into your mind. Don't sort of try to do it as a visualisation practice - you just haven't got time, when your just repeating the mantra three times - but you should get something like that, some feeling like that certainly. (pause).

Also the decoration of the shrine is important. I've noticed on recent retreats here, some people on the retreat have been remarkably good at decorating the shrine and have spent a lot of time over it. That is very good, both as a personal practice, and also to make the shrine beautiful for all those who are using it. (pause).

But I do think that eventually we shall have to discontinue the use - unless perhaps in exceptional cases - of images or oriental provenance: that is to say which are made in the East and which look eastern and look oriental. Here we shall be doing no more than following Buddhist tradition. Features change. Burmese images have Burmese features. Tibetan images have well not quite Tibetan features, they keep closer to the Indian features, but Chinese images certainly have Chinese features, and so on. All we have to make sure of is that the kind of features with which we are familiar, the kind of physique with which we are familiar, are imbued, as it were, with the spirit of enlightenment and express that for the devotionally minded and devotionally receptive person, or for anyone who is even aesthetically sensitive. It arrests their attention as it were. You don't want any sort of religious cliches as it were - "Because he's got a big bump on his head, well, that means it's a Buddha". You shouldn't need a big bump on the head of the image to tell us its the Buddha: It should be obvious what it is,

or what kind of person that is.

Devaraja: To what extent do you think we should maintain any traditional iconographical lines?. I'm thinking of-

S: I think its quite a good thing if there's a thread of connection with tradition, but I think no more than a thread. Perceptible to those who understand these things, but not obtrusive, so that the person who isn't familiar with these things asks "Well what on earth is that doing there".(pause)

Dharmamati: I don't know how relevant this is, but I was looking at some Celtic art, and some of the more spiritual beings - or what were looked at as the more spiritual - were in the cross- legged position and looked a bit like Buddha images. And it actually did something for me because it was like - sometimes I have difficulty associating with eastern imagery and then there was this Celtic root which is part of the European root. And there was this image of a figure that was just like a Buddha and that association did something quite emotional for me. (pause).

Nagabodhi: Chintamani's article's really good actually, the way he explores it really quite thoroughly. The whole idea of the marks, beauty by association and beauty as bliss and aesthetic appeal.

S: Anything more about devotional practices?

Nagabodhi: Yes. Something Manjuvajra mentioned about having gone off the Padmasambhava mantra, though you were quite specific about why - you do occasionally meet people who are just not into pujas any more. It happens I think to quite a lot of us. Every now and then you sort of suddenly lose interest. Yet I think that to actually stop doing pujas because of that well, maybe people do and I know they do-

S: But they go off any aspect of the spiritual life from time to time, don't they?

Nagabodhi: But it does seem a really bad thing actually o have no link at all with a devotional practice.

S: Well, something that someone told me recently I found interesting - An order member - they said that they really enjoyed taking or leading pujas. So perhaps we should be careful to rotate the leading of pujas more. That you aren't always being led, as it were - when it is a group puja so to speak: you don't always have the same few people leading the pujas. Especially I'm speaking with regard to the Order. This happens to some extent but I'm quite sure at the same time that there are certain Order members who take pujas or who lead pujas far more often than other people do. And maybe there are certain Order members who hardly ever lead a puja. So I think perhaps this should be looked into (pause).

Nagabodhi: Is that because different leaders may spark off different people, or because? -

S: No. I think the person who is accustomed just as it were to being led will get quite a different feeling from the puja leading and it will seem a newer thing, a more interesting thing, just by virtue of the fact that he is leading and as it were taking the initiative.

Nagabodhi: And when you lead a puja you are in a way kind of -

S: You have to be all there.

Manjuvajra: And that can help because then when you're in the group doing it on the floor or whatever you carry on, you try to bring that same sort of intensity that you had when you were out front.

S: I think it's quite a good idea especially within the Order context, - say when there are no mitras - or at least no friends present, that those Order members who hardly ever lead a puja, or maybe who are not considered to be particularly good at it, are asked to do so. They aren't as it were habitually passed over, for any reason. (long pause).

There is one thing that we haven't yet developed, and maybe we should close with this for the time being: sort of festivals. I think various people at Sukhavati have got ideas about this, but this could be, at least from one point of view, a quite big devotional occasion. (**very short break in recording**) - on a scale that we don't usually have these things.

Padmaraja: It's awkward because you've got to draw the line between. If it's a purely Friends activity then you can be devotional, you can have sevenfold puja. Then again, if you decide ah it's an excellent opportunity to open up to people from outside then you've got to curb things a bit.

S: Or you just have something different of a more say diffuse devotional nature, with the more intensive devotional happening arranged for some other part of the day, in some other place perhaps.

Devaraja: It's difficult. I think that maybe there's a reason in that case for not opening up festivals to the general public and just strictly within the circle of people who come to classes.

S: I think experience shows that for a festival to be successful as a festival, you really need a lot of people. I think that is an essential ingredient. If you have just a small number of people it may be very good of it's kind, but it isn't really a festival. A festival needs to involve large numbers of people and a very definite, a very different distinctive atmosphere is generated, of a very positive kind. I really have seen this in India.(pause).

Devaraja: I personally find that relating to festivals which in a way are quite obviously Buddhist devotional occasions, it's quite inhibiting to have to start to feel that one's got to tame it down a bit there because people who aren't into it might misunderstand.

S: Well no, one doesn't need to tame it down. I don't think that that happens or needs to happen at all. Though there may be certain things that you do, just as it were, as own your own together, not with the general public. But I don't think you really need to tone anything down. (pause).

Manjuvajra: What sort of things were you thinking of?

Devaraja: Well I'm thinking that for instance, the Padmasambhava day was sort of generally opened up to the public, on the last part of the day, and that was pretty ornate and I think highly successful.

Nagabodhi: It wasn't generally open to the public.

Devaraja: Well, I think it was, I mean it was open to the public after six.

S: I was under the impression that was open to the public. This is what I was told. I gather there had been a decision not to open it to the public, and then quite late in the proceedings, I

was again informed that, that decision had been rescinded, that people had changed their minds and it was in fact going to be open to the public: This is what I was told.

Nagabodhi: It was open to the regulars and some people from other classes by invitation only. But there was no general....

Devaraja: After six o'clock it was opened up to the general public, anybody who came along.

Nagabodhi: Not by any agreement of the council's.

Devaraja: Well it was by agreement between Subhuti and me.

S: But being under the impression that it was open to the public, I was a little surprised that there was only that one shrine room full of people. But perhaps it was not strictly speaking open to the public, and maybe that was why there weren't so many people.

Manjuvajra: It wasn't advertised. People weren't even encouraged to come from the beginners class I don't think; it was only for the regular's class.

S: Well there were an awful lot of Order members and mitras present. There was a very good shrine full of people.

Nagabodhi: Going off festivals if I may, Devotion. I mean something I've often found is that perhaps people who have been in India do being to really get a feeling for the life of the historical Buddha. I mean, I feel

S: Yes, several people have said this.

Nagabodhi: I feel also obviously when I hear you give talks, lectures, that the actual life of the historical Buddha is very inspiring to you.

S: Yes. I have a tentative series of talks planned on as it were inspiring episodes from the life of the Buddha. It might be the next series I get round to giving after the Vimalakirti series.

Nagabodhi: I've even sort of found myself wondering whether what's needed is for someone to write a novel based on the life of the Buddha, but transposed perhaps to a Western environment. I mean there is Hesse's Siddhartha, but I mean its is something that really is Buddhistic, that would deal with the main events from the Buddha's life but somehow put them in a language which would be more directly accessible for Westerners.

S: Well, I've thought of doing this myself. This is one of my unexecuted literary projects. I was thinking about it even when I was in India. I don't know that I'll ever be able to get around to it though, now. I know exactly what you mean, I think.

Nagabodhi: It feels very remote. I must confess. It does feel quite remote in time and space to me.

S: But I don't feel it remote at all. I feel it very vivid and very immediate. Almost as if it has happened the day before yesterday - or at least a generation before the last. I really do feel that, and some of us felt it in New Zealand. I think Vajrakumara wrote an article about this. That when we were studying the Udana in New Zealand on my first visit we really did have this strong sense of it being very contemporary. Not the later more elaborate literature, certainly not the Mahayana sutras, but the Udana I think is was. We really had the feeling of that all being very contemporary and there being many parallels to our own life and

experience within the FWBO.

Nagabodhi: Maybe I just feel extremely divorced from all that living in Bethnal Green. It's really hard to talk about "leaving his palace, dismounting from his horse"..

S: Ah, you mean something like: "Leaving his luxury flat, and getting into his flash new car" (Laughter). I see what you mean, yes. I hadn't quite thought of that. (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: Well perhaps we could work on it together (laughter) and shape it up a bit!

S: I think I'd rather not! (even more laughter). If I actually took my project at all I'd do it my own way! (laughter). You can get together with Devaraja.

Nagabodhi: (laughs) Oh, no!

S: Well, it's just that I personally find that the life of the Buddha - the historical life, as far as it is accessible to us - very inspiring. Perhaps this is again another aspect of the whole devotional practice, as it were. I know that when I was thinking about this as a possible series of talks, I even jotted down the titles of the talks and what I might include under. I wanted to take up - deal in each talk with one particular episode, make it come alive as having happened then, and then in sort of contemporary terms explain the implications or talk about the implications. If the historical Buddha does come more alive for people as an enlightened human being - with the emphasis on the human being - that would certainly stimulate devotional feelings in people to a greater extent than is the case at present.

So I hope that sooner or later I can get around to doing this. Vimalakirti will be something quite different, I must warn you. It's going to something rather 'up in the air' in a nice sort of way, if you know what I mean, though coming down to earth from time to time. This is what I just sort of anticipate, without really knowing, because I've not really thought about the lectures yet in a very specific way. But perhaps a series on the life of the Buddha - the historical Buddha- would be very complementary). Anyway, lets see, and perhaps for the time being just end on that note with two minutes to go until lunch time . (Break in recording)

S: Well, we're still on the ten things to be done and we come now to precept nine of this set.

Devaraja: I wouldn't mind having a bash at reading.

S: Come on then. Oh, yes read and then I'll say a few general things about reading, which occurred to me a little while ago.

(9) Retain such disciples as are firm in faith, meek in spirit and who appear to be favoured in karma in their quest for divine wisdom.

S: First of all, a few remarks about reading, because sometimes the things that we take most for granted are the things that most need attention. It did occur to me - in fact, the fact did strike me, in fact it has struck me quite a number of times in the course of the last few years, that most people read very badly. So I couldn't help asking myself why this was. Sometimes it's as though some people seem to have difficulty in actually reading the words. I don't know whether there is any definite reason for this. It's almost as though they aren't really sufficiently accustomed to reading. They're literate but only just about. It's not as though they sort of spell it out, but almost like that. So that's the first thing. And then sometimes people read in an absolute monotone. They might say it in this sort of way. (**read in a slow monotone**) "retain-such-disciples-as-are-firm-in. Forth-meek-in-spirit. And-who-appear. To-be. Favoured. By. By. Karma-in-their. Quest- for. Divine wisdom." (laughter). People do

actually sometimes read like that. Do you see what I mean. Then somebody else might read like this : 'retain such disciples as are strong in faith....er.... meek in soul and who appear ---' Do you see what I mean: they actually read word that are not there. So what do all these various things suggest, and why do you think that it is of some importance even that we should be able to read well, that we should read well? I mean what is happening when people read badly?

Padmaraja: Lack of confidence in oneself.

S: Lack of confidence, yes.

Mangala: I think it's mindfulness.

S: Lack of mindfulness. Especially when you don't read the word which is actually there. It means that you are not paying attention. You're quite capable of seeing the word is say "firm" but you read "strong". Actually I have known people to do this on a number of occasions. Even some people do it habitually when they have to read something aloud.

Devaraja: What do you think of the dyslexia theory?

S: What exactly is that? One hears about that.

Devaraja: Well, I'm not quite sure. Just wondered if perhaps you might know.

S: Perhaps one of the educationalists can tell us.

Manjuvajra: It's word blindness. They can't actually make out the form of the letters.

S: So what would they do then, would they substitute the nearest word, as it were? What they thought the word might be?

Manjuvajra: I think they would hazard a guess actually.

S: Hazard a guess. But if they were to say strong instead of firm actually they would not be in this sort of case making out the outline of the letters and thinking that it should be something else like that, so hazard a guess maybe that it is strong and not firm (pause). But again what is dyslexia due to? Is it known? Does it apply only to certain words or what is it? (pause)

_____ : I think it's an actual hereditary thing - something they're actually born with. Or like a form of illness. It's not a mental thing, more of a lack of something. It's only just been discovered recently what dyslexia really is.

S: It would seem to be mental, rather than say physiological, because presumably you register the form of the letter physiologically - you perceive it - but it's as though you are unable to recognise it. So it would seem to be a mental, even an emotional thing. A psychological thing rather than a physiological thing. I mean, at first guess though without really knowing anything about it.

Manjuvajra: Dyslexics can normally read. It's just that sometimes they go into, they can't read particular words.

S: Is it certain definite words? Is there any sort of pattern? For instance, supposing they had difficulty reading the word 'mother' or 'father', well, that would tell one quite a lot, wouldn't

it? Some people do seem to stumble over particular words, words connected with emotive issues, or issues which are emotive for them. (pause).

Manjuvajra: There are quite a few people around the LBC who can't read.

S: Do you mean literally can't read?

Manjuvajra: Well, yeah, or in study groups for example they ask not to read because they can usually get by, but with great difficulty.

S: I have read somewhere, fairly recently, that it has been realised in educational circles, only quite recently, what a high proportion of the population, compared with what they thought it was, still cannot actually read. Apparently the percentage of illiteracy in Britain is higher than it is in Japan. And it was said in this article that there are quite a few people who cannot sign their own name, even, and if they have to sign it, say at the post office for some particular reason, they'll go to all sorts of lengths to avoid letting on; they'll even sort of do their arm up in a bandage and then go along and say, "I've had an accident with my arm. Please sign it for me". Yes? Because they aren't actually able to sign their names and don't want to let on, and adopt, or have recourse to all sorts of subterfuges to conceal the fact they cannot in fact write; they may be able to read.

But anyway leave that aside. Lack of self confidence seems to be an important reason why people don't read well. Lack of mindfulness. And being out of touch with their feeling. This comes out especially, evidently, when people read poetry aloud. For instance if somebody reads (**read in monotone**) "retainssuchdisciplesasarefirmfaithmeekinspirit", instead of reading "Retains such disciples as are: firm in faith, meek in spirit" I mean what does that mean when they read in the first way instead of the second way?

Nagabodhi: It means they have no feeling for what they are reading.

S: Got no feeling for what they are reading, Yes. Perhaps they're deficient in feeling generally, even at least in certain connections.

Kamalasila: Maybe they're just a bit slow in making contact. I mean, It's not always that you can understand the whole sentence while actually reading it and that can bring forth a flatness.

S: Yes that's true.

Devaraja: I remember at school that people in the class used to take the piss out of you if you put feeling into poetry you were reading in English or into Shakespeare. They'd go: "A-a-a-a" (laughter)

S: Well, when I was at school, which was a bit longer ago, you were taught to put feeling into what you recited in a highly artificial way, which was just going to the other extreme. It was terrible: it was called "giving expression to the poem". (pause).

But I think we should give more attention to the way in which we read aloud. And I think there might be something to be said even from having a class in this. It almost amounts - I think it would be for some people - to a form of speech therapy, do you see what I mean? If they were able - or enabled- to read better, it would have quite a tonic effect on them psychologically. It would be a form of therapy for them, albeit a very mild form, but still quite useful, quite helpful.

Mangala: It's sometimes difficult to get people to do readings in pujas.

S: Well actually anybody ought to be able to do, and in the case of the puja you're able to study the passage beforehand ... so you're not sort of stumbled by the unexpected difficult word, or Sanskrit term or whatever.

Nagabodhi: Do you remember the Puja reading Devaraja got me to do about five years ago on a retreat at Tittleshall which was from the 'legend of the Great Stupa'. And it was full of the most horrifically unpronounceable names that amounted almost to a catalogue of (laughter) unpronounceable names. You know it took about twenty minutes to do the reading. Everybody was just in tears of laughter (laughter).

S: It was probably Devaraja giving you a bit of therapy. (laughter).

Nagabodhi: Well maybe he was. I gave him some afterwards! (laughter)(pause).

S: But anyway, you see the point, so perhaps it would be possible for us to have, from time to time, sessions, just helping people to read aloud better; maybe to get on to reading poetry. There are even little sorts of things to be borne in mind about one's breathing: Not to try to breathe in the middle of a line, where you don't need a pause of that kind; to keep your drawing in of breath, your inhalation, until the end, until there is a natural pause, according to the sense of what you're reading. Otherwise people read like: "Retain-such-disciples. (breathes in loudly). As-are-firm-in-faith....." One actually sees people, or hears people doing this, doesn't one? (pause).

And also when one is reading aloud, say, in the context of a puja, realise that it is a communication: you are reading not just to yourself - mumbling away to yourself half under your breath - but to be reading to and for other people: it's a form of communication. And that is very important.

And of course you must avoid the opposite extremes of pseudo professionalism, pseudo-slickness, and artificiality. It's important to avoid that too.

Anyway, having got that off my chest, let's go into the precept itself:

(9) Retain such disciples as are firm in faith, meek in spirit, and who appear to be favoured by karma in their quest for divine wisdom.

It's as though from verses one through nine there's been a sort of progression. Do you see that? In verse one, it is said, or precept one - "attach yourself to a religious preceptor"; then you seek a "delightful solitude"; then you seek friends of a certain kind; then you watch yourself for gluttony; you study the teachings of great sages of all sects impartially; you study beneficent sciences; you live in a correct way in accordance with the requirements of your body; you adopt devotional practices. And by all these means it's as though you have made a certain amount of spiritual progress - you start attracting people, disciples start coming to you, wanting to stay with you, Do you see that? So, therefore, this precept says "Retain such disciples as are firm in faith meek in spirit and who appear to be favoured in karma in their quest for divine wisdom".

What do you think of this? It doesn't say anything about how the disciples come. It just speaks of retaining certain disciples. And what does that suggest?

_____ : Well, you get rid of all the others.

S: Yes. Get rid of all the others. Well, how do you do that? And how do you know who to get rid of? And are you justified in fact in an way in getting rid of anybody?

Mangala: I don't think you'd get rid of them. I think you'd just maybe give more attention to the ones who are good. You really see that the,...

S: Some people might say you should give more attention to those who are not so good. But then there is a little saying of mine in this connection, isn't there? Of course you probably know that one should help

_____ : The strong need the help.

S: Yes. You should not waste time helping the weak. But I don't think actually it is a question of rejecting anybody or sending anybody away. I think usually they will drop out of their own accord if they are not quite able to keep up the pace. Do you see what I mean? So it is a question of retaining, yes, but not a question so much of not retaining. Certainly not a question of rejecting or actually sending away. Sooner or later, in fact, they will go away. They will realise, hopefully, that it is not really the place for them, that they are out of place. On the other hand, one mustn't be too much drawn or too much attracted by the obviously brilliant, well endowed, promising disciple to such an extent that one perhaps neglects those whose virtues are not quite so obvious; one has to be careful of that too. (pause)

But the precept gives three criteria. "Firm in faith". And what do you think that means? In the broad sense, in this particular connection in this context?

Nagabodhi: Committed.

S: Well, yes, committed. Who really is serious about the spiritual life. And "meek in spirit". This has to my ears a rather Christian ring. It doesn't seem to me a very Buddhist phrase. But anyway what do you think it really means?

_____ : Receptivity.

S: Receptivity - even patience. Receptivity, patience. Not that it is literally meek in the Christian sense - "meek as a lamb," nothing like that. In fact you want young heroes, but heroes can be very meek in the presence of those who are even more heroic than they are. (pause).

"And who appear to be favoured by karma in their quest for wisdom". Now what is all this about? "who appear to be favoured by Karma?"

Devaraja: I think some people do definitely have a feeling that they've - perhaps in a previous life - they've reached a certain level of development and that they

S: Yes. It's not so much a feeling that they have in a previous life reached a previous level of development, but it's as though they are at a definite stage. They seem to have an advantage over other people, perhaps most other people, and that perhaps that is to be explained by the fact they have done some work and made some spiritual progress in a previous life: That would be a possible explanation, not that they themselves necessarily think this, or that it's necessarily even literally true. But that's how it seems. It's as though that could be a possible explanation. That is the sort of thing that appears to be happening because they are so much ahead of the others, perhaps, and show such a natural aptitude, and take to the spiritual life so readily. I mean almost as soon as they come into contact with it, they recognise: "Well this is the thing for me." It's almost as though they are getting back into something very happily from which they'd been temporarily separated. So these are the sort of people who appear to be favoured by karma in their quest for divine wisdom. I'm sure that those who have to do with centre activities have noticed this sort of phenomena, perhaps more than once.

Nagabodhi: I was just yesterday thinking about my school days. And I can't remember why

or how it came about - but I remember a couple of people who I knew well who, if they made contact with the Friends now, they would very soon be right into things. I can just remember how when they were 15/16 they had a lot of energy, a lot of integrity: They were quite exceptional people. And I'm sure we all must have met people like that, way outside the context of the spiritual community, just healthy people.

S: Well this is one of the reasons I emphasise so much that we need to spread the Friends, and information about the Friends, and the real feeling of the Friends, as widely as possible, because there are people, who are as it were favoured by Karma, who were as it were naturally advanced, but who might not think in terms of anything like Buddhism or even meditation at all: It might never occur to them that something of that sort could be ever any interest or use to them. But if they actually were to come in contact with the Friends, in a sense even though it's religious and spiritual and all, even though it's labelled "Buddhism", in spite of all that they will think: "this is what I'm really into." So it is therefore really incumbent on us to do what we can to spread the movement as widely as possible.

Otherwise it's as though there's a lot of people who won't get the opportunity they otherwise perhaps could have had, because the aren't aware to what an extent what they are looking for - or perhaps not even looking for - is sort of found or is fulfilled within the Friends. Even if they are sort of conscious of something within themselves - even if they are looking for something - it might not occur to them that it is to be found within the area, or within the circle, of what they might, say, regard as something quite strange and even something quite weird.

But if they actually made the personal contact - direct contact - then they would be able to recognise that is what in fact suited them, what they wanted and what they needed and what would be best for them. So we mustn't hide our light under a bushel, to use the Biblical phrase. (pause).

Derek: That also seems to imply a lot of benefits in spreading our activities and sort of physical stuff and more cultural stuff.

S: Yes Well, in all sorts of ways. In as many ways as possible. People might go along to, say, a poetry reading just because it's poetry reading, knowing nothing about Buddhism, and not, in fact, interested in Buddhism, but they might like the atmosphere because it was a Friends occasion, and then they might hear announcements about meditation classes, retreats, and start thinking: "well, maybe that would be interesting." But they'd never perhaps have gone along directly to something of that sort.

So you need quite a lot of these sort of intermediate activities, as it were. Yoga can very often fulfil that function. I am sure there are many other things which could. (pause).

Kamalasila: Yes, because what we've got to offer is actually quite demanding, quite total, there aren't all that many people who will get involved, who do get involved. So it won't all be in the area of meditation.

S: Right, yes, so it's all the more the pity to miss out on those people who would - or who would have wanted - to commit themselves totally just because we aren't quite widely enough spread around. There's precious few of them, comparatively speaking, anyway, so we don't really want to miss any - even if he's living right down, at Lands End or up at John O'Groats. (pause).

Nagabodhi: Something I sometimes just muse on, is the idea that, in that Buddhism is now coming to the West, now that the Dharma's coming to the West and dying out in many countries in the East, how valid is it to think in terms of people who have developed through

the Dharma choosing rebirth in the West? I mean is it just a sort of fanciful musing or could one take it more seriously than that, does it have any implications that we need to consider?

S: I think it's a little fanciful frankly. I don't of course deny the abstract possibility but I think it is a little fanciful. For instance, I never met say a Tibetan who wanted to be reborn as anything except a Tibetan.

Nagabodhi: But would he still?

S: I just don't know. It would be very difficult to say. But I've not heard of any Tibetan who in this life wanted to be reborn in the West. Some of them might be, that's another matter.

Nagabodhi: Didn't Dilgo Khentse recognise one of Chogyam Trungpa's children as being an advanced guru just recently.

S: In a sense, yes. But whether that was in fact so, and if, in that case, the person before his decease in his previous life had actually decided, or determined to be reborn in the West, we don't know. I'm a little bit suspicious of recognitions of young re-incarnate lamas among quite sort of closed social groups, as it were - even within the same group of families - as seems to have happened in this particular case. And I'm not quite happy about that. I mean, also I've noticed myself when I was in Kalimpong that in certain Tibetan circles, those sort of recognitions were not really very much more than gestures of Tibetan politeness. Do you see what I mean?

Mangala: That would be where someone who is recognised as being a reincarnate lama within the family.....

S: Within a family of high social position. You find there is quite a lot of Rinpoches or incarnate lamas born, especially in Eastern Tibet as members of the small royal families. There's quite a lot of them so you get a sort of quite typically feudal tie-up between the aristocracy - the secular aristocracy and the religious aristocracy, so to speak. This to my way of looking at things is rather suspect. It certainly doesn't always happen and there are notable exceptions - for instance, the Dalai Lama was born in a family of peasants.

[End of side one side two]

But I did notice that in the case of many of the Nyingmapa incarnate lamas, they were members of royal families of different kinds, or connected with them in one way or another.

Mangala: What do you think about the Dalai Lama. Do you think, when he was recognised as being a young incarnate lama, whether - he's supposed to be a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara - do you think that that's ... how, let's objective do you think that is, and how much do you think is something that they lay on somebody?

S: It's very difficult to say. There is no doubt that some of the young lamas, who are identified at a very early age, are quite remarkable and unusual. But then again quite a few of them are not. One must also take into account the question of education; the very intensive training that they get. And I have noticed that in many cases - and I assume that this happens in the best cases - that they are treated with a great deal of affection. It is not that they are just regarded as sort of little infant prodigies and really sort of put through a strict academic training with very little of love and kindness in their lives; this is just not the case: I have seen this. But they seem to be treated extraordinarily well by the monks who are in charge of their bringing-up, and receive a lot of care, a lot of attention. So it's almost as though because people believe that they are little incarnate lamas, it's as though they get the sort of care, consideration, education, which in away every child ought to get.

Mangala: In other words, they almost create that person.

S: Yes, right. So I sometimes used to think that even if an ordinary child, reasonably intelligent, was given that sort of upbringing and that sort of treatment, that sort of training, well perhaps they could be very much like, well, the sort of person that many of these lamas, if not most of them, turn out to be. I did arrive at the conclusion that the majority of incarnate lamas as human beings were definitely superior to ordinary monks. I leave aside the question of definite spiritual transcendental insight, but as human beings, in terms of their general awareness and positivity and consideration and thoughtfulness, they did seem quite markedly superior to the ordinary monks, in definitely the majority of cases. But I felt that that could be accounted for by the superior education and training that they had received, and that had these other monks all been treated as little incarnate lamas from the beginning, they could well have developed in the same way.

There were just a very few that had something really special above and beyond even that: Perhaps one or two in a hundred among incarnate lamas; and I feel that maybe in their case there was something which was carried over from a previous existence.

I mean, I've met the Dalai Lama several times. I never felt with the Dalai Lama that there was in him anything so special that it could only be accounted for in purely spiritual terms. I mean, he's certainly a very good man, a man of great honesty, sincerity, integrity, and all that sort of thing, but not so much, not to such a high degree, that it couldn't be accounted for by a very good training. But when I met the young Tomo Geshe Rimpoche I got quite a different impression: There was something quite strange, something otherworldly: a bit uncanny. I mean, you've also met him but maybe in a different way or under different circumstances but - well, you went to the pictures together! - but my impressions were as I have mentioned. I never got that feeling with the Dalai Lama. I got the impression with Tomo Geshe who was then 23 or 24. I met him when he came out of Tibet - there was something well almost weird, yeh? But in a nice, pleasant positive, friendly way. But quite, yes, uncanny, even is the word: He wasn't a sort of ordinary human being. I definitely got that impression. I mean, I hope his years in Delhi have not sort of rubbed that away.

Devaraja: He struck me .. well, what I picked up off him was rather like a Roman senator almost, he had that sort of.... He didn't feel like he belonged to Tibetan...

S: Well, I can't say he struck me quite like that. Because he's Sikkhimese by birth. He's very small and he has a very little voice. But I've noticed that when he spoke or said anything, people really sort of jumped: they took him very seriously indeed. But he also had a very playful side. He was very fond of teasing me personally. He was one of the very few people in my life who've ever done that (laughter). I think maybe not more than two; I can't for the moment think who the other one was. But he certainly, well he used to like - well, the other one was another Tibetan, a lay official who was a friend of mine, the husband of a friend of mine. But Tomo Geshe used to like to tease me in a very subtle, gentle, way, and at first sometimes I wouldn't realise it was a bit of a tease 'cos it was so subtle and so refined. Then after a minute I'd start suspecting and just look at him, and there was that sort of little smile which told me "he's teasing me"! But it was so refined and so gentle and completely non-malicious. It was completely playful; and that again I felt was a quite unusual sort of quality.

And there were a few others I met who had this sort of quality, which couldn't be accounted for by their excellent monastic training, however good that might have been there was something over and above that.

Mangala: Presumably a young Lama would be brought up in a completely in a single sex society -

S: Yes indeed

Mangala: without having any contact with the women at all.

S: No, well among the Gelugpas especially yes. But even among the Nyingmapas very often.

Mangala: It must be quite amazing. I mean what --

S: And they get great love and care from their tutors. And they are carried about when they are very small and they are treated with really great love.

Mangala: To what extent do you think one could argue - perhaps a western psychologist, that that person might be completely manipulated and shaped and made into something which is intrinsically isn't or wasn't or --

S: Well, what does one mean by intrinsically? Any education under any system moulds or shapes you in some way from the natural little animal that you are. There's only the question of whether it is done well, or whether it is done ill: whether it is done in the best interests of the person, or not. And certainly one of the things that one noticed in the case of nearly all these incarnate Lamas, they were such healthy people, such emotionally positive people. There were two or three I met who weren't and who actually told me they didn't believe they were incarnate Lamas at all, but they - significantly - had been discovered in princely families. And here again. I think it more a question of a compliment to the family. Or sometimes - and it occasionally happened - that the head monks of a monastery wishing to gain the support of a certain powerful aristocratic family would find, would discover, their deceased abbot in the midst of that family. You see? Its very difficult to tell I what extent it was deliberate contrivance, to what extent it was wishful thinking, not altogether conscious: its very difficult to say.

But I remember one of these coming to me, and he was going through a sort of nervous breakdown and he was saying: "I'm not an incarnate lama. I know I'm not an incarnate lama". he was telling me in Hindi. He said "people say I'm an incarnate Lama but I'm not: I'm not good enough for that". He was telling me that in a very sort of, well, tearful way. So, luckily, I was there and some of them could come along and talk to me in this sort of way which they couldn't to other Tibetans and it clearly gave them a bit of relief to be able to talk like this. But there weren't very many of them. The majority of them as I've said were definitely a cut above the ordinary monks, and were extremely good people. I don't say they were highly developed spiritually even as a result of their training, but they were really good human beings: they were positive, friendly, helpful people;but aware and sensitive and all the rest of it. They really were.

Mangala: Have you ever thought about this in connection maybe with Friends' children that maybe if they were brought up in a completely male situation....

S: You are referring to the male children I take it?

Mangala: .Yeh.

S: Well it wouldn't be enough for it to be just an all-male situation. It would have to be a particular type. I've noticed that, the tutors of some of the little incarnate lamas definitely give the little incarnate lamas almost a sort of motherly affection - that is there, as well as a sort of fatherly care. They are not deprived of affection. And so that would be important. You shouldn't take the child away too early, not before he's say three or four at the earliest

perhaps.

Mangala: From the mother?

S: From the mother. And even after taking him away you should be quite sure that he got all the love and affection that he needed as well as training. And also another thing is with the little incarnate lamas, I mean, usually the attendants and tutors are deeply imbued with the belief that he is an incarnate bodhisattva, let us say, though it isn't quite that always, and therefore they've got a profound respect for him at the same time that they are teaching and training him. They really feel that they are coaxing forth something that will just take a few years to develop, but which has just been temporally forgotten, because he's died in the mean time, but that it'll all come back very very quickly. So when they're sort of teaching and training, they feel they're just coaxing it forth, that it is really all there already. So they give him full respect as though it was in fact already there and manifest - or there in the sense of being manifest. They might even occasionally just smack him but they do it with that same sort of feeling nonetheless. But I am told, or I've been told by my friends who've sort of participated in the sort of bringing up of little incarnate lamas - that they're usually very good and it's hardly ever necessary to chastise them. It may be because of the very positive way in which they are treated. (pause).

So to me, this whole way in which little incarnate lamas are brought up was just a sort of demonstration of the power of a really positive education.

Padmaraja: But over and above that, just in our own experience of the Friends, people who've had really bad background, really harmful; you do feel that some people are special: they have a natural aptitude.

S: That's true. Well that they're favoured by karma.

Padmaraja: Yeh very much.

S: But say in the case of the person who even is not favoured by Karma, even the child, if he gets this very positive upbringing of the sort that the little lama - the little incarnate lama - gets, well, he will be enabled to be a much more highly developed human being than he would otherwise have been able to be.

Padmaraja: Which we've got to really provide more and more.

Manjuvajra: While you're on the subject of Tibetans, one thing that concerns me a bit about Tibet was why - well, it was such a stronghold of Buddhism and yet the social system they seem to have devised was comparatively primitive and quite cruel in a lot of ways.

S: Well, I'm not sure what means by primitive. For instance, they didn't have, let us say, modern plumbing but in a way, does that matter?

Manjuvajra: Wasn't there quite a lot of poverty and starvation and so on because of the feudal system.

S: One has heard that, but from all that I could gather, there wasn't. I mean, Tibetans have assured me that there was always plenty of food in Tibet, and there was no poverty in our sense. Well there is poverty and poverty. If you've got a strongly built stone house and you've got sacks of grain and hunks of meat hanging up to dry, enough to carry you through the winter and maybe for the rest of the year; you've got strong, warm, coarse clothing; you may not have much cash, you may not have modern consumer goods, but in a sense, what does it matter? According to say modern western indices you will be living in poverty etc., etc., in an

undeveloped country. They didn't see it like that. You see what I mean? I'm quite sure there was marginal actual poverty but I think it was certainly probably no more common than it was in Britain at the same time.

Manjuvajra: So do you think the social system which they had there was quite a fair one?

S: I think it worked reasonably well. I don't think one can dismiss it simply by saying it was feudal and because it was feudal it must have been wholly bad. No, I don't think so. Though a lot seemed to depend on the character - not to say the mood - of the individual landowner in many cases. But the majority of them seem to have been not at all bad from all that I was able to make out. The Chinese of course, presumably for propaganda purposes, would like us to think that Tibet was a nation of serfs who were actually enslaved by the aristocracy and exploited by the lamas. I didn't get at all a favourable impression of the aristocracy - what I saw of them in Kalimpong, and I think they were very often selfish, and entirely devoted to their own interests, rather than those of the Tibetan people. I also noticed that the ordinary people and the monks - including many of the incarnate lamas - seemed naturally to side together against the aristocracy. I couldn't help noticing that there was not that sort of tie up between the aristocracy and the monks that Chinese propaganda for instance would have us believe. It might be that some of the ecclesiastics, let us say, say high ranking lamas who'd been discovered in the case of incarnate lamas in aristocratic families, were, in some cases, just hand in glove with their opposite lay numbers, so to speak. But the vast majority of the monks and lamas generally made common cause with the ordinary people. This was very noticeable in Kalimpong; the alignment was definitely the lay aristocracy versus almost everybody else. (pause).

So I think in trying to estimate or evaluate the situation in Tibet before the Chinese invasion one must subject one's western ideas, modern ideas about progress to very severe scrutiny. This is not to say there were not anomalies in the system and imperfections - we can find plenty of those in any western country. (pause).

Anyway. I hope we haven't wandered too far astray.

Padmaraja: I felt a bit annoyed actually 'cos I felt Manjuvajra detracted from the point. We seemed to be discussing a certain point and that tended to detract from it. I was very annoyed and I just expressed that.

S: At which point that you raised? About the socio-political situation? But this is a question that people often ask actually. Well, at least they used to; maybe not so much now as before. They say: "well, Tibet is supposed to have such a high level of spiritual development and Buddhism is supposed to have reached it's acme there, but was there not serfdom and slavery and all the rest of it? So I think quite apart from whether that point came in appropriately here or not one needs some sort of answer prepared for this. So I've, what I've said constitutes more-or-less my personal answer to this particular question. (pause).

Manjuvajra: Could we go back perhaps to that other point.

S: Well where did we branch off?

Padmaraja: Well we were talking about reincarnation. And it was suggested that really good education in the very early years could produce a really higher consciousness, could really....

S: I really became convinced of this seeing the way these young incarnate lamas were brought up. As I said, the power of education, the power of positive education, and it's as though we've hardly tried it in the West, actually yet. But you have to have that sort of

believe, that sort of positive belief, about the potentiality of that particular individual child, if only it was properly developed, if only the child was properly cared for, and properly trained in every respect.

Mangala: How could you reconcile that with letting the child in a sense find its own feet, and explore, and in a sense, leave it alone, which I think D.H. Lawrence says almost is something you've got to learn to do: just see that it's nurtured and gets enough food and then just sort of leave it alone.

S: No, what I think D.H. Lawrence was getting at, what he was criticising, was what he called "the premature awakening of the personality of the child". Like when you say, well : "Come here Johnny. You're aunty's come. Look show your pretty trick", or "Isn't that cute?": All this sort of thing. Developing this wrong sort of self consciousness on the part of the child. This is I think was mostly what D H Lawrence was against.

Mangala: I suppose it's quite maybe a tricky think to reconcile where you do give the child a good sort of loving sort of training an care sometimes without totally taking up every minute of its day and sort of forcing something down its throat almost.

S: Well actually of course under the Tibetan system of young incarnate lamas practically every minute of their day was taken up. They did have some time for play but not very much. But the results seem to have been excellent. So perhaps we should consider that.

Mangala: So maybe all these so-called healthy.....

S: (Interrupts) What are, are our results particularly good? (pause).

Mangala: I'm just thinking like somebody might argue a young child shouldn't be sitting in a smoky rooms full of incense all day. He ought to be out playing in the fields, and this kind of think. You know what I mean?

S: Well, even, young incarnate lamas got out into the open air and they did have a certain amount of exercise, I didn't myself go into this side of things very much, but they did strike me, as adults, as being extremely healthy in all respects. Tomo Geshe was a bit of an exception: He was very small and his parents were like that, he was small and a bit frail looking. I don't know whether he still is. Well he did suffer under the Chinese also: He was imprisoned for some months under very difficult conditions. I met him initially just after all that. Well, they did not seem to me to have suffered on account of lack of air and exercise. (pause).

I think that a lot of children become a bit disoriented if they're not given sufficiently firm guidelines. I think probably our educational system has gone to that wrong extreme.

Mangala: But suppose really like if our society put some kind of say spiritual principles and values at the bottom of it, then that would come through how we treat children and how we educated them.

S: Because in the broadest sense, the Tibetans' conviction was - especially in the case of the incarnate lama, the young incarnate lama - was that they were dealing with a spiritual being. So I think you can only give that sort of upbringing, that sort of education, that sort of training in that sort of way if you're deeply convinced that you are dealing with a spiritual being. Recently I've been reading a little bit about the Steiner movement. I've been reading some of the works of Rudolf Steiner. I've not been reading about their work in the field of education but I know their are a number of Steiner schools. I don't know how successful they

are, how good they are, but I believe that they're in the very least no worse than other schools and possibly quite a bit better. And I believe that this is their approach, or the foundation of their approach, to treat the child as essentially a spiritual being. Though they also seem to take psychological factors - especially as expressed in difference of temperament - into consideration too. So it might be an interesting thing if someone who is interested in this sphere - well it might be a useful thing, if someone who is interested in this field - was just to investigate some of these Steiner schools a bit and to find out what actually is going on; what happens and what is their method; what is their training like; what sort of effect it does seem to have on the child.

Nagabodhi: there's somebody now in Norwich who lives - David Luce - who has been living in a sort of Steiner community for some time.

S: Ah, that was of a rather different nature. They dealt with mentally handicapped children, didn't they?

Nagabodhi: I don't know.

S: Yes, I had a bit of a chat with him and his wife about it, separately. And they certainly appreciated the attitude of the Steiner people towards the children - well, children and young adults, let us say, up to the age of eighteen. They left this particular Steiner school because they didn't have enough in common, spiritually, with the other members of the community; didn't feel it was really a spiritual community. But they certainly appreciated nonetheless the work which they did, and which they were also helping to do, for these handicapped children, and were definitely of the opinion, - both of them - that it was far far better for mentally handicapped children to be able to live in communities of that sort, even if they weren't fully spiritual communities. But so far as these mentally handicapped children were concerned it was infinitely better than being institutionalised.

So they had nothing but praise for the community so far as it benefited the mentally handicapped children who were in it. They thought that a really good way of caring for them. But for themselves, individually, there was no spiritual nourishment there - though they got quite a bit of satisfaction from working with these mentally handicapped children, and they both have the hope at least that there can be such developments within the FWBO, but within the context of a more definitely spiritual community. They would both like to continue working in this sort of field.

Devaraja: What chance do you think there is - obviously it varies with different types of mentally handicapped people - but do you think there is a chance of spiritual development for certain kinds of mentally handicapped people?

S: I don't know. I can't say that I've really thought about this. It does seem it has been suggested that in some cases what one is concerned with is physical brain damage which prevents the individual for want of a better term in this connection, from manifesting through the brain and through the physical body. So this may be, but I can't say I've given the matter any particular thought.

Nagabodhi: At the LBC, a few times people have asked questions about what does Buddhism do for people who are mentally handicapped? "It's all very well for you to talk about growth and development: but what about people who are born handicapped and so on, incapable of meditating or whatever?" It's almost as if they expect you to have some kind of answer. I suppose they expect the Christians to say, well "We can pray for them" or "God loves them".

S: Well, I think for the time being at least, my answer is found in that aphorism - Our resources are limited so therefore they are better deployed on the strong - that is to say those in this context who are capable of relatively speedy development. And perhaps when we have enough of such people around, then, we or they can take up the case of those are less developed, or handicapped even, in certain ways. I also broadly speaking, I object in this connection to the word 'ought'. "You ought to be doing this". "If you're Buddhists you ought to be doing that. The Friends ought to be doing this, the Friends ought to be doing that".

I sometimes relate the incident of the person I met in the train in India quite a few years ago, on my way to the ex-untouchables, how was running leprosy asylums, leprosy colonies; and he asked me what I was doing, and I said working for the untouchables - or the ex-untouchables - and he wasn't at all satisfied with that: he said that I ought to be working for lepers. You see, in his eyes, working for untouchables - or ex-untouchables- had no value: only working for lepers had any value. So one must be aware of attaching importance only to the sort of work that you are doing, and expecting everybody else to do that. Or, of course attaching importance to something that in fact you are not doing and expect everybody else to do that. So what I say is that in the FWBO, we don't say to anybody that you ought to work in this way, you ought to work in that way. We lay down the general principles and every individual - each individual - decides in which particular sphere he wishes to work, or she wishes to work, which particular sphere they feel called on to work, as it were.

So, I would say, if there are individuals within the FWBO who would really like to devote themselves for spiritual reasons to working with the mentally handicapped I'd be all in favour of that. Or to work with the ex-untouchables, I'd be all in favour of that. Or working with small children: I'm all in favour of that. Or taking meditation classes, I'm all in favour of that. You lay down the general principle: one person cannot do everything, one person cannot engage in all forms of service. You have to leave people free to serve and help in the way that they personally feel called on to do. You cannot direct them and say; " You ought to do this". "Well if you're working for untouchables you ought to be working for lepers instead" or "If you're taking meditation classes, you ought to be raising money for Oxfam instead." No. Each person must choose for himself.

So I really do object to this almost sort of almost dictatorial attitude of well "If you're a Buddhist you ought to be doing this " or " If you're Buddhist you ought to be doing that."

Mangala: What about the objective needs of the situation?

S: Well, there are all sorts of objective needs of all sorts of situations. You cannot possibly cover them all. You can only cover one or another: Therefore you have to choose. And the best way of choosing is doing what you genuinely feel you'd like to do - which is not just a sort of subjective whim or fancy: You also, from your particular point of view, as best as you can, take into account the overall objective needs of the situation. You may genuinely feel that working with mentally handicapped people is comparatively a waste of time: you may genuinely feel that, looking at the situation objectively. You may feel, well, "there's not much can be done for them: it'd be much better if I devoted my energy more productively".

Manjuvajra: Isn't there a bit also of the Christian idea of religion here - well the modern Christian idea which works just on the social levels - that religion equals social work - and those sort of people don't even see the spiritual sides of things at all.

S: Well one wouldn't encourage anyone within the FWBO engaging in any of those sort of activities for purely social work reasons but definitely as an expression of spiritual commitment and as a means of helping other people to evolve in one way or another.

Devaraja: Something that, - it may be a bit of a tangent but anyway, I've discovered that - or I learnt - that in some homes for the physically and mentally handicapped that they sort of help people in there to have sexual relationships and it just seems a bit strange to me. A bit odd. If a person who's mentally handicapped maybe becomes pregnant and has a child...

S: But there's been a - strange to say - well I think it's a bit strange - there's been quite a lot of concern about this recently in certain circles. Several years ago I found that Vajrayogini was very much concerned about it. And there's even been a book published about it, quite recently, in fact I think there have been several books, and this is another one. Yes by Gunnel Enby: "Let there be love: sex and the Handicapped" You notice "love" you see "let there be love: sex and the handicapped. A discussion of the sexual problems of the physically handicapped people written by a paralysed Swedish journalist who is herself married with one child and introduced by Baroness Mashoma Bilton, published by Erlich Pemberton". So even Vajrayogini was keen on - as far as I remember - sort of supplying special appliances to physically handicapped people so that they could have sex. So, all right: we, perhaps, one can accept that as part of an overall concern. But it seems as though the interest centres on helping them to have sex rather than in helping them despite the fact that they were physically handicapped - or even mentally handicapped - to develop as individuals. Do you see what I mean?

In the case of the physically handicapped with whose minds apparently there is nothing wrong - well one should be more concerned with the person, the individual, and helping them to evolve as individuals and seeing sex, if at all, within that context of individual development. So just to consider that separately seems really extraordinary and in a way strange.

Dharmamati: Pathetic

S: Pathetic, yes. As if you can do for the physically handicapped nothing more than that.

Devaraja: Why I'm particular disturbed not so much for the physically handicapped because someone might have been through a car crash been injured, but it was just the idea of the mentally handicapped - somebody who might be retarded and forming a sexual relationship...

S: They might not want sex.

Devaraja: Well, right!

S: Might have no idea about it.

Devaraja: But actually sort of forming a sexual relationship with somebody else who's retarded just seems really weird.

S: Well, perhaps this is a reflection of our general distorted attitude towards sex, in our society, our over valuation of it, perhaps; at least our over-preoccupation with it.

Manjuvajra: Too much of an equation between that and affection - between sex and affection.

S: Very likely, yes. (long pause).

All right, let's pass on to precept ten.

(10) Constantly maintain alertness of consciousness in walking, in sitting, in eating, and in

sleeping.

S: So we're familiar with the idea of remaining aware while walking, sitting, eating and so on, but in sleeping is not such a familiar idea. But anyway. lets discuss first of all this more general question of maintaining "alertness of consciousness" as it's called here, in walking, in sitting, in eating: that is to say, in all physical activities. This is of course stressed very much in Buddhism, especially in early Buddhism. I'm sure you're familiar with this: remaining aware and mindful of whether you're walking, sitting, standing, lying down, talking to somebody, eating, dressing, etc. Can you see the value of the importance of this? What do you think that consists in? How or why is it important? (pause).

Manjuvajra: You retain a sense of integration....

S: Integration, Yes.

Manjuvajra: and also there's the kind of ethical angle: you got to know what you're doing before you can know whether what you're doing is right.

S: Right, yes. If you do everything mindfully you're less scattered, less dispersed, and to that extent more of an individual, because you're more integrated. But what must we beware of, especially in the West in this connection?

Several voices: Being alienated.

S: Alienated awareness. But how does that come about?

Mangala: With a kind of separation of you from the activity. It's a kind of you watching what you are doing.

S: From the outside instead of actually experiencing it. As I've mentioned before this doesn't seem difficult in the East, but it's certainly a difficulty, or even a danger, in the West for many people.

Mangala: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, clearly because we're more out of contact with our own experience, especially more out of contact with our own feelings and why that is is no doubt quite a long story.

Mangala: Do you think being out of contact with feelings, particularly relates to things like walking, sitting or...

S: I think it's got a lot to do with being out of contact with our bodies. And that is probably due to two sets of factors. One connected say, with our whole modern way of life - mechanised, technological way of life, scientific outlook, and all that. And the other set of factors connected with our Christian heritage which encourages us, as it were, to be ashamed of the body, or to regard the body as even evil. (pause).

Mangala: Sometimes people ask me that. They say isn't the idea of Buddhism not to be reborn, and that is not to assume a human form, not to have a body in fact.

S: I would introduce a correction here and say that it is not the ideal of Buddhism. Buddhism is not against rebirth. I mean, this might seem quite extraordinary, but actually this is a more accurate presentation of the Buddhist point of view. The Buddhist is not against rebirth. What the Buddhist is against is that rebirth which is the consequence of craving. I mean Mahayana Buddhism for instance has nothing against the rebirth of the Bodhisattva in this or that sphere

of conditioned existence, voluntarily, out of compassion. So clearly, if you take this broader view of Buddhism it is not rebirth that Buddhism is against, but a particular kind of rebirth. You might just as well say, well: "Buddhism is against work." But Buddhism is not against work. It is against that kind of work which is exclusively for personal profit and aggrandizement, but it is not against work for the benefit of others - or for that matter for the sake of your own individual development. So you cannot say categorically that Buddhism is against rebirth, and that the sole concern of Buddhism is to put a stop to the process of rebirth. The rebirth that Buddhism wants to put a stop to is that rebirth which is the consequence of your own blind ignorance and craving, but it does not want to put a stop to the Bodhisattva's rebirths out of compassion for the benefit of humanity.

Mangala: Like in the Tibetan Book of the Dead though isn't the what I believe it says is that when you die, in the initial period after death you experience the clear light of the void. Now then if you achieved a very high degree of conscious awareness in your previous life, well then you can sort of maintain that sort of level. But if you haven't achieved such a high level, you can't sort of bear this confrontation with reality, so you assume lower and lower forms or bodily forms until you reach a level which you're comfortable at, which would seem to indicate that the higher your level of awareness and development, well then, ultimately that you would just stay in a purely formless kind of sort of.....

S: Well, no. that is not the Mahayana point of view not the Bodhisattva Ideal, not the Bodhisattva's attitude.

Mangala: Yes, Firstly, is that the correct interpretation of what the Tibetan Book of the Dead says?

S: Well, yes but it is speaking all the time of rebirth as a result of blind ignorance and craving. It doesn't preclude the possibility of the Bodhisattva being voluntarily reborn out of compassion, so, therefore, the fact that you have achieved a state - the state you've achieved is the Dharmata, the Dharmakaya - and are no longer obliged - speaking in terms of you as if you're continuing to exist - are not longer obliged to be reborn as a result of your ignorance and craving. It doesn't mean that as, say a Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya, you cannot choose to be reborn out of compassion: that possibility is not excluded though only too often it appears to be excluded because one takes rebirth without making it clear, without putting it explicitly, takes rebirth in the sense of "rebirth which is due to ignorance and craving"

Mangala: So I suppose the thing is to get to a state where you have a choice.

S: You have a choice because there is a Bardo there too for the Bodhisattva, yes? At least, this is how it is sometimes represented, perhaps that is rather a crude way of putting it. But, there is a choice as it were between remaining in Nirvana and sallying forth into the Samsara to help beings. But it is also said at that at level one isn't really able to make ...

[End of tape nine tape ten]

..... that sort of distinction because the ego is completely transcended. The fact that one has achieved the Dharmakaya means that out of compassion one is active in the samsara. One doesn't dualistically distinguish between Nirvana and Samsara any longer. Your staying in nirvana is your remaining in samsara. You may appear to others to be passing from one to the other, though that is not your own as it were subjective experience.

Mangala: So a Bodhisattva won't choose to be reborn as it were, but the fact that he is a Bodhisattva means that he would actually

S: Yes, right - he would manifest within the samsaric situation.

Nagabodhi: A few years ago on the *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* Seminar, you said that the Bodhisattva, as it were chooses rebirth but in full knowledge of the risk involved, that when he takes on the human form in the human realm, circumstances could be such that his merit or his state is threatened.

S: Ah, this would only be in the case of a Bodhisattva who had only reached a certain stage of the Path. It would certainly not be the case with what I called just now the Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya. Meaning one who had achieved the Dharmakaya and who, because one has to speak in some sense of a continued individual existence, has become a Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya, it would not apply to him.

Nagabodhi: Is that an irreversible Bodhisattva?

S: Well yes he's more than irreversible then. You become irreversible according to the Mahayana at the eighth of the Bhumis. But you might genuinely, as one who accepted the Bodhisattva Ideal and who had attained some of the earlier stages of the Bodhisattva Path, you might genuinely aspire to be reborn for the benefit of others and be reborn, but you still might be exposed to various temptations, one of which according to the Mahayana is the temptation to return to the path of individual liberation.

Mangala: So there are degrees of Bodhisattva?

S: Oh yes of course, there's the ten stages.

Mangala: So the one that Nagabodhi referred to is at the eighth stage did you say?

S: No, from the eighth stage onwards the Bodhisattva becomes irreversible so it would be what I call the novice Bodhisattva, let's say, or the Bodhisattva of the Path.

Manjuvajra: When can you actually start calling someone a Bodhisattva?

S: Well here usage differs. The broadest sense is every Mahayana Buddhist can be called a Bodhisattva because he accepts at least theoretically, the Bodhisattva Ideal. But more strictly the Bodhisattva is one in whom the Bodhicitta has arisen and that is said to occur in the second of the Bhumis. That is at least one way of looking at it. So it is as though the Bodhicitta itself continues to develop as you pass through the Bhumis and it's when you become enlightened and reach the Dharmakaya that the Bodhicitta becomes synonymous with enlightenment itself in the full Mahayana sense.

Dharmamati: There is something I have never been totally clear on, the Arahant Ideal and the Bodhisattva Ideal, I can see it in writing and I can see it in various ways that people might behave. But surely, ultimately, if somebody has attained Buddhahood then their aspect, the way they would behave, would be the same.

S: Well this is what one would have thought. What it really means is that you can't really separate the self regarding from the altruistic as rigidly as the fact that there seem to be two different ideals, would suggest.

I pointed out that the Buddha is called Arahant Sammasambuddha as though in the Buddha these two ideals are unified. So I don't think that there's any real choice ultimately between the two but you cannot help at the beginning of one's spiritual career of seeing in some sense, spiritual development as a personal possession, or even enlightenment as a personal

possession. But as one goes on, one sees more and more that that in fact is not the case. It is not a case of a personal achievement in the sense of something grasped by the self, by the ego. So you end up as a Bodhisattva. Of course you can be following the Bodhisattva Path in a sort of egoistic way, it is not a question of words it is a question of reality. In the same way, someone who says he's following the Arahant Path, say he was a Theravadin, because maybe he doesn't really know about the Mahayana Bodhisattva Ideal, is in fact quite Mahayanistic in his attitude and quite Bodhisattva like in his behaviour, even though he has said he is following the path of the Arahant.

In the same way one who professes to be following the Bodhisattva Path, may have a quite 'Hinayanic', inverted commas, attitude. He may be in it for the sake of his individual, his personal spiritual attainment, even though he professes to be a Mahayanist. He may be following the Mahayana in a Hinayanic sort of way, just as someone else might be following the Hinayana in a Mahayanistic sort of way. I have met quite a number of Theravada Bhikkhus whose general outlook and attitude was definitely Mahayanistic but they professed to be Theravadins and I have met a few Tibetan monks whose attitude was really quite Hinayanic, even though technically they were Mahayana Buddhists. So one has to distinguish actual attitudes rather than names.

Mangala: It's similar to what you were saying yesterday wasn't it about the nikayas and so on.

S: Yes indeed.

Mangala: What about, out of contact with body, do you think that something like sex could be used as a valid means of having contact with one's body or experiencing one's body ?

S: Well, perhaps, if it does involve putting one more in contact with one's body and also if it isn't too entangled with one's emotions, if you see what I mean. We discussed this this morning as a matter of fact or it might have been yesterday but it was in the other group anyway. I am a bit cautious about recommending sex as a therapy because people seem only too ready to seize upon this. [Laughter] Yes. I do not exclude the possibility.

Mangala: Well we talked about food and stuff, and we talked about going swimming and cycling as ways of keeping the body in good shape.

S: Well sex does not necessarily put you in touch with your body, it may just put you in touch with your genitals! You see what I mean? You've got to be quite sure it is putting you in touch with your, well, body at least.

Mangala: But in a way too, you could see it as being a natural function, in the way that eating is a natural function, and as such may be worthy of some exercise.

S: Well you could look at it like this but perhaps exercise isn't quite the word, perhaps satisfaction is the word like satisfying your hunger, but be cautious, and nobody should quote me out of context! I don't preclude the possibility certainly. Someone did come to me not so very long ago and cautiously approach the topic of a sexual relationship for himself with a certain person whom he knew, but worked his way up to it very carefully via a certain thing that he needed for his spiritual development and I think one has to watch that a little bit, or quite a bit, and not convince oneself that one needs these things in the interest of one's spiritual development. It may be that one needs them but not necessarily in the interests of one's spiritual development, but more in the interests of just maintaining one's general human base in sort of healthy working order, it is perhaps more like that.

Mangala: Surely that's what we were talking about yesterday, make sure that you eat properly, get enough sleep, get enough exercise and keeping the body in optimum condition. Presumably that might mean having some sort of sexual.....

S: It might. As I say I wouldn't exclude that altogether, though it would depend on the nature of the individual. You might be a person for whom sex was very much bound up with the emotions, and the emotions with projections onto the opposite sex. Well then you would have to be particularly careful, and also that you shouldn't use sex just as a means of supplementing from, as it were the outside, your own very alienated attitude towards your body and your emotions. You just vaguely feel something lacking and try to fill the void with sex as it were. And I think also, I think, avoid thinking that sex is absolutely necessary for everybody under all circumstances, and that if someone hasn't had it or isn't having it, there's something missing or something lacking. Do you see what I mean ?

Kamalasila: Do you think that not having sex can have a damaging effect on your emotions? I mean there is a line of thought which says that if someone doesn't have sex, they can become quite cold.

S: Well there are plenty of people who do have sex and have it regularly and who are quite cold nevertheless. So clearly it isn't a panacea in this respect. It might under certain circumstances help some people in establishing contact with their emotions. I don't deny that possibility. But I think one should be quite careful about how one acts upon the fact that there is such a possibility at least for some people.

Mangala: I still get the feeling, I think in the Friends, that people would like a go-ahead on sex.

S: Well some people think that they have already got it! [Laughter] For instance I asked somebody who didn't attend my Padmasambhava lecture if he'd had any reports about it and if so, what was the message that it had seemed to communicate? And he said, " Ah yes several people have told me they really liked the lecture." "What was the message they got from it ?" - "Oh Bhante says that the senses were OK!" That was the message they had got from it, which wasn't the message I'd intended to give.

But on the other hand, this is quite a delicate issue in a way because one does not want to seem to hark back to Christian attitudes. One wants at all costs almost to purge sexual experience from the guilt with which it has been imbued or with which it has been polluted one might say, by Christianity. So I personally almost lean over backwards to do that because I feel that Christianity has done such a terrible thing in a way, in spoiling so many different aspects of people's lives in this kind of way.

Mangala: You see I think that perhaps there are quite a lot of people in the Friends who feel a need for sex or a desire for sex.

S: Oh I'm sure there are plenty of them! (laughter)

Mangala: But I think they hold back from it because they somehow think that you don't approve or that the Friends don't approve or that it's not really good for their spiritual development, that it's neurotic or something. Do you know what I mean?

S: Well quite often they are dead right. But I don't think actually that many people hold back for any reasons, whether for these or for any others. I think it is something that needs at least to be brought within the scope of mindful consideration and possibly rational discussion rather than just sort of being left to look after itself, or to remain a sort of hole and corner

business, or round the corner business.

Mangala: I mean it is still very much that you can't really bring up the word "sex" without a few people sniggering.....

S: Yes and nostrils twitch!

Mangala: and in a way that's actually a thing you do when you're at school, and you think that we ought to be over that by now, but I don't think we are!

S: Oh yes a lot of our Friends are in the sniggering stage still, yes indeed. I avoid discussing sex in mixed company especially. The atmosphere that develops almost instantly is not very positive. When I say "mixed company" I mean that when both men and women are present.

Mangala: It doesn't seem to have had a proper airing somehow.

S: Well it's often talked about but not sufficiently aired.

Manjuvajra: A few years ago you were asked your attitudes towards sex and you said that you didn't think people were ready for it or prepared to take in what you had to say.

S: Oh I think that this is quite true.

Manjuvajra: Is that still the case?

S: Well I think that I have said quite a bit more since then, but perhaps there's still a little bit left to say which hasn't yet been said at least not to everybody. But I think with quite a few people now it is now it's possible to discuss more and more frankly all sorts of questions, not just sex but all sorts of other questions. For instance to give an example totally unconnected with this one, the place of the Friends within, or the relation of the Friends to, the Buddhist Movement in the world especially in the East. This is something you could not discuss completely frankly some years ago, but one can now very much so.

Devaraja: What else is there left to say that you haven't said?

S: I'm not quite sure (laughter). I'm sure there is something. I think one needs to follow a very definite middle course between a blanket condemnation of sex, which will cause people to think that one has, or themselves fall back on, purely Christian attitudes, and on the other hand a kind of general go-ahead which will cause people to think that it doesn't matter about sex - whether you have it, how much, with whom etc. - it has no bearing upon one's spiritual life, I think one has to follow a middle course between these two extremes.

Mangala: I suppose what we have to try and do somehow is get sex in perspective, both in ourselves and in the Movement. In society, it's way out of perspective and it's almost gained far too much importance.

S: Absolutely, I think this is true.

Mangala: But I think that the way to do that is that it has to be brought out and talked about and really properly aired, and in that way it just kind of finds its place.

S: Well it has even been aired quite a lot at least in small circles and small gatherings, people have talked to me about it quite a lot and I have talked to people about it quite a lot to such an extent that sometimes it seemed that the subject has been over worked, if you see what I

mean. But I sometimes have had the feeling that people are just waiting for me to say some slightly favourable word about sex [Laughter] so that they can just go ahead without any restriction or further thought whatever and that really makes one so cautious, more cautious really than one sometimes wishes or cares to be. You have only to say that, Well, a little bit of sex occasionally, might be, or under certain circumstances, and if this and if that, then all right, carte blanche, off you go sort of thing. This is the sort of impression that I have repeatedly had.

It depends very much also on who you are speaking to, what you can say, how sincere you feel the person is that you are speaking to and whether they really are trying to see what is actually the position and what would be best for them, or just whether they are just looking for permission to do what they want to do or would like to do.

Devaraja: It's a subject I have given much thought to and the thoughts that have occurred to me about it are that in a way, sexual activity or intense sexual activity seems almost to belong to a period in one's twenties.

S: Well some people say a period in one's teens.

Devaraja: Or one's teens. And it's almost like, in my own case and I think this is also corroborated by other people's situations, that up to about the age of thirty it's a bit like you have no personal direction in life. It's like you are taking in lots and lots of impressions - sexual, intellectual, aesthetic, just every kind of sensation. And then round about thirty you start assessing what these impressions are, and you decide what direction you particularly want to take after that.

S: Yes well this happens with some people earlier, in the case of some people later and after a more or less varied range of experiences. One should not attempt a premature synthesis within the Friends, and in the same way you should not attempt a premature synthesis within your own life. You should be open to enlarging the range of your experience, incorporating more and more elements into your personal synthesis and your personal way of life and your personal direction. Do you see what I mean? Not deciding too early in life that you want to be an engine driver and just going all out to do that. (laughter)

Mangala: I thought that was one of the slight dangers of what we were saying on the very first day about deciding what one wants to do. It almost sounded like, "That's what I want to do" and you shut the doors on everything else, and it's a bit sort of confining.

Padmaraja: You also said that it could take you up to six or seven years to discover what you want to do.

S: After Ordination yes. It was within the context of someone having committed himself to the Three jewels, and that providing the foundation and that you decided what you wanted to do in terms of what expression you wanted to give to that. And I did say that for some people it might mean one comparatively limited thing that they might want to devote themselves to very intensively, and in the case of other people it might be a whole wide range of activities which for them were related or interrelated and in a way parts all of the same thing.

Devaraja: Another thing which I have noticed recently is that I had known intellectually and areas had been discussed about desire for sexual activity often being like an addiction. But it is only recently that I had actually experienced it, in that there had been a period of withdrawal and that in a way the holds were not quite as strong, and although I knew it intellectually before....

S: I think a lot of people discover that, it's in a way like having a retreat, when you have a retreat of any kind, or an intermediate period of any kind, including an intermediate period between two phases of sexual experience, you can just see those other periods in between which you are, more objectively and more detachedly.

It is not as though sex is something really special, it's an exemplification in its own way of what often happens in other departments of life too. You see what I mean? There is a certain parallel. It is not that what you have described only happens in the sphere of sex, I'm sure you didn't mean that, but that it's parallel to all sorts of experiences that we have in other respects in other areas too.

Devaraja: I noticed that it was very similar to the sensation of not smoking cigarettes for several months.

S: Well when you withdraw from anything and you don't have anything to do with it for a certain length of time, when you go back to it or when you re-establish contact with it, you see it differently, in a way you see it more objectively, that applies to sex as much as to anything else. So maybe that's a reason for doing it, those who are habitually into sex should occasionally withdraw from it and have what has been described as a sexual moratorium, a moratorium on sexual activity just so that you can experience what it's like to be without it, and perhaps if you do return to it, return less addictively than before.

Manjuvajra: Have a day off! (laughter)

S: I think some of our Friends need a few years off! If you see what I mean. Anyway I think it is now tea time. I have persistently headed off this next precept haven't I. Anyway let's have tea first.

Manjuvajra: I would like to talk a bit about sleeping as well.

S: That's true. All right, let's have tea and then go back to sleeping, that's quite a different subject. I should have said I was headed off the remainder of the precept. Usually discussions about sex leave one thinking or feeling there is not nearly enough idealism in life, do you see what I mean? It's as though if people were perhaps more preoccupied with the realisation of ideals, a very strong sense of ideals, and a strong feeling for ideals, all these other things would fall into place much more easily. In other words they begin to be seen in the wrong perspective when they are given too much consideration as it were, quite by themselves in isolation. Well that's another way of saying that too much importance is given to the subject. That's all I was going to say.

[Break in recording for tea]

_____ : Do you want to repeat that Bhante ?

S: Oh I had simply summarised what I said before by saying that a child doesn't need rights, because it is love that it thrives upon and not 'rights'. Even if it had rights and those rights were enforced it would not save the child because what the child needs in the family situation is affection. It is like the marital relation - if the enforcement of rights comes in the marriage is at an end. If you go to court about it there is no human relation any more. If you go to court about anything really, there is no human relation involved, not in the full sense. You have abdicated any responsibility for a relationship the minute you go to law about something.

Manjuvajra: I really do feel that on the political level anyway, the spiritual community seems to be anarchic and yet the social structure within which that spiritual community

exists, maybe shouldn't be an anarchy. So what I am saying is that the things that you say about spiritual community don't necessarily apply, do they, to social structures?

S: They don't, no. Social structures are power structures. You are part of a power structure only if you exercise power within that structure. There's nobody within a power structure who does not exercise power, though it may be to a very limited extent. Even the oppressed and enslaved are exercising power to a certain extent, but their combined power does not equal, much less still overbalance, those others who are said to exercise the power.

Mangala: Do you think that's what society is based on, it's based on power, do you think that is the basis of it?

S: Yes I would say it is based upon power but then I would qualify that in various ways also. This is something I won't go into just yet, because this is something I am still thinking about. But as it were methodologically, I would treat the group exclusively as a power structure, but subsequently make certain qualifications as regards society.

Mangala: That sounds like the primary, motivating factor underlying everything, achieving power I suppose.

S: Exercising power. Your vote is power, it's not a very great deal of power, but it is power.

Mangala: So what would be a spiritual community.....

S: Well one in which no power is exercised on the negative side, which is what I said in the lecture on authority and the individual. When in your relations with other people, you don't seek to exercise power, to that extent your relationship embodies a spiritual community, or you the relating individuals, are a spiritual community.

Mangala: Could that be metta, do you think that's broad enough?

S: Well yes, I used the word "love" rather reluctantly in that lecture, but some such principle would be this principle, I shouldn't say dominating, but you know what I mean, the spiritual community.

So the minute you try to exercise coercion, you are not functioning as a spiritual individual, and your action falls outside the spiritual community.

Mangala: You talk about power, is it always, or is power intrinsically always power over someone else?

S: Well I use it in that sense for the purposes of discussion and exposition. I am not saying what power really is because I think to take a term and to speak in that way about it is very misleading, but this is what I mean by the word power. It can be used in other senses - Chintamani in his articles has used it in other senses - but there is a factor of this kind and I use the word "power" to cover that factor or that kind of behaviour. But the word "power" can be used in other ways. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: There's something I have been thinking about spiritual communities, residential spiritual communities. You often hear people expressing resentment about the rules applied within the community, as if the residential spiritual community or the co-op, or whatever it is, isn't being seen as a situation in which certain people have chosen to live or work in the way, where they can live and work in the way that they want to. It seems to arise from the fact that people have been attracted in some situations really for the wrong reasons.

S: Yes, they don't commit themselves to the situation, they take advantage of the situation to do certain things that they want to do, which is rather a different thing.

Nagabodhi: Right. Then you get problems arising of people saying, why can't we in this community, have jam on our bread, or women in overnight, or more pay for our work, as if they had a right.

S: Yes exactly. Of course one has to accept that sometimes what we would like to think of as a spiritual community, is in fact a positive group trying to evolve into a spiritual community. Or it isn't even a fixed thing, again I have spoken in these terms quite recently, that a community might have its moments when it is really functioning as a spiritual community, but in between it might just be a positive, healthy group. It is not that you label yourself a "spiritual community" and you are always that, twenty four hours of the day and night, and never anything other than that, no. You may have your lapses and after all, the community such as it is, is the people who are there on the premises and sometimes they may just be functioning like a positive group, sometimes like a not very positive group, and sometimes in their better moments, really like a spiritual community. So it has its ups and downs in this sort of way. But your aim is to be functioning as a spiritual community the greater part of the time, even all the time. And there are degrees of intensity, even for a spiritual community.

Manjuvajra: And a spiritual community, would you still define that in the same way by saying individuals relating as individuals?

S: Oh yes.

Manjuvajra: Would you add anything more to it than that?

S: Well this is essentially what it is, this is the definition. It doesn't mean that they are necessarily always doing things together, they may be working separately during the day but none the less, by virtue of the fact that they have a common spiritual commitment and each one is expressing it in his own way, they are related to one another, are relating to one another.

Nagabodhi: I almost feel that we need to develop like a Michelin Guide to Communities where they have a couple of knives and forks to show you can have a meal there and a four poster bed to show you can sleep there, some kind of guide to our communities. So somebody who moves into a community knows exactly what they were letting themselves in for.

Mangala: Four stars!

S: Perhaps it's part of the definition of a spiritual community that when you join it you don't know what you are letting yourself in for.

Nagabodhi: Yes maybe. It's just that I think you can get this resentment if somebody goes into the situation not really knowing what in a way were the rights of the people he's chosen to live there. I mean the people who had chosen to live in a particular way have a right to live that way, they don't want somebody saying, "well why don't you do this or why don't you do that".

S: Well it's a question of spelling out to the person beforehand what is the particular way in which that community functions.

Nagabodhi: I feel this is really important with the co-ops. I think it's pretty easy to ensure that kind of integrity in a community, but I do feel that as the co-ops get bigger and more financially successful, more socially successful.....

S: Well I have been saying that a co-op will never be really successful unless everybody in it is really a hundred percent committed to it. It shouldn't be that the majority leave the direction and as it were, management and the thinking and the responsibility just to a minority of people within the co-op.

Nagabodhi: We have the preamble to the co-op, but perhaps it would be quite good if maybe we brought out a *Mitrata* or something on right livelihood that could be studied in study groups with the people new to co-ops so they can really familiarise themselves with the principles of right livelihood.

S: As I said there is the danger with co-ops perhaps even more than communities, that people are ready to avail themselves of the advantage of the situation without really being into the situation itself fully. They like the idea of working with nice people, they like the idea of not having to work too hard, they like the idea of, as they see it, not having too much responsibility or maybe not working too many days of the week. But the fact that they like all those factors doesn't necessarily mean that they are really committing themselves to the co-op situation.

Mangala: At the same time I suppose there has to be a place for people like that, who might actually get further because it produces better results.

S: Yes but if you give a place to people like that, do it consciously and deliberately. Don't do it inadvertently with the result that after a while you get rather disappointed and disgruntled yourself that they aren't as committed to the situation as you had hoped they would be.

Nagabodhi: By which time they are in the situation, they are attending meetings and they can sometimes be quite a troublesome nuisance.

S: Perhaps there needs to be a second tier of membership so to speak or they should be kept as workers rather than members of the co-op. Those who are admitted as members of the co-op should be people about whose total commitment to that situation, there is no doubt.

Padmaraja: Is that not the case?

S: Well I don't know, I'm not sufficiently in touch with the co-ops.

Nagabodhi: I'm not sure technically but even in practice I would even say nobody should even be working in a co-op, whether they are a member or not unless they are at least, well I think thoroughly familiar with the principles. At least they are fully observing the principles and living according to the principles if only on probation. In the way that if you go to Israel and you live on a Kibbutz, you earn your wage and you live exactly as a Kibbutznik in the same way somebody could work within the co-op perhaps on a two month probationary period, but while they are in there they absolutely live according to the principles in the way they work and they give themselves.

Mangala: That's not always possible though. Because we have people who work in our co-op who are married and have families and who can't live in exactly the same way as people who live in a single sex community.

S: No, but surely they can commit themselves to that co-op situation even though they are

married.

Nagabodhi: And they can still follow and observe the principle of support. It's just that the money it costs perhaps to support them is more, though still within the same principles.

S: They are still getting what they need in principle.

Nagabodhi: And sometimes it's almost economic considerations that have forced us, or maybe it hasn't happened very often, but occasionally economic considerations have been forcing co-ops to take on supplementary workers.

S: Well we should be very careful about getting ourselves into that sort of situation. If they are taken on, take them on as workers at the very most, not as members of the co-op.

Manjuvajra: Voluntary workers, I think that is a good way.

S: Does that mean unpaid workers?

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: Good.

Derek: But if they were literally unpaid, most of them wouldn't do it surely, they would not work voluntarily unless they were committed to the spiritual ideals.

Manjuvajra: But if they would only do it if they are being paid, then they are not really doing it in the right spirit.

S: Well they may need money, there is that too.

Manjuvajra: I'm assuming that part-timers wouldn't, because they would be getting their support already.

S: Yes, for instance you might have a married woman whose husband is at work all day, her children are at school, she's got time on her hands, she doesn't need the money but she's sympathetic with the ideals and she'd like to help out. That is the person it seems to me, who could be a voluntary worker.

Nagabodhi: I don't know if you still do it and I can't actually remember what we did, but I think at Aryatara when we set up the co-op, people who joined actually supported themselves for the first two months.

Padmaraja: Yes they do, this still happens, and even beyond that. People are actually prepared to pay to join the co-op, the privilege of paying.

Nagabodhi: They should be.

S: Anyway shall we get on to sleeping. So the precept says: 'Constantly maintain consciousness in walking in sitting, in eating and in sleeping.' Do you think this can actually be done? Alertness of consciousness in sleeping. It says in sleeping, I don't know how much significance is to be attached to that preposition. Does anybody ever experience this? Anybody experience knowing that they were dreaming, which means that this is consciousness in the dreaming state, knowing that you - a, b, c, or d, were dreaming. So yes this is consciousness in the dreaming state.

Kamalasila: I think that since I have been meditating, I generally don't sleep so heavily. I do sleep but.....

S: It's as though there are moments of consciousness in sleep.

Kamalasila: You have much more general awareness of yourself and of your dreams.

S: Yes and maybe you are more in contact with your dream life, and you may be able to remember dreams more easily which suggests that there is less of a hiatus between those different levels of your experience.

Mangala: I think that with sleep, often you just want to get as far away as you possibly can from your waking state, and I think that indicates a pretty unhealthy sort of psyche.

S: Or a pretty unhealthy sort of life, when sleep is welcome as a sort of oblivion from the cares of the day.

Mangala: But otherwise I think maybe on retreat when things are going well, you feel happy and positive and it's a lighter sort of sleep.

S: You even feel like getting up in the morning, because you get up to something worthwhile and enjoyable.

Derek: This precept seems to suggest that there is quite a scope for deliberation - deliberately being able to be aware in sleep.

[End of side one side two]

S: Well there are several methods of doing this or achieving this. One is for instance that just before you go to sleep you determine that you will maintain consciousness during the sleep state, during the time that you are dreaming and you then reflect that the dream state is essentially no different from the waking state. So that if you should be able to be conscious of what you are doing during the waking state, there is no reason why you should not continue to be conscious of what you are doing, so to speak, in the dream state. So reflecting in this way with great determination and conviction, you fall asleep and consciousness will then tend to be continued. I must say that I have personally tried this, and have done this and I have found that it does work, it does help you to maintain consciousness during sleep or during the dream state in this sort of way.

Mangala: I suppose there should be a kind of continuity from your waking state through your sleeping state. Normally I suppose we go to bed and when the morning comes you're a completely different person in a different space altogether.

S: In some ways that's not a bad thing because the dream state is a kind of in-between state, a bardo, you've taking a sort of fresh turn.

Mangala: I suppose I was saying that say you go to bed in a very positive state then there will be a kind of continuity of purpose which carries through to the next morning and perhaps even through the dream state, so that you kind of carry on.

S: Well this happens when one constantly recites a particular mantra constantly. You can fall asleep reciting it and when you wake up in the morning, you may have a feeling that you have been reciting it all through the night and in fact during the dream state itself from time

to time, you maybe conscious of yourself reciting the mantra or you may actually dream that you are reciting the mantra.

Nagabodhi: What would you say is the main practical benefit to be derived from maintaining consciousness through the dream state.

Nagabodhi: What would you say is the main practical benefit to be derived from taking consciousness through the dream state.

S: Well it does represent a sort of unification of different levels of one's experience, especially the conscious and the unconscious so to speak. But it doesn't mean that standing and observing the dream state or whatever in that alienated sort of way, it means a sort of fusion of the dream state and the waking state. Sometimes I say it's a fusion of the clarity of the waking state with the richness and depth of the dream state.

_____ : How do you feel about the possibility of precognition in dreams, actual dreaming events that could.....

S: This does seem to happen, well precognition does seem to occur.

_____ : Because I've had some experiences like that.

S: Well, yes, these things do occur and they just suggest that the mind, or consciousness is not so limited as we usually think.

Manjuvajra: Does this continuity of consciousness be developed continually, or is it that you just do it for a certain period.

S: Well in a way it should be developed in one way or another all the time. This is what recollection is all about, mindfulness, it means maintenance of continuity, because this is a form of integration, a way of integrating, Do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: Even through the sleep state.

S: Oh yes, sooner or later it must include the sleep experience, the dream experience, but it isn't a question of the wakeful state erupting into the dream state, and disturbing and breaking it up. It's more like it's peacefully illumining it. It's not that you have patches of sleeplessness, it is not that.

Manjuvajra: Would you say this would be a valuable practice to adopt?

S: Well it's something that one has to take into consideration sooner or later in the interest of the continuity of one's development as an individual. You can't in a sense have time off from developing as an individual.

Mangala: I think sleeping and dreaming in this very positive way depends very much on being almost in a sort of retreat like situation. I think it would be very hard if you had been rushing around all day, taking classes so you crash out!

S: You shouldn't be rushing around taking classes! [Laughter]

Mangala: But you know what I mean.

S: I'm not sure.

Mangala: I'm exaggerating slightly but I think that probably most people that I see that would be pretty much their experience, they very gratefully get to bed and just want to crash.

S: Well certainly one's dream experience changes, and the relation between the waking state and the dream state does change when one is on solitary retreat and that surely is one of the advantages, one of the benefits of solitary retreats, all the different aspects of oneself, all one's different levels of being come much more together; one becomes more angelic.

Padmaraja: Yes on solitary retreat I spend much more time in bed, whereas I don't feel as though I get enough sleep usually in the week.

S: That could be.

Padmaraja: You get up at six, and you never get to bed before half ten or eleven.

S: Well I certainly notice that when I went away to Cornwall for ten days, the year before last it was now yes, to my surprise I was sleeping ten hours a night for the greater part of that time. And had you asked me beforehand, I would never have thought I could have slept ten hours a night but I did. And I concluded from that that I had accumulated a sort of backlog of tiredness which needed to be made up. So sometimes that does happen. So yes, one can profitably and with a clear conscience, [Laughter] mindfully spend extra time in bed or extra time sleeping.

Mangala: I think in the course of the day if you're in a less stressful situation I think on the whole you would probably need less sleep and probably sleep better and lighter when you do actually sleep.

S: Yes, of course stress will differ for different people. Because sometimes of course if you have been too much in a stressful situation it will prevent you from sleeping, or if you haven't had sufficient exercise, I mean physical exercise. Or if you have been worried during the day and your brain just goes on ticking over.

Devaraja: Sometimes I find I can wake up in the middle of the night, about three o' clock in the morning and I've got an idea right in my mind as I wake up. I can have a very exciting and fresh idea, it's almost like it's happened whilst I have been asleep and it has made me wake up so that I can remember it.

S: Well in the sense it is a time when there is an open space, new possibilities, it's an intermediate state between two waking states or two periods of wakefulness. So yes it is a bardo state in that sense and you are very open and very fluid then all sorts of possibilities emerge. And one may be so important or so insistent as to wake you up, to claim attention from your conscious mind.

Mangala: Do you think sleep is really or can ever really be a kind of oblivion, I suppose at best it can only be a temporary forgetting of something?

S: You mean, are you ever completely oblivious at the time while asleep, is this what you are asking?

Mangala: Perhaps I'm not really quite sure what I'm actually saying. I mean like sleep doesn't really get rid of anything. You may be having a rough time or a problem.

S: Oh no but it can very well alter the perspective in which you see things because if you go

to bed and go to sleep tired and worried about something and not knowing what to do, if you can, even under those circumstances, have a good sound sleep and wake up refreshed and feeling well and healthy and then you look at that particular problem, the problem hasn't changed during the night but you have. Perhaps then you see it in a different perspective and you see more clearly what is to be done, or what can be done about it.

So that's why we sometimes say; "Well sleep on it, don't tell me now, don't make up your mind now. You are tired, you need rest, sleep on it." And also it may be your unconscious mind is working on it and perhaps it works on it more successfully than your conscious mind, and therefore when you start consciously considering the matter, then you find that some idea, some suggestion, some solution is in fact there ready waiting for you, waiting for your conscious mind to appropriate it and put it into action, put it into operation.

Kamalasila: I find that a terrific amount of dream activity has to do with your immediate situation or seems to have. [Pause]

S: Anyway, anything more about sleep?

Manjuvajra: Maybe a little bit more about other levels of consciousness. At the moment I am finding myself really wanting to search out other levels of consciousness, it's as though I'm perfectly aware of the consciousness that's associated with my senses. I've started having this really strong feeling that there are other levels and I want to get in touch with them.

S: Other dimensions even.

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: So what do you think this represents?

Manjuvajra: I think there is a sort of limitation with the world of the senses, it's not enough somehow. I mean it's good, it's bright and shining - it's nice like that - but I feel there's got to be more depth.

S: Yes there are possibilities of seeing things in other ways. You have not exhausted the ways in which it is possible to see things or even the things that there are to see. It's almost as though one's ego is loosening up, you don't want that fixed point of reference so much as you wanted it before, you want to shift your position so to speak, so that you can see things differently. You are not so insistent upon a fixed position from which to see things therefore not so insistent upon a fixed or rigid ego, and therefore things loosen up, they widen out, they become more multidimensional.

Nagabodhi: That links up with something I feel about mindfulness, awareness and sleep, which is an image I use a lot when I'm giving classes. There is a parallel between the spiritual life and sleep and wakefulness. I think one of the main values I find in awareness is that it takes me out of living in a subjective world. If I really look, if I really feel; and if I'm not doing that I am asleep, literally so. I don't know if it's just a poetic connection, but the difference between sleep and wakefulness in life is very parallel to what we are trying to do in the spiritual life, we are literally trying to wake up.

S: Well this is a well known analogy isn't it?

Nagabodhi: To me it's the one that works almost better than any other that I know of, because my own experience of altered states of consciousness through meditation, being on a retreat, it's not just a little rise or something it's radically different.

S: A whole different perspective.

Nagabodhi: Yes, in the way that waking up from a sleep is.

S: I think that is a good way of putting it across to people, by a means of that sort of analogy.

Mangala: I'm wondering too if there is any way of avoiding the development of alienated awareness. I think this word mindfulness in itself is a bit, well I don't really like it, it almost implies this kind of frozen, sort of standing back, going around in a very stiff kind of way, and people say, "You must be mindful" and you see people almost freeze up as soon as you say that.

S: Yes right. Well here the expression is used 'alertness of consciousness' which is a bit better because alertness suggests a certain liveliness at least. But I think one needs a term which also suggests a certain warmth and a certain sensitivity and a definite feeling quality. Awareness and mindfulness don't really suggest that. You could of course say creative awareness or something like that, perhaps even that would not be very satisfactory,

Manjuvajra: Sensitivity is not a bad word is it?

S: Yes, that's true, because it certainly suggests at least a modicum of awareness doesn't it, but it can be used metaphorically as well as literally.

Mangala: I think people sometimes use the word mindful in quite a loose way, when they say; "They are really being very unmindful" when really it would be more true to say they are just being very rowdy or something like that.

S: Although of course the rowdiness includes unmindfulness of course.

Mangala: Yes but I think that what people are actually objecting to is the rowdiness.

S: Well sometimes you don't say what you really think. You say to someone; "I think you were just a little unmindful" whereas you just really feel like saying; "You were just creating a terrible row!" Do you see what I mean?

Mangala: Yes it's the same kind of thing isn't it, it's a bit like you are actually alienating yourself from your actual feelings, you are not actually giving a feeling response. And in the same way when you have alienated awareness, it's like you're aware OK, but you are not actually experiencing anything. In the same way you might say; "You are being a bit unmindful" whereas there is no feeling component in that communication, you have avoided that.

S: Yes right.

Devaraja: Perhaps some sort of almost like a responsive awareness.

S: Yes, or even responsiveness, that is not a bad sort of word.

Nagabodhi: The whole phrasing too, the way you communicate awareness, the whole thing saying; "You should be aware of your breathing, try and become aware of your breathing." Because I know I am very prone to alienated awareness and using my head as a kind of search light, looking at my breathing.

S: Well you can say; "Allow yourself to be mindful, or allow yourself to be aware."

Nagabodhi: What I do these days say if I'm explaining the mindfulness of breathing, I'll talk about beginning by experiencing your breathing and then add awareness to the experience. It's as if the awareness has to be located in the experience. Try and find language that impresses that on people, you aim awareness at it.

S: Yes right it grows out of it. Well this comes out especially in connection with the third stage of the mindfulness of breathing and I always used to speak of it in terms of experiencing the in and out breathing process. But one could speak of experiencing the breath in the previous stages too.

Mangala: Actually I am not sure about what you said about first of all you experience it and then you become mindful of that. Is there actually any difference?

Nagabodhi: Eventually no, but I think it's a much healthier way of putting it.

S: It's a different procedure almost.

Nagabodhi: Because when it comes to it, they will probably be trying to become aware of their breathing for a time. But it's just a way of putting it that I think helps or prevents people from thinking of the awareness as something separate.

S: It's more the well experience needs to be imbued with awareness, not that as you put it, you turn, as you put it, the searchlight of your awareness on something from the outside as it were. A beam of bright light stabbing the darkness, and that's your awareness of something. But it did occur to me that there is a useful expression which might be made useful in this sort of connection, that is when we speak of ourselves as being alive to something, not 'aware' of but 'alive to', we are alive to this question, or alive to this difficulty. So not aware of nature say, but alive to nature, not aware of the body but alive to the body. It's more that sort of connotation which needs to be communicated. Alive to existence, so of course if you are alive to something you are very vividly aware of it.

Derek: Of course if you say "alive to" that could again imply being cut off from the breath.

S: I think it would be much more difficult.

Mangala: I think just experiencing the breath's best.

S: But even if you use the word 'experience', it doesn't very explicitly suggest the feeling quality, the awareness has got to have a feeling quality and even as I said, a warmth.

Mangala: But surely if you are experiencing the breath, in a way how can there not be a feeling.

S: Experience can just suggest sort of contact. When I put my finger on the table, am I in contact with it, am I experiencing it? I can put my hand on say a person, I am contacting that person, I perceive him, in a way I experience him, but is it real, total, vivid etc. So I think even experience is not quite a full enough word, not a rich enough word.

Manjuvajra: When I talk about both mindfulness and metta, after people have got a bit of experience of both, then I say that really the experience is actually the same one, you are just approaching it from two different angles.

S: Yes that is probably quite useful.

Manjuvajra: Yes, and they should bear it in mind when they are doing either practice.

S: There is certainly awareness and mindfulness involved in the metta, because how can you direct metta towards anyone without really being aware of them? In the same way you should not simply be aware of your breath, which is part of you, but, as it were, love your breath, direct metta towards your breath, and towards yourself as a living breathing being. You should as it were, love breathing.

Mangala: Don't you think that to fully experience that would include metta?

S: Yes but it doesn't actually say so, it includes it in an abstract way. It doesn't communicate the fact.

Manjuvajra: Once you know what you are talking about, it's OK, but if you don't know what you mean by experience then....

S: Yes, because some people don't even know what you are talking about when you talk of metta, it doesn't really come across to them that actually you are talking about a feeling and even that is not evident. It is not evident that feeling itself is included in metta, or that metta is a kind of feeling. It has to be really spelled out. Even then sometimes people sometimes find it difficult to grasp. It's almost as though they don't know, they have no experience of what a feeling is, which seems really strange, but there are such people I can assure you.

Nagabodhi: I would say that most have experience of feelings as reactions, but very few people have experience of feelings as creative emotions. That seems to be the difficulty. People can maybe relate to it in terms of hate or love, but very few people can actually grasp that metta is something quite different to the experience they have probably had up to now of emotion.

S: It is something as it were, purer.

Nagabodhi: Yes it's creative, it's not.....

S: Impersonal.

Nagabodhi: Yes. There is a very good quote I found in *Zarathustra* years ago. I didn't understand it at the time, I have only just come to understand it, which is, "Sleeping is no mean art, you need to stay awake all day in order to be able to do it." [Pause]

S: Well, shall we pass on a little now, otherwise we don't want to dwell too much on sleeping or we'll start sleeping!

All right 4. The Ten Things To Be Avoided. Let's at least make a start on this. The Ten Things To Be Avoided seem to be the opposite of the Ten Things To Be Done. Would someone like to read that first one.

IV. The Ten Things to be Avoided

(1) Avoid a guru whose heart is set on acquiring worldly fame and possessions.

S: Well one would have thought that a Guru whose heart is set on acquiring worldly fame and possessions is a contradiction in terms, but what do you think is actually meant here?

Derek: Someone who is claiming to be a Guru.

S: Claiming to be, or who is regarded as such, but who is in fact what? Clearly he has got some kind of position otherwise he wouldn't be called a Guru at all or recognised as a Guru at all. So what kind of position do you think he has?

Nagabodhi: Ecclesiastical.

S: Ecclesiastical yes.

Manjuvajra: He might be a popular Guru.

S: Or a Guru in a metaphorical sense. Sometimes it's almost as though pop stars seem to consider themselves as gurus.

Manjuvajra: They seem to be the Western equivalent of what you do find in the East.

S: The equivalent of the more trashy kind of 'Oriental Guru' in inverted commas.

Nagabodhi: People like Ronnie Laing as well.

S: Ah yes, well the word guru is applied to these sort of figures who, especially in the States, go from campus to campus and have quite a following amongst them, and become quite influential. Alan Watts was of this type too wasn't he? So what are they doing, how are they functioning. What are they in fact? Are they catalysts of opinion, or what are they? Do people of that sort necessarily have their hearts set on acquiring worldly fame and possession, or is it subtler than that?

Manjuvajra: I think it is more subtle, because they are not out and out rogues, consciously.

S: No certainly not. If you were an out and out rogue, you wouldn't succeed at all. I think to be a false guru I think you have to have at least some of the qualities of the genuine guru if you see what I mean, otherwise you could not even sustain the role, even though for you, it is in a way a role.

Derek: Maybe it is a sort of group leadership.

S: Ah it's a sort of group leadership, yes. This is probably the most significant or relevant factor in the situation, that you are a sort of group leader and groups require leaders. A group without a leader is almost a contradiction in terms. So it's as though a group leader has been mistaken for a spiritual teacher. This seems to be what happens.

Devaraja: It's like subtly portioning things to the ego, like worldly possessions.

S: Yes it may not necessarily be accumulating a big bank balance it may be something a bit more subtle than that.

Mangala: Do you think though that - perhaps we can't generalise here - they all necessarily encourage, let's say, disciples or followers. Perhaps some of them maybe even actually try to avoid that. I am not speaking from experience.

S: Well I would say that if you really want to avoid disciples, you can. If you don't succeed in avoiding them and profess to be trying, I just don't believe you. But it could be that they

are as it were, victims of the situation, as much as the so called disciples are. They belong together, it is not that they are really leading. Again there is a wonderful saying in Nietzsche: "The bell weather," that is to say the leading sheep, said to the sheep who were following; "I will have the courage to lead,

if only you will have the courage to follow." The two belong together, they hang together, so there is no real leadership actually. He is just a sort of prominent figurehead, the most vocal or most prominent aspect of the group if you like, but he is not a leader in the real sense more often than not. Sometimes yes, he is not only more powerful, more intelligent and can manipulate the others, but not always. He may just be sort of carried helplessly along on the crest of the communal, the group wave.

Nagabodhi: I've felt similar ideas to this when I was thinking quite a lot about Bob Dylan. About a year ago I read a biography of him after seeing him at Blackbushe and I was quite intrigued by the fact that the Blackbushe Airport concert was the largest peacetime gathering in British history.

S: How many people were there?

Nagabodhi: About a quarter of a million or so. He has that kind of role as a kind of prophet/guru for a generation as the cliches go, but what strikes me about reading his life story, and although I really like quite a lot of his music and his words in a way. It is almost as if he has actually a very weak personality and it's almost as if he has become a channel for quite impersonal ideas.

S: Yes. Social forces.

Nagabodhi: Social forces. He was somehow open, I am not saying he's opened himself, because it's also a weakness in him.

S: There's a sort of mediumistic quality almost at least in some such people.

Mangala: And to further corroborate that, apparently recently, he has become born again in Christ and he has now become a 'Child of God'. And in fact his latest album has a lot of references to the Bible in it.

S: Well it is as though that is what his generation needed. And their need finds expression through their perhaps leading figure head, most popular guru - Bob Dylan. You follow at least as much as you lead.

Mangala: It's quite strange because I think his early work was really outstanding from every point of view, I thought anyway. Yet it seems as you say, he does seem to have in the last analysis, a very weak personality or something somehow. But it is difficult to see how somebody could in a way be so creative, and I think really genuinely creative, and yet at the same time be so, well what in a way seems so stupid ultimately, to do what he has done. Obviously that has been a process, I don't think it's just happened suddenly.

Nagabodhi: I see it in what in Jungian terms is the 'invasion', it's as though the character, the total personality, is quite weak but allows an invasion from a kind of wise old man or something which takes over. That's how I see how it could work, but his private life was a terrible mess, always was.

That applies I think to Hitler, similar sort of forces seem to have been at work.

S: You could hardly say his private life was in a mess. I mean, in a sense that he was in such

a mess he had no private life at all, he had been so much taken over by these forces whatever they were.

Mangala: Could you say something about the fact that someone can be so let's say creative and even poetic and have such tremendous imagination and creativity and yet be so apparently weak and so exposed to these other influences.

S: This raises the whole question of the artistic temperament and all that. It is quite a complex issue. Perhaps it's also dependent on the whole social situation, the whole tradition in the West which is not helpful in a way to the artist, doesn't co-operate with him.

Nagabodhi: In a way though, even in traditional societies, the tribe often had the Shaman, who gave voice to, who gave voice to the feelings and drives of the group, and he was often quite a weird person, he often wasn't a very 'together' person.

S: Well you would have to be a weird sort of person to be able to function in that way. He would have to have a weak personality, a weak individuality, to be able to be receptive to group things - in that sort of way. Of course you can be sensitive to what is going on in the group without being mediumistic or Shamanistic, but the group doesn't want that, the primitive group, it wants direct contact with the gods. It wants to hear the voice of the gods through the Shaman as it were.

Devaraja: The Tibetan oracles presumably would have the same situation and weak individuality but if it was a healthy group, then it wouldn't be, in a way, too detrimental to them.

S: It wouldn't be too damaging yes, at least they would look after their Shaman, but we don't look after our Shamans, as it were, which makes things much more difficult for them. For instance the oracles are expected to be celibate, because non-celibacy is traditionally believed to be really bad for the Oracles. It has nothing moralistic about it because some of the Nyingmapa Lamas may not be celibate. You see what I mean? You might have a Nyingmapa living in a monastery not celibate - he may have his wife and family outside the monastery precincts. But the Oracle who is a layman, is obliged to be celibate because he is an Oracle. So clearly there is nothing moralistic or puritanical at work here, it is almost a sort of hygienic measure if you see what I mean.

Devaraja: He might be taken over by the female's personality presumably?

S: This is not an explanation which has occurred to me, but it might be connected with that, I don't know. But it's as though they just have to be particularly careful about all things of that sort. I think it is more likely to do with, as it were, distribution of energies, my guess is that it is more connected with that.

Mangala: I suppose in a way you have to, this is on a slightly different track, differentiate between let's say an artistic disposition first and maybe a truly creative or individual one. That is one who would be so strong in himself, more developed as an individual in a way. I suppose it raises the question; does creativity necessarily go hand in hand with individual development?

S: Does it necessarily go hand in hand with imbalance?, it would seem to me not. That under optimum circumstances, artistic creativity could itself be a means of individual development, even spiritual development. Just as, to draw a parallel, for instance in the Middle Ages mystics could be maimed as human beings and as mystics just because of the rigid, dogmatic framework of Christian theology through which they had to function much of the time, or in

terms of which they had to express themselves. In much the same way the artist might be as it were, maimed or crippled, or made unbalanced just because of the framework through which he has to function, or the sort of society in which he lives.

Mangala: Do you think this could be what happened in Dylan's case?

S: Oh it must be a terrible strain, leading the sort of life that he leads, and fulfilling the sort of function that he fulfils. It would be difficult at the best of times I would imagine, but under the conditions of contemporary American life. It is almost amazing that he hasn't gone completely crazy. That's what I would think and it says something for him that he has remained sane to some extent at all.

Mangala: You mean there's so much expected of him and laid upon him?

S: Expected of him, laid upon him, temptations he's exposed to. Presumably women throwing themselves at him all the time, etc. etc., to say nothing of money, popularity, adulation, all possibly tending to go to his head, who knows? At least he's having to resist that.

Mangala: Do you think that perhaps, if you are going to be very hard on him, then perhaps it indicates a weakness in him, but perhaps it would be more charitable to say that it's society's fault rather than his broadly speaking?

S: Well it is society's fault I'm sure to a great extent. Or the fault of other people with whom he is in contact and who are in contact with him and the general absence of understanding of the whole situation.

Mangala: Do you feel perhaps that this is the only way he can come to terms with or cope with the situation?

S: Well no but everybody does their best, but perhaps even their best is not always good enough.

Devaraja: In a way that seems to ring a bell related to Van Gogh, because he seems to have had quite a strong weakness in his individuality, yet at the same time it was almost like there were no barriers between him and nature.

S: There was no positive support, there was no framework, there was no structure through which he could function perhaps.

Devaraja: And also I think possibly, I mean that's another aspect to Van Gogh, but I think that probably he was crippled by a Christian sense of guilt as well.

S: I felt that in the case of Rimbaud, reading his own life story. I couldn't help thinking how different he would have been if he'd been brought up in the way that say the young William Blake was brought up. Blake seems to have had a sensible and understanding father. Young Rimbaud didn't have a father at all, he had a rather narrowly Catholic and rigidly materialistic mother, Catholic and materialistic at the same time, to be brought up by, and only a sister, he didn't even have a brother.

Mangala: You don't think that perhaps sometimes these apparently unfavourable circumstances can actually go some way towards.....

S: Well it depends how unfavourable. Circumstances can be a bit unfavourable and thereby

stimulate you, they can be so unfavourable that they utterly crush you, it's a question of degree. So they shouldn't be so favourable that you're living as it were, in the devaloka where there is no stimulation at all, but not so unfavourable that you are living in hell and are completely paralysed and stultified and rendered incapable of doing anything however gifted you may be. That's why the human realm comes just in between. There's enough contentment to keep us reasonably happy and enough discomfort to keep us stirred up and to prevent us settling down in a complacent way. [Pause]

Padmaraja: With Rimbaud you get the feeling that it was his mother who really crushed him?

S: Amongst people it was his mother, but behind his mother there was the Catholic Church, and he experienced it seems a great sense of guilt in getting involved with things like magic and alchemy as though he was dealing with the devil, because this is how the Church viewed it. It seems to be that also as much as anything that affected him so adversely. And also being brought up in a small provincial town. Blake at least was brought up in London. Rimbaud was brought up in a small provincial town with all the narrowness and all the limitations of a small provincial town, even in provincial France at that, and I believe in Normandy which is, or was, the most provincial practically, of all provincial places in France. Indeed the peasants there, had I think a special reputation of being really.....

[End of tape ten]