

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 eleven]

S:in France. The peasants there I think had a special reputation of being really hard-headed and hard-fisted.

Padmaraja: It's a big question, but could you say something about the artistic temperament?

S: I've thought quite a lot about this. I can't say that I've come to any definite conclusions. It seems to me that what the artistic temperament does is essentially this: the artistic temperament seems to be that temperament which is naturally inclined to, and enjoys doing, the transformation of the object into the subject in such a way as to get a new object. You see what I mean? The artistic temperament is that temperament which is constantly seeking to come to terms with its own experience by remoulding and reshaping that experience in a meaningful way - which is what I mean by transforming object into subject - in the form of the work of art, or through the creation of the work of art. Yes? Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Does that imply that the artistic temperament has a feeling for possibilities beyond the apparent. and seeks to realise them through the creative act?

S: In a way, but I don't think he necessarily thinks about it like that consciously.

Nagabodhi: It's an intuitive process.

S: It's intuitive, even in a sense, an unconscious process. For instance. I was thinking about it also in connection with these

letters I've been writing for *Shabda*. Now what happens? What makes one write these letters or things like that, apart from the communication of facts - and I'm not just communicating facts in those letters - I think that's pretty obvious - so what happens? One is having a whole series of experiences, all sorts of things are happening to one. So it's as though one wants to, as it were, make sense of those, in the sense of reducing them to, or recreating them as, or in, a sort of meaningful form, which is pleasing. attractive. etc., etc., regardless of the extent to which one is successful in doing that. Rilke I think goes into this quite a bit - that you recreate the creation as it were. You are not content with your experience as it is, you want to further refine it, give it a still more beautiful shape, a still more beautiful form. In that way you make it more your own.

In this way what was formerly more object becomes more subject. Say, for instance in this case, New Zealand before I went there was just object. I could only think it: when I went there it was experience, I had an experience of New Zealand. So, to the extent that I experienced it, it becomes a little bit part of me, but when I transform my experience into, or express it in terms of, what I hope is something artistic, let us say, it becomes still more mine. I've carried the process of transformation one stage further, and it seems to me that this is the essence of the artistic temperament - wanting to do this. You hear stories, you imagine characters - you want to sort of weave them altogether into a whole: create or recreate them all in a meaningful way, as a play, as a drama, as a novel, as a poem. You're not satisfied with say going out into the garden and seeing that beautiful flower blooming there. You have the experience of the flower, then you want to carry it a stage further and write a poem about that flower, embody your experience of the flower fully and perfectly, eliminating all extraneous factors, which are things you might have perceived but which weren't really part of your experience of the flower. An aeroplane might have passed overhead while you were admiring the flower, but you ignore all that, you exclude the aeroplane: you are not writing a complete factual account of your experience: you are re-creating it on a more refined, and in a sense, on a higher level, and this is a means of individual development.

Manjuvajra: Do you think you have to have the experience first and the desire to recreate that or can you sometimes, I feel, I get the desire to create something. but I don't actually feel that I have the original experience, the original inspiration.

S: Maybe you are not sufficiently in touch with your material or your potential material. You are sparked off by something because it corresponds to something in you. Why do you want to write a poem about a flower, rather than say a bird? You feel some attraction to the flower, you sort of linger over it. You want to do something with it or with your experience of it. You see what I mean? So it must reflect something in you. So therefore in dealing with the flower you are dealing with yourself. In transforming your experience of the flower you are, in a way, transforming yourself. Hence the relevance, I think. of the artistic process to individual self development.

Mangala: Do you think this is something which could be just undertaken almost in a calculated way? Like you go out for a walk and say right now I'll sit down and write about my experiences.

S: No. you couldn't do that I would say. Of course. you might think that you were doing that, but if you did. you wouldn't in fact be doing that.

Mangala: You think it has to be an actual desire to -

S: There has to be an unconscious process in a way going on. Or at least a process which is not fully conscious, and certainly which is not the result of the calculations and manipulations and manoeuvrings of the conscious mind. So Rilke says things like the tree re-emerges within your consciousness recreated in the form of the poem about the tree. He says. God sort of creates everything once and the artist creates it all over again and goes one better than God, improves on the creation. God just gives the raw material. The artist is the true God, refashioning that raw material. Rilke says something like that: I'm quoting him very roughly and loosely.

Mangala: Do you think there are, let's say, some ways and means of arriving at that state, rather than just..... I mean. it would appear to be that what you were saying was in a way that you've either got it or you haven't, you either have it unconsciously or you haven't got it....

S: Poets are born not made. I don't think it's a matter of what sort of person you are born as, or what sort of temperament you are born with whether you evolve or not. But perhaps it is a matter of birth rather than nurture, the way in which you evolve and the artistic temperament gives you a particular way of evolving. Do you see what I mean? And others who don't have that particular temperament don't have that particular way of evolving, though perhaps we all share in that temperament to a small extent. Even when say moving to an empty house, you paint and decorate it, move the furniture around, - that is creative. You are expressing something within yourself by doing that. So we shouldn't limit artistic activity or artistic creativity too narrowly. It isn't just the poem and the painting - it's your attitude to, your reaction to, your action upon, your whole environment: what you do with your environment; the way you recreate it. But clearly in the case of the work of art, we have absolute control, within the limits imposed by the medium itself we can do as we please. But the more we approach the objective world on the bigger scale, the more limitations there are.

I might want to change the world and maybe the highest expression of artistic creativity would be to change the whole world. But who's going to do that? Only the Bodhisattva who aspires to create a whole new Pure Land succeeds in doing something like that. So this is

what *Sukhavati* in a way represents - I mean the *Sukhavati* of the scriptures, not just our own little reflection of it in East London - it represents the highest conceivable work of art, in other words, the artistic transformation of the largest possible amount of material. a whole world. You see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: It's possible there's real art and sick art. In a way what you are saying I'd say, goes for both but isn't it just as you become more developed.....

S: Well, sick art is to healthy art as a cancerous growth is to healthy physical growth.

Nagabodhi: The real artist, the artistic genius, is somebody who looks at the flower and writes the poem or paints the picture and in a way he's making it something of himself. But if he's a great artist he's also making it more of a flower - he's not just adding his subjective.....

S: Well, you could say that: the flower is almost just God's flower, in a manner of speaking, but the flower of the poem is the artist's flower which by definition, in a way, is a higher development of the same thing. So nature is aspiring, you could say, after the condition of art or even that nature imitates art, as Oscar Wilde said. Nature never produced pale green sunsets before Turner painted them! Of course it is paradoxical but anyway you see what I mean.

Devaraja: Well, I've seen pale green sunsets - the lower air was tinted a very subtle green.

S: But did you see it before Turner painted pale green sunsets? Would you have seen it if Turner hadn't painted his pale green sunsets? Well this is what is, in a sense, said, but you know what is meant.

Devaraja: Do you mean that in the sense that being exposed to Turner had a influence on me personally?

S: Well he sharpened our perception of nature. The great painter educates his audience so that they are enabled to see what without his help they would not have seen otherwise. They would have said it's blue. But he looked really closely and saw that no, it was green and he not only saw it was green, he registered that on the canvas: and at first people said, "well, whoever saw a green sunset? A green sky?" But he said "no. it's green." So maybe they looked again and said "oh. well yes there is a tinge of green there." and after a while they said "yes, it's actually green there, who would have thought it, it's really strange but it is green". So he's educated them into seeing the green that he sees.

_____: It's becoming more popular to express terms: that they're calling skies a Turner Sky. or a Constable landscape.

S: That's true. Or a Pre-Raphaelite face.

Devaraja: All sickly!

Nagabodhi: What you said about green sunsets is as near almost as you can answer Manjuvajra's question. You can only look, you can only try and develop your ability to look and see.

S: But I would like to in a sense develop this theme of people actually all the time from a certain point of view, being engaged in artistic activity. In the sense that they are moulding their environment or part of their environment and they are doing it in accordance with almost archetypes, one could almost use that word, within themselves, at a deeply

unconscious level. The artist proper does it in a much more concentrated and intensive and successful form or way, but as I said, when you rearrange a room you are exercising your artistic temperament, so to speak. Or when you arrange a few flowers in a vase - it's going on all the time, actually, in varying degrees, with varying degrees of success.

So yes, in that sense everybody is an artist. In the way you organise your business. In a way it's an art(unclear)..... must be bad art. if you see what I mean. The way in which you organise anything or recreate anything is art. This is the way in which you interact with your environment, it isn't that it leaves an impression on you, or that you are reacting to it - you are recreating it all the time. But the recreation is very rarely complete, very rarely adds up to a meaningful whole, is very rarely isolated in the form of the actual work of art. But it's really only a difference of degree, not a difference of kind.

Manjuvakra: You're organising your material in accordance with some vision that you have.

S: Well it may not even be vision, because that suggests a conscious ideal. It may be a vision like say, Dante's vision of existence. But it may be something of which you are quite unconscious, and I think usually the artist becomes conscious of what he is trying to express, so to speak, only in the actual process of trying to express it. Goethe even says, speaking about his own *Faust*, the work of art is incommensurable. Even the artist who produced it doesn't fully understand it.

Mangala: You said this in one of your Brighton Lectures actually. That you set out, and, in a sense the FWBO - it doesn't have a set goal, it doesn't know what it's trying to become, but it finds that out in the process of becoming it.

S: I think this is true. This is also from another point of view what I mean by saying not attempting a premature synthesis. Not trying to say too quickly what we are or what we are doing. Not trying to sum it up too neatly too soon. Otherwise you might limit possibilities of further development.

Derek: You used the phrase "bad art". Could you elaborate a bit on what is meant by that?

S: By "bad art" I mean material which has a sort of a shape in a way but doesn't really add up to any whole or anything which is complete, or perhaps even which can be made complete. It's perhaps the expression, even, of a schizophrenic personality, one could say. Though again, one must be careful because sometimes a schizophrenic personality, in the process of expressing its schizophrenia, manages to heal the schizophrenia. That's the healing aspect of art too, even the therapeutic aspect of art. Art is therapy because greater integration is being achieved. I mean ideally, or at least possibly.

I mean. we all know what a bad organisation is, don't we? So. a bad work of art is much the same thing. It's stereotyped. cliché ridden, etc.. it doesn't add up to a living whole. Imitative. Has no principle of its own. (Pause)

So I think one should see the interaction of the individual with his environment in terms of a constant, as it were, aesthetic appropriation and re-creation. We're not just sort of passive, it's not that impressions fall upon us like marks being made on a blank sheet of paper. It's not like that at all. It's as though aggressiveness is when we over-manipulate our material or sort of cut more deeply into it than is required. And so under aggressiveness is when we attempt or don't cut into it sufficiently - are merely passive to it. We are not able to handle it and recreate it.

Mangala: Perhaps one is when you deny the other. The other is when you deny yourself.

S: Right. Yes. indeed. But in the artistic process there is this very vital interaction. With neither being denied - you respect your material, but at the same time you're determined to give expression to your artistic impulse. Otherwise. you can be so afraid of dirtying the canvas you don't even succeed in painting anything. On the other hand you might paint it so vigorously and brutally the brush goes right through! (laughter)

Mangala: This is one of the things you could, maybe. sort of feel like in a big city like London: when you first come you just sort of feel totally overwhelmed by the environment: you feel you can't make any impression on this at all, you've almost no place in it, you're kind of helpless, and it's a very killing sort of thing to feel.

S: I think for the ordinary person, within our current situation, the field of creativity is the family. This is one, at least, positive aspect of it. The whole family life and family situation. For the ordinary person without any conscious spiritual aspirations. this is the creative medium. including the whole way you live, the way you decorate your house, and cultivate your garden, bring up your children, and dress - this is the ordinary person's, as it were, creative response to his environment. It can in principle be carried to quite a high level. Usually we don't try to do that, but it can be. There can be such a thing as gracious living as it were, artistic living.

So I think ordinary people find quite a bit of creative outlet in the family situation and the family environment, and this is not to be underestimated or depreciated. Maybe one of the reasons why artists don't care so much about home life is that they've got another better, higher, more intensive outlet. They don't care so much whether the room is untidy: or the roof is leaking. But for the ordinary man, the ordinary householder, well, it's not just a job to be done, there is a sort of artistic outlet in that, I mean under, as it were, reasonably good conditions.

Manjuvajra: A voice: That would explain why people can spend so much time on their garden and painting the house.

S: Yes, it is quite clearly something of this sort which constitutes their interest or is the basis of their interest. It isn't purely utilitarian. On the other hand, admittedly it doesn't reach a very high artistic level. Sometimes it's bad art unfortunately: the results are really poor. But in principle that is what it is. In principle it is artistic.

Devaraja: It's almost, it may be an entirely false thing to say, but it's almost like in order to be a good family man, you've got to, as a general rule, not to have a job which fully expresses your creativity: work which fully expresses your creativity.

S: Ah. in a way that is true, yes. You've got to have enough time to work on your house and to be with your children and all that sort of thing.

Devaraja: And if you start achieving all the satisfaction through your work, even if it can be quite mundane work, then I think it is true to say that, I mean I noticed it in working situations I've been in on a sort of labouring level: usually, the guys are fantastically involved with their families and really keen about their kids, and "my wife's absolutely marvellous" and "I really love being at home with the kids" and everything. But then at other levels sort of moving more into the creative usually there's an immense amount of break-ups of marriages because they just don't satisfy.

S: Right. Or don't offer sufficient scope: the family life doesn't offer sufficient scope for creativity. Or maybe there are alternatives which are more satisfying. You can't keep both

going at once: both, as it were, home and job which is giving more creative satisfaction.

So also, another aspect - I'll just touch on this and then we must close - that your artistic expression is also your language: it's not only expression, it is communication. It is spelling out a message to other people all the time, the whole way in which you live. I mean, there's just a simple illustration. Someone was saying you just go into somebody's room and just look at their books. The books that are kept there tell you a quite a bit about that person. So everything, the whole way they live, the whole way they arrange their room, their colour scheme, etc., will tell you quite a lot about the person. All the more if it's the result of their deliberate choice, if it isn't just accidental. But even if they just allow it to happen and to be there, even that tells you at least something about them. So you are constantly communicating through your work of art, whatever that may be. Your little red tiled semi-detached bungalow with the neatly kept garden: that is sending out a message - maybe just a message of smug suburban complacency - to everybody who passes by. Do you see what I mean?

Or if you've built some strange chimney onto the top which nobody else in the street has got...(laughter)...again, this tells you something about the person who lives there. It's not an expression, it's communication. Or if there are gnomes in the front garden, well, especially if there are great clusters of gnomes, almost regiments of gnomes as you occasionally see, that tells you something about the person. It's a communication, it's almost shouting at you. If you see windmills and cranes and little toads. (laughter)...all in stone, all painted brightly: if you see pebbles (spelling out) "God save the Queen"..(laughter).. ... Go to any community, going into the shrine, it tells you something about the community: the kind of shrine, or even the way the shrine is kept. Even the way the kitchen is kept tells you something! (laughter)

[end of session next session]

Well. we are still on the ten things to be avoided. We've done the first one. we come on to the second one. Would someone like to read that?

(2) Avoid friends and followers who are detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth.

S: So perhaps this can be discussed under two headings: first of all, the friends to avoid, and the followers to avoid. It's as though someone is in a sort of intermediate position. He still has friends but he also has followers. So what about friends? Supposing you are concerned with your spiritual development, with the maintenance of one's own peace of mind and spiritual growth: what sort of friends should you avoid? Does it mean that you can't have any as it were, worldly friends at all? What do you think it means?

Well. first of all, the friends, so-called, who obviously should be avoided.

Manjuvajra: Ones who encourage you to unskilful states.

S: And why do you think people encourage you to unskilful states? Is it that they deliberately wish to do you harm?

Mangala: They want to try to - perhaps are not that sure of what they are doing so it kind of reinforces their own belief in what they're doing. The more people they have doing that.

S: Yes. right.

Mangala: It's like creating a group.

S: It's as though such friends want to involve you in what they themselves are doing. They are not thinking so much in terms of whether it harms you or doesn't harm you, whether it's skilful or not skilful: probably they don't think in those terms at all, or would refuse to think in those terms, or would profess not to believe that whatever it is that they are suggesting you should do together could possibly do you any harm, like when they might invite you for a drink or an evening at the pub. They'd say. "well. what harm could it do? What's wrong with it?" Or "what's wrong in it?" And they might be quite unable to see your point of view and might think that you are just being unfriendly and stand-offish.

So sometimes it does create quite a difficult situation when there are old friends let's say, for whom you have some feeling and who have some feeling for you but they just can't see at all why it is that you are no longer willing to be involved or no longer willing to become involved with them in the things that you used to do together. I'm sure most of you have had some experience of that sort. It sometimes seems quite impossible to convey to them, to communicate to them, what you are into and the fact that you'd like to continue the friendship, but to some extent at least, it just would have to be on a new kind of basis. And perhaps they're just not willing to accept that. They perhaps think you are just being eccentric, or just going through a phase or something of that sort.

But I mean does this mean when it is said one should avoid friends who are detrimental to "thy peace of mind and spiritual growth"? Does it mean that one really has to avoid all one's, as it were, worldly friends, who don't share one's spiritual ideals? Does it mean that one cannot really be friends with them? In fact not only that, one should actually avoid them?

Mangala: I think probably there are some of whose contact with them isn't detrimental: might actually be helpful. Like they could be maybe artists or something like that say, who wouldn't actually share your own aspirations in quite the way you perhaps are into it but who nevertheless could have a positive effect on you and benefit.

S: The criterion is "friends who are detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth". Perhaps what is meant here is not so much the occasional contact, but the persistent and the regular association with such friends.

Manjuvajra: Couldn't it be alright to approach those friends on your own terms. As long as you

S: Well, if you can, because that is a criterion: "who are detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth." If you go along to see them, spend an afternoon with them, spend an evening with them, and you find that in so doing your own peace of mind has been completely disturbed, well, there is not much point in it. Or if you find for instance their attitude to the spiritual life is so cynical and so unsympathetic that it has a really unpleasant effect upon you, well, then no doubt you should not continue that association, not so long as one is liable to be affected in that way. This applies of course not only to friends in the ordinary sense but to relations - perhaps to relations above all in some respects. One has to avoid one's relations, perhaps, who are detrimental to your peace of mind and spiritual growth. You might even happen to be living with them.

Clearly there are degrees of friendship and degrees of association: it is very difficult to avoid people altogether, even people who are definitely detrimental to your peace of mind and spiritual growth: but you have to try to ensure that your closest contacts and your closest and most meaningful relationships and friendships are with people who do share your own spiritual ideals and who do contribute to your peace of mind and spiritual growth and to whose peace of mind and spiritual growth hopefully you also contribute.

It's not perhaps so much a question of total exclusion, but almost of arranging one's friends in a sort of hierarchy and spending most time with those who are most truly your spiritual friends without totally excluding contact with the others.

Mangala: You said once, there's a saying, "it's not so important where you visit but where you live".

S: I don't remember saying this but it's true perhaps more metaphorically than literally, if you see what I mean. "Live" in the fullest and richest sense, not simply where you usually spend the night, or where your roof is and where you keep your cornflakes! Not just that - where you live, yes. What is important is where you live not where you occasionally visit. It's important to have a base to which you can return from these various excursions and to return to that base.

Manjuvajra: Do you think there's a danger - in a way you've explained it, you've said you have a hierarchy of friends - but there would be a danger, wouldn't there. if you just related only to spiritual friends? Wouldn't that tend to create a feeling of dichotomy between your spiritual friends and the rest of the world?

S: But it is a dichotomy, - isn't there?

Manjuvajra: But I find it quite uncomfortable to feel that.

S: Well it is uncomfortable. Yes? Of course it is. But that doesn't mean that one should disguise the fact that there is a dichotomy. I mean, the majority of people in the world are not interested in spiritual ideals and spiritual development. There's no point in disguising that fact from oneself. They could be, they could become, many of them, if not most of them. if things were put to them in the right sort of way. Unfortunately usually they are no. But as things stand at present - I mean just open a newspaper any day and read it. What do most people seem to be involved in? Anything other than spiritual development. So if you are involved in that, yes, there's an absolute dichotomy between your way of life and theirs, your interests and theirs. Especially, say, if they are concerned with the acquisition of power, and you are doing your best to give up whatever power you happen to possess or at least not use it or operate with it where other people are concerned. There's an absolute dichotomy.

So I think we mustn't be afraid to face this and sometimes face up to the fact that however much, in a sense, we love our old friends, we are just going in an opposite direction, and if we are going in opposite directions it's difficult to meet. (Pause)

But that doesn't mean one should go to the other extreme and almost cease to regard them as human beings, if you see what I mean. Perhaps you are afraid of that. Well, it certainly isn't necessary to do that in any case. But for the time being you are out of communication, you don't really have anything in common in a deeper sense. You might be able to spend a pleasant social evening with them in a quite positive way, but perhaps only because for the time being, you've just in a sense forgotten about your spiritual ideals. (Pause)

This also doesn't mean that one should avoid friends who are "detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth" and only cultivate spiritual friends in an artificial sort of way, in a pseudo religious way. It's not sort of saying to yourself in a puritanical sort of way "oh. he drinks. I'm not going to have anything to do with him." You must actually see what the person is really like. Do you see what I mean? And it is quite possible to have, say, a friendship with someone who may not necessarily be interested in Buddhism, but who in some way of his own, perhaps in some strange way of his own, is concerned with being a genuine human being, even though he may not think of it in terms of actual spiritual development. One has to

genuinely discriminate and see where different people really are at. He may seem a very worldly person but in another sense he may not really be so. On the other hand there may be people who are ostensibly into religious life, but with whom one doesn't feel it possible to have any spiritual fellowship. You see what I mean? They may be professing certain religious beliefs, or they may even be almost professionally religious people, but you don't feel that they are really concerned with their own individual spiritual development, and therefore with such people the possibility of spiritual fellowship just does not exist.

So, broadly speaking, yes, one's spiritual friendships will fall within, yes, say the field of the Movement, and will broadly coincide with what are, in a sense, recognised as spiritual fellowships, spiritual friendships, but they may not always invariably coincide with that, if you see what I mean. I don't say this by way of comfort or consolation but only by way of reminding people that one is concerned with the essential and not with the apparent, with the real and not with the nominal. I'd be really suspicious in the case of someone who claimed that all his spiritual friends were outside the FWBO - if you see what I mean.

But it is possible to have the odd spiritual friend, that is to say the in the looser sense of someone with whom you can relate quite genuinely and positively, without detriment to one's spiritual growth, even in a sense in a way that has a stimulating effect on that spiritual growth. It's not at all beyond the bounds of possibility that some people should have the odd friend or two of that sort outside the formal limits of the Movement. But again I would be a bit suspicious of someone who wasn't able to make spiritual friends with anybody within the Movement. Surely one's best opportunities lie here! (Pause)

Well, what about the "followers", who are "detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth"? In what way are followers detrimental to your peace of mind and spiritual growth? Perhaps those who are Kalyana Mitras and have mitras tend to think of it in those terms. In what way could, say, having mitras be detrimental to your peace of mind and spiritual growth?

Nagabodhi: They can be completely insensitive to you and to your needs, to what you are. They can be very demanding.

S: Well you expect them to be unaware to some extent, don't you? Because if they were as aware of you as you are of them, they wouldn't be your mitras, you'd just be good spiritual friends of each other. So you expect and must accept, perhaps, a certain amount of unawareness and insensitivity. But not, of course too much.

Manjuvajra: You get all the rubbish.

S: Well, yes, but surely that is the function you take on in a sense, quite knowingly.

Manjuvajra: Yes but if you are not careful that can really disturb your peace of mind.

S: You should be able to take on that sort of responsibility then, when you take it on.

Mangala: If you can't then you shouldn't, presumably.

S: How could, say, followers be detrimental to your spiritual growth? Well, it's as we were discussing yesterday in connection with the first precept here - it's when they're followers in a sort of group sense, because that reinforces in a way your sense of group leadership and sometimes you may see the situation as one of spiritual community. but they to a great extent or at least in their weaker moments may see it as a group situation and act accordingly. Or they may try to almost force you to act or to behave as though it was a group situation, as

though you all belonged to a group, and that they were the followers in the group and you were the leader of the group and nothing but that.

Mangala: Putting you in a kind of authority position.

S: Well, yes, they can't help doing that to some extent, but the person who has the followers must resist that, mustn't let them get away with it. If you think you are not going to be able to resist their doing that, well you shouldn't take them on as followers or disciples, and not allow them to be such, or to consider themselves as such.

[end of side one side two]

..... that you are a good friend of mine and I'll do what I can for you. Don't think in any other way. You can make it quite clear in that way, sort of put your cards on the table. Say well maybe I have a thing or two which I can teach you, but it's no more than that. I don't consider myself therefore as a teacher - maybe sometimes I can learn a thing or two from you. You can put it like that, just so as to relax the whole situation, even though perhaps, or on the whole, you are more in the position of Kalyana Mitra, and he more in the position of mitra. But you put it like that just to prevent him putting you into that extreme authority position.

Mangala: Would you not say that was a good sort of strategy in any case - to adopt...

S: I think on the whole yes, especially if there is this tendency on people's parts to put you into an authority position. But don't go to the other extreme. Don't be so much of a pal, they don't take seriously anything that you say. Avoid that extreme too - that is shirking responsibility.

Manjuvajra: In a way, the very make-up of the Friends seems to protect from that. I mean you get it much less within the Friends I would have thought than in a lot of other movements because of the emphasis is on spiritual community.

S: I'm sure you do, yes.

Manjuvajra: Because people - mitras - seldom, it seems to me, relate to their Kalyana Mitras in that sort of way. I mean, I was going to say in the way that we relate to you but I mean we do relate to you much more in terms of as a teacher. But within the rest of the Movement it doesn't seem to happen like this.

S: Yes, one notices, in a way, within the Movement as a whole, there seems to be generally a quite healthy situation. In a way, mitras generally sort of look up to Order Members in general, but they're not unaware of their weaknesses and shortcomings, if you see what I mean. The two seem to go together, or they overhear Order Members telling each other off or something like that, so that has a sort of healthy corrective effect. On the whole they broadly accept that, well yes, they are quite a bit more knowledgeable and experienced than they are. Yes? And that seems OK - that sort of situation.

Padmaraja: We've spoken in the past quite a bit in the Movement about projection of the feminine, of mother, but we don't seem to have said an awful lot about father projection in relation to this mitra - Kalyana Mitra "relationship" for want of a better term. could you say something about that?

S: I don't think we've discussed much "Mother" in connection with this particular relationship have we?

Padmaraja: No. but between Men and Women we have.

S: Well. I think we probably haven't discussed it so much because it isn't generally so much of a problem. In the case of one's relating to women the whole thing is reinforced very often by the

sexual aspect. We do know that there are quite a few men who come into the movement, especially say, young men, with very negative parental images - say, with a negative father image. This may in some cases, create difficulty in relating to certain Order Members. But there's now quite a wide range of Order Members for them to select from and relate to. I've noticed in the past that if, for instance, in the case of such a person coming into the movement with a negative father image, a particular Order Member behaves or seems to behave in a slightly authoritarian way, well, then that particular friend or mitra will project his negative father image onto that Order Member, and will henceforth avoid that Order Member if he can.

But there are plenty of other Order Members who do not act, or seem to act, in an authoritarian way with whom he finds it quite easy to relate. There are some, maybe, who are so relaxed and easy going and friendly in their ways, that there's no possibility, no opportunity, of him projecting his negative father image on to that particular, or that particular kind of, Order Member. Do you see what I mean? So it doesn't seem to be really much of a problem, except perhaps where you've got a situation where there's quite a small centre with just one or two Order Members, and perhaps at least one of them is a bit authoritarian. You've got several people coming along with this negative father image and they find it quite difficult to relate to the one or the two Order Members who are the only ones around in fact just because of this particular reason. But it's as though if you've got a wide range of Order Members, there isn't really any difficulty. This certainly hasn't been ever brought to my attention as a real difficulty. except sometimes in these very limited situations.

Padmaraja: I get the impression, from talking to other Chairmen, that Chairmen in particular, just by virtue of the position that they're in, of really having to take the initiative: to be a man, they find automatically that they are going to call up that response. I know you've been speaking a bit in the other group about the necessity to be able to perform the function of mother as well: but that seems quite a difficult balance to hold.

S: It is a difficult balance. Perhaps, therefore, there has to be a sort of division of functions and that if you notice that, say, the Chairman of a particular centre is not able to carry off the double function, or maybe he's a bit lacking in tact: sometimes you can really lead and take the initiative, but you are so tactful about it that people accept it utterly: they don't take it as though they are being told what to do or that you are authoritative: they feel that they are just doing it along with you. That is just your skilful way of handling the situation: sometimes that happens. But if it doesn't happen and say that, for the sake of argument, that the Chairman of the centre seems to be authoritative, even despite his best efforts to appear otherwise: maybe it's the way he looks or the way he holds himself or the way he speaks: people take it as authoritative, then there needs to be another Order member around in a fairly prominent position who is of quite another type, quite another temperament, to whom if necessary, people can go; even have a bit of a grumble about that Chairman and give him (that is the other Order Member) an opportunity to smooth the whole thing over. Do you see what I mean?

So, in a way, if the Chairman is too much like "father" in the conventional sense, then there's got to be some other Order Member around in a quite prominent position who is very much 'mother' so to speak. I think this sometimes does happen. quite naturally.

Derek: Do you not think even that example in the long run is a bit dicey? If you have a good image that's very easy to project in that way of one Order Member who would be obviously a father type and the other obviously a mother type?

S: I wouldn't take this too literally. If you are literally and fully projecting father on to one and mother on to the other, no, that is not a healthy situation: that is more like a group situation. The aim of both persons concerned must be not to encourage that sort of projection, especially not to encourage it to stay put. So this is the purpose of, let's say, the mother figure, explaining the father figure to the person who is projecting father, so that in the end he can see what is happening. and can relate to that person more objectively, and therefore not have the need to relate to the other Order Member so much as mother, but can relate to him also more objectively. Its not a question of accepting that as the way the centre is run, that it is just a sort of device for dealing with the situation and overcoming it.

Padmaraja: But ideally one should be able to in time combine both these within oneself.

S: Yes. according to circumstances: everybody should, in a degree, according to circumstances. One and the same person should be capable of being quite hard on occasion, but also quite soft and gentle on occasion, as the situation requires. But some people are so prone to project this negative father image, that they may just see the Chairman as a negative father figure just because he happens to be the Chairman, however gentle, easy going, meek and mild even he may be. So, then, if they are to relate to anybody at all, it can only be someone who is very obviously, undeniably, mild and gentle and has no position to speak of, who, in a way, appears like mother even though he may actually not be like mother at all.

A few people even see Order Members as such as authority figures and they have perhaps the greatest difficulty of all in relating to the Movement, for obvious reasons. They resent that there are such people as Order Members around at all. and think that their wearing kesas in the way that they do is sheer arrogance. They look at it like that; as though it means a claim to great superiority and that means that they automatically look down on anybody who hasn't got a kesa etc., etc. A few people - fortunately a few - see things like that. They usually remain very much on the fringes of the Movement: they are never able to get very close.

Manjuvaja: Its a good argument for having Order Members - having quite strong, experienced Order Members who don't have any post anywhere, isn't it? In that they just move around: they haven't got any kind of official position, as it were: make it a lot easier for people to relate to them.

S: It could, yes, though of course some people, as I've said, do create difficulties for themselves just by virtue of the fact that someone is even just an Order Member. Some such people don't even like you to call yourself a Buddhist: they think that implies some claim to superiority. You can't win with such people, so you shouldn't try.

Nagabodhi: Where does it come from, that kind of attitude?

S: I think its deeply bound up with several of our modern micchaditthis. There's this thing of pseudo-equality, that nobody is really in a position to teach anybody anything; certainly not in the religious sphere, or spiritual sphere, or human sphere, let us say: that one man is as good as another. Why do you think that you are better than me? This is the basic sort of attitude. What makes you think that you are better than me? In other words you are not better than me. In other words. you are thinking that you are better than me. I am thinking that you are thinking that you are better than me..(laughter) I feel that you are better than me, and I don't like it...yes? This is what is really going on.

It's the egalitarian myth: that one person cannot be better than another. One might even stick one's neck out and say that men cannot be better than women. Not that they are not better. but that they cannot be better as it were "a priori": or women than men come to that. Or that one race even, cannot be better than another, it being usually assumed that if one race was better than another well of course it would be your race that was better: that is the sort of assumption. But that one cannot be better than another, not that one as a matter of fact is not better than another. So this goes, in a way, quite deep, and it pushes up against quite a lot of modern assumptions and presuppositions. doesn't it?

Nagabodhi: Do those assumptions have a common root do you think?

S: The common root seems to be lack of reverence. Lack of reverence seems to spring up when you think that you know. Because you know something you think that you have sort of taken it in, that you've absorbed it, it's become part of you, and if it's part of you, it isn't other than you, much less still superior to you. Coleridge has gone into all this in a passage which I quoted in a talk once. This sort of attitude springs from the over-valuation of theoretical knowledge. Because you know something, as you think. or know about it, you think that you are as in a manner of speaking, superior to it. I think this is perhaps the ultimate root, though there may be a deeper root still.

Manjuvajra: So it would be linked sort of culturally in the West with the rationalism of the 18th century?

S: Yes it would: though maybe not in a completely straight-forward way, that rationalism, even 18th century rationalism, always in all circumstances had that sort of effect. I mean no doubt that there was another side to it. That that rationalism tore down pseudo hierarchies. I mean this is how in fact it started. It started off as a protest against unreal and inauthentic hierarchies, especially in the form of the French aristocracy and the French ecclesiastical establishment. That was a completely valid protest, and they did right in rejecting that sort of hierarchy.

Manjuvajra: Did they recognise the possibility of a real hierarchy at that time, or did they not recognise the distinction between...?

S: It's very difficult to generalise, but broadly speaking it would seem that they did not. They thought in terms of liberty, equality and fraternity. Though there were other, relatively speaking, undercurrents going on at the same time, of a semi-mystical nature, usually linked with things like freemasonry.

Manjuvajra: The Illuminists.

S: And the Illuminists. Do you see what I mean? So that tendency was also there quite definitely and it was a quite important one. And that again was an aspect of the enlightenment in the widest sense.

Manjuvajra: Could we kind of re-define equality in terms of equality of opportunity rather than equality of being?

S: Ah. But I think first of all one should ask oneself what one is really trying to do when one re-defines a word, instead of finding a new word. Sometimes it suggests you're a bit attached to the old word and want to hang on to it and maybe some of its connotations somehow, yes? By the simple process of just re-defining it. In your heart of hearts you feel it's the same word, in a sense, the same thing, but you have sort of adjusted to some extent at least externally or superficially by re-defining the term. It's like the people who say well why not

re-define God? They don't want to sort of throw away the term "God": they want to keep it, they want to hang onto it. (They say) why think of God as the creator? Why think of God as omnipotent and omniscient and all that? Well, that's what you have meant for thousands of years by the term "God": if you don't want to mean that why use the term "God"?

So its the same with this term "equality". So one should ask, I think, that question first.

Manjuvakra: There are some good qualities about equality, I think.

S: Ah. I didn't speak about equality. I spoke about egalitarianism. I mean certainly one could say yes, people are equal in certain respects. Though again I would be careful of that. I really sometimes question whether equality is a suitable category to apply to human beings. Because what do you mean strictly by equality? What do you mean when you say that two things are equal? Supposing you say that two plus two equals four. Well this is sort of quantitative equivalents. Do you see what I mean? So this is the basic meaning of the word 'equality' - that one thing is the same as another. One and one is the same thing as two. Its just another way of saying two. So this is the basic meaning. In other words the basic meaning is quantitive. So when you say that two things are equal you mean that two things are the same.

In the same way when you say that two people are equal you mean that they are the same. So therefore you cannot say that two people are the same in 'esse': (in reality. in essence); except, of course, possibly in a highly metaphysical sense which would not come into play or into operation in ordinary socio-economic relations. So in a way, when you say that two people are equal, you really mean that for all practical purposes, or for certain practical purposes, one would do as well as the other. In other words. you negate what is unique: you negate what is truly individual. Supposing you say - well, give an example: supposing you want a person to do a certain job. It's a very simple job. Almost anybody could do it. all the people doing that job, to the extent that they do that job, are equal: but this of course excludes all that is specific to those people. So you cannot, in fact, say of human beings, as a sort of total overall statement, that they are equal, because then you are treating them as interchangeable. This is the root. basically, of my objection, really to the extension of the term "equal" to human beings.

I mean, there are certain respects in which human beings are equal, that is to say, interchangeable: but to the extent that they are interchangeable and therefore equal they are not human beings, because they are not individuals. For instance, let me give you an example of another kind. We were talking about spiritual friendship: supposing that you have a relation of spiritual friendship with a certain person, could just any other person take his or her place? No. So, there would not be equality because there would not be inter-changeability. If you were to say, well, what's the difference between them, they've both got two eyes and they've both got noses and they've both got mouths: they both can talk, they can both speak: I can see both of them. Well, what's the difference? They are equal, well, they're inter-changeable. But there are certain relationships, there are certain aspects of life, in which people are not inter-changeable: do you see what I mean? And it is in those relations of life that they are individuals.

So if you treat people as equal, you are not treating them as individuals. So if you insist on equality overmuch, you are ironing out individuality. So, this does not go against equality of opportunity because equality of opportunity says to the extent that they are the same, they should be treated the same. In other words, if they can all do a particular job equally well, no-one should be denied the opportunity of doing that job on grounds which have got nothing to do with their ability to do the job. This is what is meant by equality of opportunity: do you see what I mean? But it doesn't mean that no-one should be treated in a way which it is not

possible to treat everybody else, because that negates individuality, it negates individual needs: do you see what I mean?

Manjuvakra: No. Say the last bit again.

S: Well, go back to what I said before that: if there are a number of people able to do the same job equally well, there should be equality of opportunity: that is to say they should not be prevented from doing that particular job or having the opportunity to do that particular job, or to be given that particular education opportunity, on account of factors which have got nothing to do with their ability to do that job. You see? On the other hand, or the other end of the scale, nobody should be refused something because it cannot equally be given to others, if he needs that thing. Because that would be denying his individuality, as it were. Do you see what I mean?

Let me give you concrete examples. In the first, supposing there are four people applying for a particular job. Supposing one of those is black, one is white, one is yellow and one is red. Supposing they are all equally capable of doing the job and also suppose there are four places. None of them should be excluded on grounds of colour because colour is quite extraneous to the consideration of whether they are able to do the job or not. If that was taken into consideration that would be an injustice. yes? On the other hand supposing you might have, say, a highly gifted child at school with a great interest in art, in a particular way. but he is not given the kind of training that he needs to develop that kind of gift just because it isn't going to be given to everybody. yes? Do you see what I mean? If you refuse to treat the child as an individual or you refuse to meet his special requirements because they cannot be extended to everybody, because they aren't everybody's requirements, then you are doing him an injustice.

So equality of opportunity, whether in terms of employment or in terms of education, is not inconsistent with a rejection of egalitarianism which tends to regard everybody as equal, i.e. interchangeable under all circumstances, which amounts to a negation of individuality. So if you regard the sexes as equal, men and women as equal, strictly speaking you are regarding them as inter-changeable. That whatever a man as a man can do, a woman as a woman can do and whatever a woman as a woman can do a man as a man can do, which is obviously nonsense. They are equal in certain respects, because there may be certain jobs which a man can do as well as a woman and vice versa. There may be other jobs which a man can do better, other jobs which a woman can do better, other jobs perhaps which neither can do or which very very few people of any kind will be able to do at all. So to insist on equality between men and women in the sense of complete inter-changeability of men and women under all circumstances, is ridiculous. This seems to be the modern or the current or the contemporary tendency, to make men and women as interchangeable as possible. Or even to seek to make them interchangeable when in fact they are not really inter-changeable, which usually takes the form of denying that there are actually differences between men and women other than the strictly physiological ones and even those are played down.

So egalitarianism amounts to a denial of individuality. But equality of opportunity represents a different kind of thing altogether. You can believe in equality of opportunity without necessarily subscribing to egalitarianism.

Mangala: Apart from the physical differences in what way would you say that they weren't interchangeable?

S: Well, this is a big, even controversial, question. I'm not going to go into it now. But there are certain, let's say psychological and emotional differences between men and women which everybody encounters in the course of their ordinary experience of life, but which

some people nowadays seem to wish to deny, or to say do not matter at all.

Some even would say that women are not any better at bringing up small children than men are: a man could do the job just as well. Well, there might be a few men who could, but as a broad statement it is simply not true. Broadly speaking, women are better at that sort of thing than men, and seem to be better equipped by nature to fulfil that particular task. In the same way, it does seem that men are naturally more aggressive than women, and more competitive.

Anyway, we've already covered that ground haven't we? Or was it in the other group? Oh well, we're not going over it again then! Anyway, that was quite a wide detour. but I think perhaps quite a useful one. All right, let's go on to precept three.

(3) Avoid hermitages and places of abode where there happen to be many persons who annoy and distract you.

S: I would have thought a hermitage where there were many persons was a bit of a contradiction. Perhaps the author has in mind a really popular hermitage where there's a very popular yogi who's been living in solitude for a long time, and people have started flocking to him as they did to Milarepa. This raises the question of the optimum number of people with whom it's good to live in a spiritual community. Do you see what I mean? I mean for some people one other person would amount to annoyance and distraction.

Mangala: You said five was the kind of minimum number.

S: For what? Oh, did I say five? Oh no. it is the traditional minimum number, yes, for a spiritual community, a Sangha, for certain purposes. For certain other purposes, ten or even twenty. But it is not that many people necessarily annoy and distract you. it says "where there happen to be many persons who annoy and distract you". It is though you could have quite a lot of people living around you but they would not necessarily annoy and distract you: they could be quietly getting on with things in their own way and be even having a positive effect upon you. But don't live anywhere, even in a hermitage, where there are too many people who annoy and distract you. Because such people who want to annoy and distract others shouldn't be in hermitages at all but sometimes you do find them. It just depends on the amount of annoyance and distraction that you can actually stand. You may find it difficult to live in a community where there's just one rather irritating person. It may depend on your temperament. whether you easily get affected by things like that. But you don't want to live anywhere, say trying to meditate, trying to lead a spiritual life, where there's someone who really irritates and annoys you and whose throat you sometimes feel like cutting: its better to avoid a community in which there is a person of that sort...hmmm! That seems to be stirring up a few! (Laughter)

"Avoid hermitages and places of abode where there happen to be many persons who annoy and distract thee." Well, the distraction bit would seem to exclude the possibility of the mixed community, wouldn't it? That is to say communities of men and women, unless they perhaps happened to be quite elderly or quite spiritually mature. Its really strange. the way in which people can annoy you. Sometimes they can annoy you in all sorts of little, very insignificant, irritating ways. There was one our Friends - I think it was here at Padmaloka actually who was really sort of annoyed by the fact that one particular person - I can't remember whether it was another member of the community at that time or just a visitor - really annoyed by him because he had the habit of sniffing during meditation. Every few minutes there'd be a "sniff sniff-sniff", and this really upset one of the community members. It's usually little things like that. Or the way they chew their food or even the way they comb their hair. There's something about them you dislike and it really irritates you, and they are always around and it's as though they're always doing it and it's as though they're always doing it just to annoy

you! (Laughter)

Oh, well, lots of bells seem to be ringing! [Laughter] But I think you have to be rather careful, even rather cautious, about things of this sort.

I mean if it is a habit which could easily be corrected or a characteristic which could easily be corrected well perhaps quietly speak to him about it or try to persuade him to change, but sometimes it may not be something that can easily be corrected. It may be even be the shape of his nose or you may dislike that silly moustache that he insists on wearing, and doesn't want to shave it off. Or it may be a habit that he's got like banging the door or coming in very late at night and stumbling up the stairs and falling over himself; things like that, or insisting on having his record player on very loud in his own room so that you can hear it all over the house. There's all sorts of possibilities of annoyance, not to say distraction. He may want to talk when you want to meditate. He may want to read when you want to go out for a walk and have a chat with him. So it isn't easy always living in a community, even a spiritual community often, perhaps I should say most of all in a spiritual community.

But above all, I think it is probably important that in a spiritual community everything should be brought out in the open. There should be no 'how nice it would be if he would just do this'. So things do sometimes reach this point, this pitch, even in spiritual communities. So I think one has to be aware of this and, in a sense, realise what is happening, because it is a terrible thing really to happen in a spiritual community. One shouldn't just get used to it and accept it as all part of the deal sort of thing. and then just not do anything about it. Because it is affecting you, and affecting everybody all the time. If there's someone who's always being annoying, and someone who's always resenting it, it really upsets the atmosphere, it really affects the atmosphere of the community, in a very deleterious way. It's of course up, usually to the chairman or whoever is senior-most in the community, to do something about it if nobody else does, even if it means asking people to leave.

Dharmamati: What do you think the maximum number is in a community? Or is there a maximum?

S: A maximum. Oh, about two hundred! I mean, in Tibet you had thousands. Of course, they tended to sub-divide into subordinate communities. You can't have just one big unified community of two hundred or two thousand. But you can have a network of communities like that, even all under the same roof practically. I'd say, as a single working unit say eight, ten, even twelve seems to be very good. Above that you have to be quite careful to ensure that communication is kept up. If, say, you've got three dozen people in a community, its quite good if they naturally break up, in a manner of speaking, into say a dozen subordinate communities. But it isn't good to have a sort of situation - suppose you've got say three dozen people say one dozen are really a community in the sense that they really communicate with one another well and constantly: it's not good having them just surrounded by a number of others who are loosely attached who don't really communicate very well with anybody. You don't want to have a sort of inner nucleus and a fringe, this is what I mean.

You must either have a relatively small community with everybody integrated into that community and communicating within it, or you must have a loose association of two or three communities - I'm speaking of people living under the same roof - with what I call subordinate communities, so that everybody is a full member of a community.

What you don't want is say eight or ten people really communicating well with various hangers-on, who are technically members of the community but don't really participate very much. So if you feel you've got what I call hangers-on, you've either got to form them into a community of their own and give them an identity of their own within the larger context or larger framework, or you've got to incorporate them into the existing actual community, or

you've got to ask them to leave if you think they are not going to be able to do either. But you see what I mean, I think.

Nagabodhi: In some communities, the Order do represent a community in themselves although they may be living along with Mitras because they have more meetings and share responsibility for the situation they tend to become a bit of a core community - should that be balanced by working or suggesting to say Mitras in that situation that they have their own kind of meetings, their own....

S: No, I don't think that would be desirable, no. For obvious reasons. I think what would be more desirable if, well, just let the Order meetings as such go on, but if certain people seem to be being left out in the cold or if especially the Mitras seem a bit at a loose end, you should in a way subdivide the community, but having Mitras and Order Members in one subordinate community, and Mitras and Order Members in the other subordinate community, because the Order Members in any case will all be having their own, ideally more intensive communication within the context of the Order meeting anyhow. You don't want anybody in a community to feel they are less members of the community, even though they are less committed. Because they can very easily start just leaving it to those who seem to be, well maybe not more committed so to speak, but to hold the responsibility, or to know one-another better, or to be more "in" with one-another as it were.

One has to be quite careful that the subordinate communities or the different nuclei within a community don't form on a too narrowly personal basis, on a basis of more personal likes and dislikes, as it were, or quite natural worldly attractions.

Nagabodhi: Because you could then quite easily get what would really amount to an inter-group competitiveness. You'd have maybe one building with a sort of.....

S: Well, the inter-group competitiveness isn't a bad thing or you are recommending that?

Nagabodhi: No. I was seeing that as a danger, it would stop becoming a community. but more like a kind of public school.

S: Well I don't write-off the possibility that inter-group competitiveness within the wider context of the spiritual community couldn't be a positive thing. I mean have we talked about competitiveness in this group? No, it is the other group in which its all been cleared up. You just have to ..(unclear).. to your own satisfaction and perhaps hear the tapes of the other seminar perhaps. That has all been quite thoroughly thrashed out, I may assure you: what is positive and what is negative. in competitiveness and in competition.(pause)

But speaking of persons who annoy and distract you at hermitages or places of abode, the person who would really distract you in a spiritual community, would be the one who was not actually into the spiritual community himself, not really committed to, or if he wasn't say an Order Member, not really involved with the spiritual life. So in a sense, if he is capable of distracting you, as distinct from annoying you, he shouldn't be there at all.

[End of tape eleven tape twelve]

Dharmamati: It seems like it can be almost quite an energy drain.

S: Yes indeed, because he would be pulling in the opposite direction or at least not pulling with you which means that he's a dead weight that you have to pull along with you. So I think in a way one has got to be 'ruthless' - single inverted commas - with people in communities. We might accept the fact that, yes, some are not able to make quite the effort

that others are, or some may be less experienced, or may have certain personal difficulties and problems, but you must be able to feel that everybody in the community is really doing his best. Otherwise it is just not fair on those who really are committed. It is a real drag on them and it's a real shame that they should be held back in this way. Again not that one expects that everybody is able to make exactly the same effort or have exactly the same degree of commitment, at least they should be doing their honest best.

Derek: If there's someone you feel is unable to make an effort which would keep along with a community what would you advise that person to do?

S: I'm not speaking in terms of making the same effort. What it is important that the other members of the community should feel is he is genuinely doing his best. If he's obviously unsuited for life in a community at all, well, you'd just have to ask him to leave. But even if he wasn't say able to meditate very well or wasn't perhaps very good at the work, well if you could see he was really making an effort that would be sufficient. He might be a very capable person, he might be a very brilliant person, but if he's not making any effort in the community context well what value does that have? It is the genuineness of the effort that is the important thing. You don't mind doing a bit more because somebody else is not able to do it if you feel he's really doing his best. You don't mind making up that bit of leeway on his account then.

But if you feel he's just being lazy or he doesn't bother or doesn't care about the community, he isn't trying - then you may resent having to do extra work on account of his deficiencies.

So be very careful about being compassionate. You have got to be able to be compassionate. If you're merely weak or merely sorry for someone, sooner or later you will start resenting the fact that you are indulging them. You've got to be able to be really compassionate.

Dharmamati: It's what they call the near enemy, isn't it?

S: The near enemy, yes. So when I say be ruthless, I don't mean be void of compassion; but be void of this sort of sentimental weak, indulgent pity.

Devaraja: I personally think that there's a direct relationship between size of community and the people that you can.....I'm thinking of a very small community and the way you have to have a greater degree of ability to push forward in all the members in the community. In a larger community I think it's possible say to maybe - if you've got say half a dozen of you that have really got a similar intensity of commitment - then if there's one or two who are finding things difficult and harder to...

S: Well just if they're honestly finding things difficult and are not just slacking - OK, but it can be very irritating for a group of six or eight really capable committed people who are saddled with three or four passengers. They'd be better off without them. They'd cover the work quite easily if they were on their own without having to carry those people along.

Somebody did tell me that there was a discussion at *Sukhavati* recently about whether certain people who weren't pulling their weight should leave, and apparently the view was advanced by some members of the community that they should not be asked to leave on the grounds that they had nowhere else to go, and I thought - this really shocked me when I heard it. Because it's as though the community becomes a sort of welfare institution, but if somebody just couldn't manage or couldn't live outside that situation, well, the sooner you throw him out of it the better, so that he may learn for his own good at least. As if to say well they found a cosy little corner here, a little snug nook and if you were to winkle them out of it well it would be very uncomfortable for them, they can only survive actually here - such a person shouldn't be in a community at all. He's better off getting a job and trying to support a wife

and family. Actually yes! That's not the sort of thing I usually suggest or recommend! (Laughter) But life in a community should not become a safe berth for anybody. The only reason for them being there is that they couldn't, so it is alleged, survive anywhere else, had nowhere else to go, poor creatures!

Manjuvajra: There is a bit more to it than that actually. If you leave *Sukhavati* you leave with absolutely nothing. You've got nowhere to live, you've got no money, you've got no job and in London that is a quite difficult situation to be in.

S: Ah it wasn't said in the sense that they should just be sort of thrown out penniless on the street. I'm sure that wasn't the suggestion, but that they would not be able to look after themselves. Well yes certainly give them some financial help, give them time, don't just throw them out tomorrow, but the suggestion was that there were some people who would not be able to survive. Even if they were just given say three months notice and given some money on parting, would just not be able to cope. Such people are not qualified to live in a spiritual community. This is what was reported to me. I don't know who the people were. Maybe the situation was misrepresented, but, taking as it were in the abstract, say forgetting about the actual situation, what may or may not have happened or may or may not have been the case, that is certainly not the reason for somebody to be allowed to remain in a community, that they've got nowhere else to go.

Manjuvajra: I think some people would leave *Sukhavati* if they felt they had a bit of financial support to leave or were allowed to get jobs so that they could get the money to put a down payment on a flat, and yet still live in *Sukhavati* while they got their job.

S: I would say that if there are such people they shouldn't be living in the community. They clearly don't really want to. Whether it would be best for them to go and find a flat and live in that, best for them from a spiritual point of view, well I don't know since we're not discussing a specific individual, but if it wasn't the best thing for them well they should be discouraged from doing that and encouraged to realise the positive advantages of living in a spiritual community. But in a place like London it is in some ways all the more easy to manage. There are friends with whom one can stay, there are floors on which one can crash, it isn't difficult to get hold of casual work if you want to. People do these things all the time. So what we don't want to encourage is an attitude of not really being able to or not wanting to put your effort into the spiritual life and being unable to cope in ordinary worldly life either. We don't want to end up with a lot of people like this but we've as it were sort of, as it were, taken them out of the world but they're not able to function within the spiritual world, so to speak. Or they've come into the spiritual life in a sort of what used to be the old fashioned hippy way to some extent: thinking of it as a soft option. We don't want to encourage that.

If you're not fit for the world and you can't cope there and you can't manage there, well just find a nice quiet comfortable corner in a community somewhere, preferably in the country, and preferably where you don't have to do any work.

Devaraja: To some extent I feel that's what's happened with one or two of the co-operative businesses around *Sukhavati*, and I think that what's happened is people who weren't really prepared to commit themselves to the spiritual life have left *Sukhavati* and maybe got say a room or a flat somewhere in the neighbourhood and they're working in the co-operatives, but the fact is that really it's just a kind of....

S: The co-op is considered a soft option whereas the co-op is an extension of the Centre in a way. Because the co-op is a situation for committed people and one of the reasons why you set up the co-op is to make money for the movement, for that particular centre, so that one

does not have to go and ask the public to support something in which they're essentially not interested particularly anyway. So you're into the co-op - one, for the sake of right livelihood; two, for the sake of being able to work in a friendly atmosphere with people also committed to the spiritual life; and three, to make money for the Movement.

But if you just think ah, well, I can get by. It gives me enough money even if I work just two or three days a week, I get enough money and I can manage like that and the people are pretty decent. If it means just that you shouldn't be in the co-op. If it's just a means of getting by in the most comfortable sort of way or the least demanding way, so I think we have to be really careful that the co-ops don't become soft options. Yes, I agree, I think this has happened here and there to some extent.

Devaraja: I was very interested in what you said about the co-ops down at Croydon insisting on that two months probation. I think that should be instituted.

S: So it isn't a question of encouraging the less committed people to join co-ops. In a way, in a sense, they almost need to be more committed, and the co-op as a co-op even is not going to be successful unless everybody involved in it is really committed. If it's a soft option for certain people you are not going to make a real success of that co-op and everybody's going to be short of money. You're going to be short of money to give your Centre, you're going to be short of money for your own retreats and other things. Because you'll be working with so little collective energy, it's not going to be a success from an ordinary practical commercial point of view. You're just going to be ticking over and covering your own wages and not much more. That isn't sufficient. So maybe a bit of rethinking is needed on the subject of co-ops. Maybe not rethinking but a more rigorous application of one's ideals.

What you don't want is someone who's mildly into eastern religions, doesn't want to work more than two or three days a week, and thinks that he's thereby qualified to join your co-op and you take him on because he's willing to do the work. That is I think quite dangerous.

Padmaraja: I'm surprised to hear that that's happening.

S: Well there is certainly a tendency which I pick up, and what Devaraja says seems to confirm that. We have been talking about it over the last few weeks sporadically, or I've been talking about it.

Devaraja: It's almost like the dead wood from *Sukhavati* community has drifted out and then drifted into the co-op situation.

S: There does seem to have been something like that happening. Or in a sense people in a few cases have given up almost any further thought of personal development. They have more or less come to the conclusion it's not for them, they're not really into that, but they like the Friends, they like the people. They think well of everybody but they're just not into any real effort to develop personally. They just are conscious of that now, after a year or more perhaps, and as you say they drift into the co-ops. It's nearby, it's convenient, they know the people, it's not too demanding but that sort of person is not going to make or help to make a success of any co-op. He's going to be a real hindrance, a real drag. Even though personally he may be a nice person and you like him and you get on reasonably well with him, that's another matter.

He's really then in that case a follower who is detrimental to your peace of mind and spiritual growth. The community's peace of mind and spiritual growth. Ultimately he will annoy and distract you.

Devaraja: Also I feel that that particularly applies to women who've been working in the co-op situation. It's like it's the sort of atmosphere that one picks up from well, hippy wholefood shops.

S: Well those who feel and see these things must just raise your voices. It can't always be Bhante having yet another go at the unfortunate Order members that are trying to run things. Some people think I am sometimes over critical or over demanding, so it's necessary for others also to speak up, not just to leave it to me. Otherwise I'll become a negative father figure! (Laughter)

But I can really imagine the situation because there are some people in the movement including the co-ops who can really work. They know what work means, they know what it means to put yourself into something day and night until it's done with all your energy, every ounce of it. If they are working with that sort of spirit and that sort of capacity in a co-op it can be really frustrating and annoying to be saddled, as it were, with even two or three, even one or two, people of this other type. I'm sure it must be intensely frustrating. And you really would like to kick them out and just do the work yourself. It's easier that way and you would enjoy it more. So I think after carefully considering the situation and after due warning to those concerned, don't hesitate to cut down on numbers. You'll do more that way. You'll do more work and it will be more smoothly done and you'll enjoy doing it more. It will be more fun to do. It may be of course that you've actually taken on too many people of this sort and are not in a position to dispense with their services, limited though the use of those services may be, for the time being but you should bear the situation in mind and gradually make such adjustments as are necessary.

But the work in co-ops should go really forward with a swing. Everybody should be working together, all pulling their weight. Even though admittedly, yes, some will be more capable and more experienced and have more energy available than others. But providing everybody's really doing their best that doesn't matter.

Well I think we'd better stop for our morning coffee now.

BREAK IN RECORDING

.....transcended work. It is not that they don't work, they transcend it. To be able to transcend work you have to be able to work.

All right so we've done with 'Avoid hermitages and places of abode where there happen to be many persons who annoy and distract thee.' Perhaps just one final word. Many persons. It suggests we ought to be able to put up with the odd one or two persons, one or two persons occasionally but if there are many persons, well that is not a suitable place for us. Many such persons.

Would someone like to read the fourth precept.

(4) Avoid gaining thy livelihood by means of deceit and theft.

S: Well this is pretty obvious isn't it. This is pretty straightforward. It is also suggesting that someone who is deeply involved with the spiritual life, even to the point of being a guru in the sense of having followers, may still be having to gain his own livelihood. Do you see that suggestion? He may not necessarily be a monk in the strict sense but in any case avoid gaining thy livelihood by means of deceit and theft. Do you think it is simply a matter of say avoiding the use of false weights and measures and not committing any bank robberies? Is it quite as straightforward as that or are there not perhaps subtle forms of deceit and theft by

which one can gain one's livelihood and which one ought also to avoid?

Devaraja: Advertising.

S: You'd say advertising. Straightforwardly, simply that. You wouldn't think maybe there's nothing good in it at all would you say?

Devaraja: I think that advertising for things that are of definite benefit, like seat belts or something like that for cars. But I think the main ads are...

S: But it is quite interesting not only that there is a great million dollar, perhaps billion dollar or certainly million pound

- many millions of pounds - advertising industry. It is surprising not only that there is such an industry - that in itself is not surprising, but that working in such an industry should involve so much in the way of social prestige and economic reward and absorb so much in the form of artistic talent also. This is quite remarkable. Some advertisements which one sees around nowadays are clearly the work of very highly gifted people, and it really seems pitiable that gifts of that sort are being used in that kind of way. So clearly a lot of the talent of the country is being drawn into the advertising industry, which seems really sad. It's though they're the sort of people perhaps who should be getting involved with the FWBO. They're clearly alive, intelligent, in a way quite creative people but they're just prostituting themselves and their talents to the advertising industry.

Manjuvajra: Isn't this a natural consequence of - artists are normally supported by the people with money. In the past it's been rich people who have patronised art. Well now it's the capitalists.

S: It's not the capitalists, it's the general public rather. Wouldn't you say? The people who smoke and the people who drink.

Manjuvajra: I think the companies themselves like to see their names up big. I think advertising probably does more for the company than it does for its.....

S: For its actual sales.

Devaraja: Advertising really pushes sales. Without advertising a lot of products just wouldn't achieve the degree of selling that they do. It just wouldn't happen.

Padmaraja: They're just buying the myth of most products created by the television commercials and advertising.

Devaraja: Absolutely. That's what people are buying. They're buying an image, a style of life which tells them that they'll be something better - they'll have that style of life through acquiring that product.

S: What are these myths then? This is a quite interesting point. I've got a few thoughts on myths to communicate in a minute. What sort of myths are inculcated through the advertising industry in order to sell their products, because people like to live in accordance with those myths or to live out those myths or think that they are so doing at least. What sort of myths would you say?

_____: Romantic love.

_____: Power.

_____ : Sexual potency.

Devaraja: That you're a better mother if you use this soap powder. That you have access to gracious living if you eat *After Eight* mints. (laughter) etc., etc.

S: What sort of image is being sort of projected? What sort of person? Or rather the image of what sort of person with which you are being invited to identify by buying that particular kind of product. Just sort of give a string of adjectives.

Mangala: Successful.

[Various suggestions are offered, all of which Bhante repeats below]

S: Successful. Ideal, Self satisfied, Powerful, Contented, Elegant, Beautiful. Well there's really not much wrong with all these things as such. They are to a certain extent genuine life ideals or they could be taken as such if they were taken or understood positively. The pity of it is that people are cheated by it being suggested that they can achieve that sort of ideal or be that sort of person just by buying that particular product.

Devaraja: In a way it's not just deceit, it is theft as well because their myths are stolen from them, their kind of ideals are stolen from them and used to.....

S: That's true, indeed. They're exploited through in a sense what is - well not maybe best in them but at least through some of their sort of higher aspirations or relatively higher aspirations, because the aspiration after happiness is not a false aspiration though it may have a wrong object. No doubt some advertising does definitely pander to neurotic craving, there's no doubt about that; but perhaps the strength of advertising is not - I'm speculating a bit here - so much that it panders to the definitely neurotic but it panders to a sort of distorted human ideal. There is sort of something in human nature that requires genuine satisfaction and it's as though the advertising industry takes advantage of that.

Supposing it even tries to sell its product with the help of images of beautiful and alluring women, well this is not entirely negative because it's as though every man has got this other side of himself deep hidden within himself, which he needs to contact and to develop and integrate into his conscious attitude - it's as though the advertisement which makes use of these images of beautiful and alluring and seductive and mysterious or aggressive women is simply exploiting that aspect of his psyche, as it were, that need of his. Perhaps it is this that gives them the greater part of their strength, not a direct appeal to purely neurotic cravings.

Mangala: I think what it does also is that people are normally so bereft of anything really to ... any real values, that advertising holds up certain images which appear attractive and appealing, like a successful sort of young man in a white dinner jacket with a girl on his arm and a *Ferrari* sports car drinking *Martini* and all the rest of it! (Laughter) And you know this kind of gives them something to kind of live for which normally they haven't got anything to live for, any real values. So they see this, this looks like something appealing.

S: This is definitely another aspect of the situation, that people's quite genuine longings are able to be exploited because no genuine satisfaction or fulfilment for them is available in many cases in our society.

Mangala: They have no ideal.

S: The church doesn't do its job, even the state doesn't do its job in this respect. Philosophy

doesn't do its job, education doesn't do its job, in providing anyone with ideals, real ideals, spiritual ideals, and so people are left wide open to this sort of exploitation, these sort of pseudo ideals being dangled in front of their noses. There's sometimes a sort of reflection of something genuine but it's not genuine to the extent that it's associated with those particular objects.

You are promised happiness, you are promised content. Well those are things which are worth working for but you won't get them by standing by your *Ferrari* with your *Martini* in your hand and a young lady on your arm, not for more than a few minutes anyway.

Nagabodhi: It's a sort of self fulfilling prophecy because if you're told enough that it's a *Ferrari* that'll make you happy you spend your life trying to get a *Ferrari*, you get one and then you think at least that you're happy.

S: Yes, you think that you're happy, or you think that you would be happy if you could get the new model *Ferrari*!

Devaraja: It's quite interesting. The other evening Kamalasila and I were having a discussion about the possibility of producing some commercials for the FWBO and I was putting forward that we should in a way use and exploit the whole approach to advertising to do it. We could start with something like it's the nature of every organism to grow and to develop and just pile on images of flowers opening and lizards jumping over large obstacles and (Laughter)

S: But don't you think the current trend in advertising itself is to mock what you're actually doing. Self caricature seems to be the trendy thing in advertising. At least it was a few weeks ago when I was down there.

Devaraja: That fashion recurs.

S: And also the ads you see before the films. They seem very self caricaturing, self mocking very often. Perhaps it's dangerous to take that approach too far, dangerous from the point of view of advertising because in a way you can do it as a gimmick or a phase but you can't make it a regular thing otherwise you are really cutting the ground from under your own feet so maybe they've already started giving that up.

Nagabodhi: It comes in waves.

S: There was the honest approach some of my friends in advertising told me about some years ago. Obviously you can't be too honest in advertising, not really honest. You just have to appear very honest. You say well admittedly this is the most expensive brand of such and such on the market, we admit it - honest approach - but it's the best etc., etc.

But then this question of the myth. I think it really is important because it has seemed to me recently more and more that people do live by myths. They don't live by facts, they don't live by reason. They live by a myth. They are looking for a myth. We have had a bit of a discussion about this in some context or other at the LBC team.

For instance what is a myth in this connection. A myth seems to be something which justifies or which enables you to fulfil or gives you a structure within which you can fulfil, or a philosophy in accordance with which you can fulfil a certain tendency within yourself. Now my more recent reflections have grown out of something that I also wrote about in *Shabda*, this is that myth as I called it, of the feminist movement, the women's lib movement, that history is the record of Woman's oppression by Man, and I deliberately capitalised Woman

and Man. This is their reading of history, that if you just comb through history you'll just find one disgraceful example after another of the way in which women have been oppressed by men or woman by man. History tells this shameful story. So it seems to me - this is what I said in this article - that that is not based on fact. I mean certainly there are concrete instances in which men have exploited women or oppressed women. There are also concrete instances in which women have oppressed and exploited men. You might even admit that there are more instances of men oppressing women than of women oppressing men, but that is perhaps debatable, but to see history exclusively, or almost exclusively, in those terms and to see the history of the relations between the sexes especially as nothing but the history of oppression of woman by man is myth. Do you see what I mean?

And I compared it to the myth, the anti-semitic myth. Some anti-semites believe that there is a world wide conspiracy on the part of the Jews to take over all the wealth and power in the world so that they may be able to lord it over the gentiles and oppress them and in fact rule the world. This is the anti-semitic myth, and the main scripture of this myth is of course "the Protocols of the Elders of Zion". Have you heard about these things?

They are very famous and were very famous a few decades ago just after the First World War. It was alleged that prominent Jews, leading Jews, from all over the world had a secret meeting shortly before the World War somewhere in Europe and concerted a definite strategy for taking over all the wealth and power and eventually governmental authority in the world and rule the world. And "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" purport to be the minutes, the records, the confidential minutes, the confidential records, of this series of secret meetings and these appeared - I believe the language in which they first appeared was Russian - they appeared shortly after the war, were speedily translated into English and have gone into dozens and dozens of editions in English and circulate amongst anti-semites still very widely. So this is the myth in which they believe and this is the sort of basis of their anti-semitism.

Now if you read history, yes you will find examples of Jews exploiting gentiles; you'll also find examples of gentiles exploiting Jews, even more so. But to read the whole of history in this sort of way is a complete distortion of history, it is a myth. But there are some people who live by this myth, this anti-semitic myth. Why? Because it enables them to fulfil a certain feeling which they have. So in the same way the women's lib myth of woman's oppression by man enables certain women to fulfil or to live out a certain feeling. The myth may be sort of pseudo historical, pseudo scientific. There may be a myth of racial superiority - a myth to the extent it is not based on scientific facts - Some people live by that myth.

So it would seem to me, reflecting on these sort of examples, that ordinary people tend to live by myths. Christianity is a myth essentially. It is the myth of a son of god who is killed by his enemies who rises from the dead, who ascends into heaven and takes his worshippers and believers with him. That is the myth. This is what appeals in Christianity, not the teaching of the sermon on the mount etc., etc., though they do have their appeal also. It is the myth which really moves people.

So we know there are many other myths. So people live by myths and this is why, to get back to the point we departed from, why I think the advertising industry is so powerful essentially. Not so much because it offers satisfaction of neurotic greed but because it offers a pseudo myth. Do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: Do you think myths are necessarily bad things?

S: Oh no I certainly don't. There are such things as bad myths, let us say, though in a sense it may be a contradiction in terms. I think a myth is to some extent to be judged by the function it fulfils. the anti-semitic myth is not only false it is also bad; because it enables people to

indulge in their anti-semitic feeling, that is to say their personal hatred for Jews. The women's lib myth is not only a false myth but a bad myth because it enables certain women to give expression to their hatred for men, and so on. So a myth would be a good myth if it enabled people, if it helped people to give expression to their higher aspirations or if it enabled people to develop, and it would be a false myth if it was pseudo historical, pseudo scientific.

A myth may be a false myth and to that extent not a true myth at all, to the extent that it purports to give not a myth but facts. For instance the anti-semitic myth doesn't say well here we are giving you a myth, giving you a philosophy, we're giving you the facts, this is what happens, those elders did hold that meeting, this is what they are plotting to do. Usually or very often the pseudo myth presents itself as scientific fact. Well Christianity itself does this. It doesn't present itself as myth, it presents itself as historic fact that the man, Jesus, it assumes that there was actually a man called Jesus though this is doubted, actually was killed, actually rose from the dead because he actually was the son of god. That he actually was born of a virgin, that this is not myth with a sort of symbolical meaning, this is actual historic fact, that his mother was a virgin.

Manjuvajra: Doesn't the believer of a myth have to believe it's fact for it to really have any kind of power behind it?

S: It would seem so psychologically speaking but you see the difficulty arises when a myth which is presented at least as pseudo history is exploded as pseudo history or is exploded as a pseudo science. Very often of course you put up a very strong resistance but sometimes it happens that eventually you just have to accept that what you had hitherto believed did happen or was the case was not so. And that you feel that your myth, what you lived by, has been exploded.

Kamalasila: But that's what did happen to Christianity, wasn't it?

S: Yes, to a great extent. There are some people who sort of go on believing in the myth and who believe that the myth is not just myth but is historic fact. They seem to be the most convinced Christians in a way and also the least informed and the least thoughtful. These are the extreme as it were evangelical wing or fundamentalist wing. They are the strongest christians. Well it perhaps includes the Catholics in a sense too, the Roman Catholics. But those who are liberal minded and who seem to accept well, yes, we can't take it all literally, the meaning is mythical and symbolic rather than factual and historical and scientific, they seem to have less conviction. Do you see what I mean? That seems to be the difficulty. The myth which you live, which you believe is literally true, gives you tremendous conviction and tremendous energy.

Devaraja: It's almost like that sort of myth, say like some of the symbolic stories or something like that in the Jataka tales or stories in the tantric tradition; it's almost like you can accept them as myth but it's almost like they are fact on a mythical level and the trouble with the false myths is that you can't somehow really use them, internalise them.

S: That's true. Matthew Arnold suggested that Christianity should be treated as poetry rather than as dogma. That was a very sensible suggestion. You find it in the Mahayana. The Mahayanistic myths are presented from a literary point of view as though they actually happened but to the best of my knowledge no Buddhist scholar or teacher has insisted that you must believe that it did literally happen like that, it has not been made a dogma, even though more often than not the majority of Buddhists have actually believed that it did really happen like that; but that has not usually been made a sort of point of dogma, so to speak.

This is just because of the generally more relaxed attitude of Buddhism, especially the Mahayana, and its greater awareness of what we call upaya kausilya, the skilful means.

[End of side one side two]

Devaraja: It's almost like the sort of myths of Christianity are just bad poetry.

S: Well when the myth is read as fact it becomes bad poetry. Not because the poetry as such is bad - it can be very beautiful but because that sort of reading distorts it really and even takes a lot of its real beauty away.

Kamalasila: And its real impact.

S: And its real impact. Though paradoxically some people at perhaps a lower level of sophistication seem unable to accept a thing mythically and to benefit from the truth of the myth, if one can use that expression, unless they can also accept it as historic fact. In fact it has been suggested in earlier ages people didn't make that sort of distinction as we make it now because perhaps of the greater, even the more one-sided development of our sort of critical rational way of thinking.

Manjuvajra: It's our emphasis on the scientific approach that makes us regard myths as.....

S: Or which makes the distinction between myth and scientific historical fact so important. There wasn't such a big difference it seems for people in earlier ages.

Padmaraja: It's almost as if the myths have a life of their own. It's not that we live the myth, but it's as if they are almost living through us. I just have this image of Giotto - scenes from the life of Christ.

S: Right, and also Buddhism has this advantage over Christianity. Christianity was myth from the beginning but Buddhism started with the human, the historical, the factual and myths developed later and Western Buddhists at least following the development of Buddhism can see the myths emerging within Buddhism and can see the purpose, can see the reason why they arose, the function that they fulfilled and therefore are able to make use of them themselves and not to identify Buddhism with the literal reading of a myth. Because the Buddha's own teaching was not mythical. He was not a mythical personality.

Devaraja: How about these recent investigations around the Shroud of Turin

S: Again it's the obsession with the factual and the scientific. It's trying to prove that the myth was true, but it doesn't, it's completely irrelevant. Even supposing that they do prove that that shroud is as old as it is supposed to be and it actually was worn or it wrapped the body of, someone called Jesus who was crucified, it wouldn't prove anything! Was he an incarnate son of god, that's the important point. It wouldn't prove anything of that nature at all. It couldn't possibly do. It would only prove that there actually was a man who presumably was called Jesus who actually was crucified at that time and that we have the shroud that his body was wrapped in. Even if they proved as much as could be proved it would be no more than that.

Nagabodhi: And even if they proved that he'd left the imprint of his body through some spiritual power or that the shroud had been preserved by.....

S: Well now we've got this Kirilian photography so we wouldn't be over impressed would we? There is a theory among some of the rationalists that the marks were produced by

wrapping the image around a bronze figure that had been heated in a furnace, and that would produce the scorch marks they say and they are calling for the actual experiment to be made with a piece of cloth wrapped in that way around a heated bronze figure to see what sort of effect, what sort of picture, what sort of image would be produced. But apart from that - I look at it from another point of view - I've seen photographs of this shroud. My impression was what an unpleasant sinister looking person! [Laughter] That was my immediate reaction. Do you see what I mean?

So even if you do demonstrate that well yes this is the shroud that wrapped the body of Jesus, all right you prove therefore that this person Jesus did exist, that he was crucified, well one is still at liberty to say that may be so but I just don't like Jesus, I don't like this person. (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: Even if he's the son of god I don't have to like him! [Laughter]

S: Even if he rose from the dead I still don't like him. Even if he is the son of God I still don't like him. Well a Christian can hardly imagine himself adopting or anyone adopting such a position, it would seem like madness to a Christian, but not to a Buddhist. Because a Buddhist sees you as an individual and ineluctably an individual. You have the right in a sense, in a manner of speaking and only in a manner of speaking, to dislike the Buddha. You are given that freedom in Buddhism, you are even exhorted in Zen to kill the Buddha if you meet him. You don't find Christianity using that sort of language.

So Buddhism is in the position of being able to have powerful myths and to use them but Christianity seems to be possessed by the myth, identified with the myth and you have to accept the myth as fact, but nonetheless even partly because it is accepted as fact, the myth has tremendous power. The Christian myth still has great power even though intellectually, historically, scientifically, it's been discredited to such an extent, but it still has power as a myth.

Mangala: Do you think that to that extent it still has power over most of us broadly even though we're intellectually not Christians as it were.

S: I think if it has power over us as myth and we recognise it as having power just as myth I think in a sense no harm. If for instance you feel really attracted by the myth of the virgin birth, you feel inspired by that, you take it just as myth. You reject the necessity of believing or even the possibility of believing that Christ if there was such a person was literally born of a virgin but you respond to the beauty of that myth. You are then making use of the myth, or at least there's the possibility of making use of the myth. The myth is not dangerous for you then. This is why it is sometimes said that Buddhists are in a better position to use the Christian myths than the Christians are themselves because the Christians are not so much in a position of being able to use their own Christian myths for the sake of their individual spiritual development. They're more in the position of being possessed by the myth and because they are possessed by the myth, being possessed by an energy which they do not fully understand. Do you see what I mean? They are taken over by the myth. They do not use the myth in the interests of their individual spiritual development.

In the same way we as Buddhists we can make use of the myth of the Grail or the Legend of the Grail and all these sort of things. They are at our disposal in a way that perhaps they are not at the disposal of the average Christian. There are Christians or people who still call themselves Christians who don't accept the historicity of Christianity or the full historicity of the life of the Christ. They don't see the myth as fact any more. They respond to the myth but they're not real Christians in the full historic sense or the church sense any more. You could call them myth Christians or mythological Christians and when some people feel they

don't want to give up Christianity, when it is in a positive sense and occasionally it is, it's simply that they are not willing to give up these myths.

But if it is a question of not being willing to give up myths which you actually find as myths helpful to you in your spiritual development, well then why should you give them up? What you need to give up is that narrow and rigid Christian framework within which the ordinary Christian encounters the myth. The pseudo scientific and pseudo historical trappings.

Mangala: It's a bit like some people almost see themselves having been created by the myth rather than the myth itself being a creation of man.

S: I mean medieval Christian myths are very interesting, especially those which are on the borderlines, on the frontiers, of orthodoxy. There are some very strange myths like the myth of the anti-christ and the myth - or maybe you could say it was a legend but perhaps it's as much myth as legend - of the female pope. That there actually was never a female pope but there was a very persistent myth of a female pope who was usually called Pope Joan and who was usually described as an Englishwoman and who was only detected when she produced a baby in the midst of a papal procession and she was then I believe burned at the stake or something like that.

But it's really strange, why should this myth constantly recur and be so persistent. It clearly means something doesn't it? One can begin to sort of even think what it might mean.

So all these sort of let us say borderline myths which were not sort of officially recognised - well the Roman Catholic church in fact distinctly repudiated this myth or this legend that there ever had been a female pope. At least it was officially repudiated I think in the early Middle Ages. Before that they hadn't bothered to repudiate it as it were. It was a popular belief which no one particularly bothered about, but after the early Middle Ages and the proper establishment of papal power, this myth was officially rejected and the name of Pope Joan was withdrawn from certain lists in which it had hitherto appeared. But the myth persisted despite the disapproval of the church and the fact that the church disowned this female pope and said that there never had been a female pope of this name, which is of course the verdict of history.

But for some reason or other the popular imagination interpolated a female pope and these legends and even biographies of her were produced.

What about the myth or legend of Prester John and his African Empire? The legend or myth of this great Christian empire in the midst of Africa. So these are very interesting things, to say nothing of the whole series of legends and myths associated with the Grail.

Mangala: Are there any sort of modern myths you could think of that are.....

S: Well I mentioned the anti-semitic myth and the women's lib myth. Modern myths seem to be predominantly negative. Hitler's myth of encirclement and a need for living space - 'Lebensraum' - for Germany. That was a myth actually that he created to ensure a certain response or reaction on the part of the German people, that they were being encircled by their enemies.

Mangala: Do you think there's any myth which say maybe people in the Friends are a bit caught up in?

S: I think they might share certain contemporary myths but they don't seem to have any special myths of their own whether of a positive or a negative nature. This is one of the

things that was discussed at the LBC meeting.

Manjuvajra: There's one that I've become aware of. I don't know whether you'd really call it a myth but it's in a way what I would call the myth of the revolutionary. I mean I mentioned the Illuminists earlier, it's a sort of Illuminist myth that one is part of a partly secret - secret not because it's kept secret but because it's a system of individuals relating to each other - You're part of this system that's working towards the overthrow of society for beneficent aims, and that certainly seems to supply.....

S: But that isn't a myth is it?

Manjuvajra: It's not a myth? (Laughter)

S: I would say that something more like a myth was the myth of the Aquarian Age, that we are now in the Aquarian Age and are being all swept along, willy nilly, by this great wave of evolution which is now sort of carrying us into the Aquarian Age or has in fact already carried us into the Aquarian Age and we're all part of that process whether we know it or not, whether we want to be part of it or not: and things like the Festival of Body, Mind and Spirit is just a big manifestation of the fact; evidence of the fact, proof of the fact, that the Aquarian Age is here. They're all part of the Aquarian Age. This is what makes them all part of one vast movement. Well, here we contest the myth don't we. We fight against it because we don't think it's true. We feel that there could be in a sense not a new age in the sense of something really collective but if there are sufficient people, sufficient new men, well there could be a new age. So we try to work more in that sort of way because we feel this is the only real way of working towards this, so that is not a myth. I won't say this is fact but it should be fact for us.

Manjuvajra: Where I feel it becomes myth is the, if you like the emotive power that that image has. One of the things I used to do when I came out of a James Bond film I'd like to feel like James Bond. In this particular case with that kind of image you can actually kind of....

S: Well I would say that isn't a myth. This is an ideal rather than a myth I would say. A myth seems to be more of the nature of a story, an account or a description of a series of events. Something which is represented as having happened or as actually happening now like say the myth of say the anti-christ.

Manjuvajra: What is that?

S: I'll only briefly mention it, it is quite complex. It is this figure which comes shortly before the end of the world and purports to be Christ, who is of course in any case expected, but he actually is not Christ, he's the false Christ, in fact he's the anti-Christ and he takes over all temporal and spiritual authority. He's a sort of power figure. This is my reading of the whole thing, masquerading as a spiritual figure. It appears constantly during the late Middle Ages. It plays an important part in traditional Protestant theology because the pope was identified with anti-christ.

I think to be polite Mr Paisley, the concept of anti-christ still has some meaning though most or practically all modern Protestants are rather ashamed of it and don't really say anything about anti-christ certainly not about the church of Rome or the pope as anti-christ any more. But the pope was often depicted as anti-christ in art during the Reformation. Anti-christ was depicted wearing the papal tiara, the threefold crown. This is a quite interesting field actually. I intend to do a little sort of research in this field. I think it has some quite interesting lessons for us in a way in as much as it will illustrate what happens when the

spiritual presents itself as the mundane, or what is essentially mundane purports to be the spiritual.

It's as though the temporal leader presents himself as the spiritual teacher. When the group masquerades as the spiritual community. This is what this myth is essentially all about and historically it sprang out of a deep concern among many more spiritually minded Christians, a deep concern at the secular activities of the papacy and feeling that many of these activities were completely incompatible with its spiritual goal so the myth of anti-christ seemed to have sprung out of this sort of almost collective concern. As though the devil himself had usurped the place of Christ. This is how a lot of people felt about the papacy, that the devil was sitting in St Peter's chair, this is the sort of thing that they said. If you really believe in Christ and believe in the papacy and in the authority of the man who is sitting in St Peter's chair this could be a terrible thought, that it is actually the devil who is sitting there. It's the devil beneath all these splendid robes and wearing this magnificent tiara and governing the whole church in the name of God. It's actually the devil. So it can be a very powerful, a very potent sort of image and it had all sorts of repercussions especially among ordinary people throughout Europe at the time of the Reformation and even before.

It came as a tremendous realisation, like a thunderbolt as it were, to Luther, that the pope was anti-christ and this is what he meant. This is what the papacy represented to Luther at that moment.

It was as though the devil without anybody realising it had crept into the place of Christ or the vicar of Christ at least.

Nagabodhi: Something I've been trying to work out over the last half hour. From the beginning Christianity didn't start out as history, it started out as myth but which was accorded by its followers the validity of history.

S: Yes, though there wasn't any point at which they did that. They seem to have taken myth as history from the very beginning as far as the records go. We cannot detect in the gospels any point at which history changes over into myth.

Nagabodhi: What I'm wondering is you know the point you made in 'Buddhism and Blasphemy' that somewhere within every Christian is the urge to blaspheme, is the urge to sort of shift off that oppressive weight.

S: Well it is felt as an oppressive weight which very often it is, maybe not invariably.

Nagabodhi: I was wondering whether there's a direct link between that and the fact that it is in the West, it is in our society that science has actually taken on the power that it has. It's almost as if perhaps people have been trying to probe the nature of truth as a reaction against the fact that truth until it's been probed fully contains god. As if the evolution of science has been a kind of actually a blasphemy.

S: Well sometimes scientific discoveries were labelled as blasphemous because they contradicted the scriptures. Science was blasphemy at one time practically. You had to be very careful. If you were a scientist, even if you were the pope and there was a scientifically minded pope, Sylvester the second, even if you were pope if you were interested in science you got the reputation of being a magician and therefore in league with the devil.

But to go back to the point you made earlier Christianity seems to have been a myth from the beginning which still in its very early stages incorporated or sought to incorporate historical elements and ethical and spiritual teachings, whereas in the case of Buddhism it was from the beginning an ethical and spiritual teaching which in the course of time incorporated myths.

Anyway any thoughts or comments? I'm simply reminded of the steps by which we arrived at this digression. We have been talking about myths and the power of myths, and we got into this by way of a consideration of advertising because advertising seems to make use of, to manipulate, to invoke, the myth, and we got onto advertising because that was a good example, it seems to us, of a wrong means of livelihood.

Maybe just wind up this part of the discussion and then get back to the more general question of livelihood. We've spoken of myths, I also mentioned in passing legends. We've also mentioned images even ideals. So perhaps we should be aware that we've been using these terms for the most part quite loosely. Sometimes we haven't distinguished quite correctly perhaps between myth and legend or between myth and image or even image and ideal but these are all interconnected. They all belong to the same area, almost to the same family and this is by virtue of the fact that they are all in one way or another, though perhaps not quite so much the ideal but we'll come to that in a minute, connected with the irrational. They all involve the irrational and this is what gives them their power and their potency, and it is within the context of the spiritual life, very important to involve the irrational, very important to enlist the co-operation of the irrational. Otherwise your ideal remains an ideal in the very narrow limited sense of being something very cold and beautiful and conceptual that doesn't really spark you off or stir you or energise you.

So when at the LBC we had this discussion about myths or even the possibility of creating myths, though I've pointed out you couldn't do it consciously, within the FWBO, perhaps what we were talking about in broader terms was the necessity to enlist by one means or another within the FWBO as far as our individual spiritual lives are concerned, the co-operation of the irrational. Because if that is pulling against us all the time we won't make very much headway.

Kamalasila: This seems to be very much the message behind *The Sutra of Golden Light* lectures that we've been listening to. It's as if in the lectures you were sort of laying down very broad principles and it's quite difficult to see where those principles could lead.

Devaraja: Thoughts that occurred to me in that area. In a way it's almost necessary to create a sort of landscape in our locality in which these myths can arise. Almost like a symbolic landscape. That's why I think a pilgrimage is very important. One's that involve completely non-functional.....

S: It's like the world of the Lord of the Rings. Before Tolkien could create that myth or that legend he mapped out that world. You need to map out the world in which your myth takes place. Well in a sense we do that when, in terms of traditional myth, we talk about the six realms of being and even the spiral and the mandala of the Five Buddhas. In a way we're sort of mapping out our world. Though perhaps that isn't quite literal enough or complex or elaborate enough.

Devaraja: It's almost that one needs to feel that there exists within one's physical landscape, there exists almost like a sort of another level, almost like a Middle Earth or some thing like that.

S: It is important for Christians to sort of be able to prove that the Shroud of Turin was actually the shroud that wrapped the body of Christ and in I think it was the Fifth Century there was almost this craze for discovering the actual sights associated with the life of Christ and to be able to identify them, visit them and go on pilgrimage to them.

So this was a sort of confirmation of the myth that it actually had happened. So that was a

sort of in a way a falsification of the myth because it meant reading it through historically, but nonetheless perhaps there is that need to map out the space within which your myth occurs. Even sort of geographically except that it cannot be a myth in the strict sense. It maybe has something to do with your history, with the history of the movement perhaps. It's as though that has to assume a mythical dimension without actually being myth.

There are sort of myths associated with Dr. Ambedkar. Some of his followers seem to believe that he literally knew everything which is rather interesting.

Mangala: It's like - I suppose you've said this all before but in a way you have to give some sort of concrete expression to one's ideas, Not just a nice little idea up in your head but more like our whole co-ops centres, everything we do in a way is to some extent an expression or perhaps ought to embody to some extent, ought to be imbued with and influenced by, our sort of spiritual ideals or to manifest and illustrate it, give them form and colour and life and so on.

S: This ties up with some of the things we were discussing yesterday about art and the artistic temperament. Making the Movement itself more our collective work of art as it were, in the sense of actually embodying literally, almost physically, the ideals. One of the reasons why I was quite keen on having that golden stupa at the top of Sukhavati if you see what I mean. It had no practical functional value at all. You're spending maybe a good five hundred pounds of Sukhavati's money on something the significance of which is purely symbolical, which some good pragmatist might consider an absolute waste of money. I'm even thinking of trying to find the money for actually gilding it with proper gold leaf, not just paint it in gold paint. I was really quite sorry we had to use gold paint on those gates.

Devaraja: It's only a temporary thing though.

S: Well even temporarily! If you see what I mean. Gold is very archetypal anyway isn't it. It's the untarnishable, imperishable even, incorruptible element. Perhaps we could gild the whole of Sukhavati. (Laughter) Or that's going perhaps a bit too far. Gild a brick!

Nagabodhi: Is the - I'm not sure if it's a myth or a symbol, but the idea of the lower evolution and the higher evolution. Would you say that really that is a myth?

S: As understood by me this is fact rather than myth, though I think people who don't express themselves very carefully or have looked at it from the scientific point of view or philosophical point of view are virtually treating it as a myth and accepting it in good faith as a myth rather than as anything else. I don't personally regard it as just a myth. No I don't.

Nagabodhi: I've never actually had the experience of doing this but some people have talked to scientists about the higher evolution and admittedly the people who I've heard have done it were not very gifted as thinkers or speakers, and they complained that the scientists made mincemeat of them - or whatever - lentil bake!! (Laughter)

S: One of these people did tell me. He was in some way the least suited person I could almost imagine to sort of discuss evolution lower and higher with even a schoolboy who was doing botany and biology.

Manjuvajra: I've had trouble with it myself. I didn't have any trouble until I tried to give a talk on it once. I found that I can understand the lower evolution, I can understand the higher evolution but when I try to connect the two that's where, when I try to connect the two from a scientific point of view, that's where I find it really falls down.

S: I'm not sure what you mean by connect though. Do you mean to draw an analogy between the two?

Manjuvajra: No, I can understand them on a kind of analogous level but as you explain it it does seem as though it's a continuous process. There's the lower evolution up to a certain point and then it changes into the higher evolution.

S: Well not it changes because it isn't a collective process. It is that individuals emerge so to speak and then take over responsibility for themselves. Nature has carried them so far so to speak and now they carry their own burdens, now they're responsible for their own evolution. You see that happening with the small child even, don't you. His parents are responsible for him and a point comes after which he is responsible for himself. So how do you connect the two? Yes it does seem to be continuous though perhaps it's equally valid to speak of there being a sort of break.

Manjuvajra: But that does go outside the scientific view of evolution which is one of survival of the fittest.

S: There are many scientific views of evolution. Many biologists regard survival of the fittest as absolutely old hat and outmoded and exploded even. There are many disputes and discussions even between Neo-Darwinians and they are not the only evolutionists even. There are many other interpretations or ways of looking at the evolutionary process, most of them not mechanistic.

So one has also not allowed any one particular scientist or group of scientists to speak in the name of science as it were. There are all sorts of views among scientists themselves. But I think one of the things we have to do - or probably one of the things I have to do - is to give a fuller more careful explanation of certain terms, and in particular I want to give a talk or perhaps it would be better to write an article on what I mean when I use the terms - one, Evolution; what I mean when I speak in terms of progress; what I mean when I speak in terms of development. For me these are three quite distinct things

Nagabodhi: That would be tremendous.

S: I think this would help to clarify the issue and make it easier for people to explain what we mean by evolution lower and higher.

Nagabodhi: People will use the phrase that was used a minute ago, that it is the natural tendency of all living things to grow, to develop.

S: Well one has to explain what one means by that.

Nagabodhi: Because I wouldn't have said it was the natural tendency of every living thing to evolve. I don't think you can use that as.....

S: Well you have to discuss what you mean by natural tendency, what you mean by tendency. These are all philosophical concepts as used in this sort of way. Aristotle believed that everything had a natural tendency to evolve, as we would say and he called things from this point of view (entelekis). It's in a way the most prominent feature of his whole philosophy and why his philosophy is often said to be constructed on a biological model.

Mangala: It's not so much grow as I think it's to do with the law of its own nature. That applies to all forms of life except man perhaps. It is the natural thing for all other forms of life but man can go so far. Growth in the sense that Bhante means it is higher evolution, it's

conscious growth.

S: What it really means in a sense is, we say that let us say vegetables develop into animals. Well is there a natural tendency, almost an urge in the vegetables or in the vegetable as such to develop into the animal. Or is it simply a fact that there are certain forms of vegetable life, and changes in their circumstances compel them in order to survive as they are, not in order to develop but to survive as they are, to change and that change constitutes a development. Could you speak therefore in that sense or on that basis of a natural tendency on the part of all things to evolve?

You could speak in terms of a natural tendency to persist in existence or to go on living and that coming up against what Darwin would call natural selection results in an actual evolution, but the fact that an evolution takes place does not in itself prove that there is a tendency to evolution as such on the part of those evolving. This is actually what could be said from the point of view of a strict believer in natural selection and the survival of the fittest, but actually this point of view itself could of course be queried. Anyway we won't go into that now. I think there's very little of strict Darwinian theory left. Even neo-Darwinian beliefs come increasingly under attack. So one shouldn't take it that the neo-Darwinians represent a sort of scientific orthodoxy by any means.

Anyway, shall we sort of retrace our steps a bit and get really back to livelihood. 'Avoid gaining thy livelihood by means of deceit and theft.' Is there anything more to be said on the subject of livelihood? We've taken advertising as the classic or almost the archetypal form of wrong livelihood. Perhaps it is.

_____: Does it also mean something or a form of livelihood that you are fooling yourself into believing is good for you? It's in fact harmful to your spiritual growth. Deceit in that terms.

S: Well if you are thinking in terms of spiritual growth at all there is that possibility but most people get involved in the means of livelihood without even thinking about all that, don't they. You've come to think about that only later on usually.

Mangala: The question of deceits also can be quite....If you work in a restaurant which I do sometimes, you're faced with making a plate of food or something and you say right what shall I charge for that? And you think well I could probably squeeze another 2p out of people and get away with it. It's difficult actually to decide what's actually ... in a way you want to make money but you don't want to rip people off and you think - on the other hand he goes down the road you pay twice as much for it. There's all sorts of....

S: I'm not quite sure what you're saying.

Mangala: Well it's a bit difficult sometimes just to know what's ethically correct maybe to charge for something.

S: I think once you are charging at all in a sense you're in a slightly unethical situation. You're not in an ideal situation put it that way - because in an ideal situation there wouldn't be any charging and everyone would get what they needed and would give what they could. But I think if you're not in a monopoly situation you'll never be able to charge more than people can pay.

Mangala: You mean if there isn't any competition.

S: Yes. If you overcharge people they will just not come. You just have to make sure from a business point of view that your putting up your prices doesn't become counter productive. Market forces are at work, no doubt, which will teach you a sharp lesson if necessary. If you put up your prices, supposing your prices are higher than anybody else's and people still come, what will that mean? Your food is proportionately better and therefore you are justified in charging more. So I think it's a rather unreal problem in a way given the existing conditions. Charge as much as you can get away with.

Manjuvajra: That seems quite reasonable to me. You're not forcing the people.

S: You're not the only restaurant and it isn't as though you've purchased from the local authority an exclusive franchise to supply food in Brighton or something like that. If you've bought a franchise that would be another sort of matter or if you had a monopoly of any kind. Maybe this is why monopolies are somewhat unethical.

Mangala: I know some people do sort of feel guilty about maybe charging a certain amount for something. You think, well they know what it cost to produce and think well that's just ridiculous.

S: Well you mustn't only consider that. It isn't only the cost of the actual materials. It's the cost of labour, it's the cost of your overheads, it's the fact that you also want to contribute something to the spiritual movement. Sometimes you're so anxious not to exploit the customer you exploit everybody else involved including yourself.

Manjuvajra: People are prepared to pay for the skill of the person who's cooked the food and the care that they put into that.

S: I don't even think there's an ethical problem because if you are over charging, people won't come. If they do come even if you are actually charging more than anybody else you are not overcharging because clearly the fact that they are continuing to come means that they think that it's worth it.

Mangala: The only case where that wouldn't apply is if you had a monopoly.

S: It wouldn't apply if you had a monopoly. Of course you might have paid a lot of money for the monopoly but then you would be in a position of being able to sell people really rotten food and they couldn't do anything about it because they wouldn't have the opportunity of going somewhere else.

Manjuvajra: Do you think this is maybe a hangover again from the idea that religious organisations have got social work aspects. In other words what we really ought to be supplying is soup kitchens, not.....

S: I was thinking more that people have got guilt feelings about money as such and handling the wretched stuff. Sometimes I suspect it is infantile. People would like everything to be free just like you're sucking at some great breast whenever you felt like it. Or maybe they think they have to supply this great breast for people to suck at. I don't quite see it like that.

Dharmamati: How about middle men. Something is produced. You are producing it, you sell it, but in the sense that you make a profit out of something that's already produced and it goes through this incredibly long process where everybody's sort of dipping their fingers in as it goes along.

S: All right why does it have to go through this process?

[End of tape twelve tape thirteen]

Put that question. Supposing something is produced at point A but it's needed in point B. So someone specialises in moving it from point A where it's produced to point B where it is actually needed. So he has got certain costs, he expends a certain amount of energy and labour let us say in moving those things from where they're produced to where they are consumed. So should he not also if anybody does, make a profit out of the transaction, out of his part that he plays in the total process of supplying that particular item to those particular people?

It would seem as though it is only unethical when the stages are deliberately multiplied without any necessity, simply to provide a source of income for somebody or other. Supposing instead of shipping things say from Norwich to London directly you worked out a sort of plan whereby they went say to Glasgow first and then down to London so that two different sets of people could make a living out of it - that would be unethical but it would still be unethical only if you had a monopoly, because if there were cheaper sources of supply, provided by people who didn't do this sort of thing, whose chain was shorter as it were, well the public would patronise them and not you.

So in a way it comes down to the same thing. So why shouldn't there be a middle man if a middle man is necessary? A middle man is not necessarily a parasite. It may be more convenient for one person to do the production and the other to do the shifting from the place of production to the place of consumption, the place of demand.

Dharmamati: I can see that as that working as a principle - there's nothing wrong with that but it doesn't happen! People do make these profits out of things just to make a living. In the sense that they're not really.....

S: They're not essential to the process.

Dharmamati: No they're not necessarily essential to the process.

S: Well, then somebody should clearly set up a business in that particular commodity cutting out that type of person because he'd make a bigger profit, he'd be able to sell cheaper, therefore he'd corner the market. Why don't people do this?

Manjuvajra: Usually I think because that false middle man has got so much financial weight behind him that he can pop off the small competitors to his particular area, the small threats to his area.

S: It is possible to raise finance. If sufficient people see the possibilities well they will surely raise enormous amounts of money, would they not? There is always the possibility of raising enormous amounts of money. Why isn't it done?

Manjuvajra: You've got to have quite a lot of money before you can raise a lot of money.

S: Well yes but businesses are operating in this sort of way all the time. It doesn't operate just in this particular kind of instance. I think we have to be careful about being pseudo idealistic about these things. Be idealistic by all means but not pseudo idealistic. If you can shorten or reduce the number of stages through which a commodity passes and the number of people who get their rake off, by all means do that because that will mean a cheaper product

and therefore you get more of the market, but people are not so lacking in astuteness that they don't see these possibilities and act upon them surely.

Do you see what I mean? People are very sharp in the business world to see opportunities of this sort, to supply something more cheaply to the customer as far as I know. In other words looking for opportunities and doing this sort of thing. I think it can only happen when there's areal monopoly and that ought to be relaxed I think if necessary by law. People are talking about taking away the Post Office's monopoly on delivery of mails because they clearly are taking advantage of that.

Anyway we were talking about livelihood by means of deceit but I don't think the fixing of prices in a restaurant even supposing for the sake of argument you do charge exorbitantly I don't think it amounts to deceit unless you've actually told lies about what you pay for certain things. If you say....

Mangala: I suppose it raises guilt like how much you can get away with.

Devaraja: (to Mangala) You've always been getting away with a lot! [Laughter]

S: One might even say Mangala's been getting away with so much it's not surprising he (fiddles the accounts?! (Laughter)

Manjuvajra: I sometimes wonder about the kind of work that I'm involved in which is research work. It's as though our department is totally based on the fact that we get grants from government bodies and we usually present something in a certain form. We know what that particular department wants so we write out a nice request for the contract, but all it's really doing is supplying money for us to do a pleasant job. In a way doing what we want to do but handing over the goods at the end which is usually quite an easy thing to do, and it gives you a lot of space in between just to do what you want to.

S: That is a part of the definition of right livelihood surely. It does among other things leave you space to do other things that you want to do. I mean your employer presumably doesn't buy you body and soul all your time and all your energy when he employs you.

Manjuvajra: That is the usual case though isn't it?

S: Well I'd say that was an aspect of wrong livelihood. Under current conditions, where you cannot humanly be expected to devote yourself wholeheartedly to your particular livelihood because more often than not that would not be worthy of a human being or conduce to his development or even survival as a human being perhaps. But perhaps you can manage if it takes up only a portion of your time and energy and you are left the freedom to do other things. So that on the whole you are enabled to develop as a human being or at least to survive as a human being.

I mean supposing Devaraja was to say well, if he worked in a particular say line within the film making industry for one month of the year they'd give him a million pounds but it would be really devastating doing that month I'd say take it on for the sake of the million pounds. If it was just for a month you'd survive!

Devaraja: Right!! (Laughter)

S: I'm not suggesting for a whole year even if they gave you a million pounds. You see the principle involved.

Devaraja: "I've turned down five feature films this year! I turned down a film in Rome to work on the *Newsletter*."

S: You'd better just have an Italian edition pretty quick.

Nagabodhi: I'm trying to think of a clever answer to that and there isn't one!

S: No you can just say a big thank you that ...(Laughter)

Nagabodhi:there's a story there.

S: He could at least have taken you off for dinner.

Nagabodhi: I can't afford it after the cover he's gone and designed for me!

S: I get the impression from the discussion broadly speaking that livelihood, wrong livelihood, is no longer a serious problem for quite a lot of you and that's quite interesting. That's of course very good. Whereas had we had this sort of discussion two or three years ago, it would have been a very serious, well, problem for people, because the majority of our friends and members so to speak were involved in what they could only feel was wrong means of livelihood of one kind or another. But so many people now are involved in co-ops and communities and are running this and running that, that within the FWBO itself the question of wrong livelihood or the problem of wrong livelihood doesn't bite in quite the way that it used to. Do you see what I mean? But it still of course is very much a problem for people outside the movement whether they realise it or not. A lot of people are really being sort of crippled as individuals, as human beings, by the wrong livelihood that circumstances seem to compel them to pursue and this is one of our very big as it were selling points within the Friends, that we do offer a real alternative, and of course it must be a real alternative in the best and fullest sense.

Padmaraja: We need to broaden our businesses don't we and get really bright young people coming along. They'd even turn down going to University for what you offer them. Working in a wholefood shop! (Laughter) It would be really nice to have something more to offer them.

S: Yes at least you should be able to offer them publicity or film making department. We should be catching the sort of young people who'd be thinking of going into advertising or TV or into computers. I'm told that it used to be advertising, that is to say ten years ago, but that isn't the tops now, that isn't the sort of chosen profession. But after advertising came TV, after TV came computers. I'm told that computers are on their way out as the trendy thing for the young man leaving university and that the trendy thing is now beginning to be, believe it or not, business management which is quite interesting isn't it. Come and run a Centre! After proper training of course.

Devaraja: Packing nuts in a basement. (Laughter)

S: Work your way up from the shop floor. (Laughter)

So 'avoid gaining thy livelihood by means of deceit and theft'. There's quite a lot of meaning there obviously. In the series of talks on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path I spoke about right livelihood and laid down certain basic very simple principles and I rather suspect that that needs now quite a lot of updating, not in the sense that those principles have been superseded but they are so basic as to be almost irrelevant now for a lot of people.

Devaraja: I remember a very interesting talk that I heard of yours. I can't remember what lecture it was, where you talked the Buddha's particular teaching on the work situation and your relationship to the person who is employing you and your responsibilities and duties to him and his responsibilities and duties.

S: This was in connection with the Sigalovada Sutta - the five duties of the employer towards the employee and the five duties of the employee towards the employer. I'm not sure where I spoke about this.

Manjuvajra: The Buddha's philosophy of personal relationships.

S: Ah good. There we are. That's a talk I gave originally before the Friends was even started so you can see the sort of direction I was trying to move people in. The people to whom I was speaking were all people who were employed, apart from those who were either retired and living on pensions or who had private incomes.

Nagabodhi: You knew a few people like that in those days did you! (Laughter)

S: A few people like that did come along to the Hampstead Vihara and go to the Buddhist Society. There are still a few people of that sort around in those circles, yes.

Anyway perhaps we should leave it there. We've covered quite a bit of ground this morning. Any final point or comment or even question?

Devaraja: I just wanted to amplify a little bit about what I said about the landscape, because you were talking about pilgrimages as well the other day, and I think that in a way it's important to create something which is almost like a non-functional in the very sort of literal sense, object of devotion and pilgrimage in an inspiring but preferably natural landscape. So I think just the idea of building stupas in - I mean we were talking about it in relationship to Tyn y Ddol - I think it's just a move to a beautiful place which is naturally inspiring where one feels one's in contact with the forces of nature, where there's a dharmic presence, it's almost like a mythology, almost that energy or electricity almost. It feels like it's vibrant with the possibility of a myth being created and it inspires the poetic....

S: I think the Friends; Order members, mitras and Friends, in India see the situation in England a little bit in mythical terms. Because they really appreciate there's something that has been achieved here and they see as sort of very bright and glowing and shining in the distance as it were, over there in England. It has I think for them a slightly mythical quality. They're certainly very very glad, very happy to hear about it all. Whereas certainly it wasn't the case say in Malaysia where the situation was quite different. I'm quite sure that whatever we had been able to do or had been able to do in England doesn't have any sort of mythical quality for Buddhists in Malaysia. Not yet anyway, though some were quite interested and even quite inspired. But for the ex-Untouchable Buddhists in Pune at least, well the FWBO in England has already taken on certain mythic dimensions.

Kamalasila: What actually is a legend then?

S: A legend is usually an old story. A myth is usually distinguished from a legend. A legend usually did take place, or could have taken place, allowing for exaggerations, on this earth but a myth refers to events usually in some other sphere.

Kamalasila: So it would be more like the FWBO legend than the FWBO myth then.

S: It would be , yes. Unless you created a myth about somebody coming down from heaven or something like that or you describe a certain series of events taking place in heaven first and then as a result of that the FWBO got started up down here on earth. Then it would be a mythical background to a legend.

Kamalasila: Like Avalokiteshvara coming into birth in Tooting!

S: Yes right. Or, well you've got Padmasambhava born from a lotus in Uddiyana, you see. You'd be rather hard put to find lotuses in Tooting wouldn't you! (Laughter)

Devaraja: They used to have the Chandrasuri Reham Vihara in Tooting! Do you remember that?

S: No.....I'd forgotten!

Devaraja: The letter heading in Olde English Gothic script, 'The Order of complete and perfect enlightenment Chandrasuri Reham Vihara, number two, The Cuttings, Tooting!' [Laughter]

S: (Laughter) That's right yes. That was (...drowned out by laughter) wasn't it. Jim Gulay. I'd forgotten about that. There you are. Mythic material from Tooting. Or was it Balham? Was it Tooting or was it Balham? Somewhere like that. Somewhere in the deserts of South London.

Anyway let's leave it there for the moment.

Next Session

S: Would someone like to read.

(5) Avoid such actions as harm thy mind and impede thy spiritual development.

S: This is very general indeed isn't it. This is almost like the fourth, I think it's the fourth, step of the Noble Eightfold Path. Right Action. Here it's in the form of abstention from wrong action. It's so obvious. It's sort of blindingly obvious but so obvious that only too often we might overlook it. It's as though with regard to every action we ought to be asking ourselves, well does this harm my mind? Does this impede my spiritual development, but only too often we don't ask ourselves that question. We just go ahead because we feel like doing it or want to do it. We just don't even think in those sort of terms. That happens only too often.

Kamalasila: These ten things to be avoided. Why is it included? A sort of exhaustive list of main things which should be avoided.

S: I'm not so sure about that. The precepts seem to have been culled from the writings of Gampopa in particular, perhaps other gurus too, and arranged in this particular way. I don't think one should regard any of these lists as exhaustively covering that particular topic.

Manjuvajra: It seems that that's one that you can't really repeat too often.

S: On the other hand one mustn't go to the extreme of overscrupulosity. One mustn't be like the centipede so busy counting your legs you can't move, you just immobilise yourself. So you mustn't be so sort of painfully scrutinising your actions and trying to work out whether it's going to impede your spiritual development or not that you just are crippled and don't do

anything. If every time someone asks you to have a cup of tea or another cup of tea you just start thinking; well is this going to impede my spiritual development or not, and sort of try to work it out very definitely one way or the other before you agree to have the cup of tea. Well, it's not that which is really meant.

We had a friend in a place I was living at once and somebody came to see us in the afternoon and brought some biscuits so we were sitting around having tea. So this particular friend who was living with us, he was also offered one of these biscuits so he said to the visitor, rather smugly I thought, 'No thank you I've had my biscuit for today.' (Laughter)

Mangala: I think one should develop a certain faith in oneself I suppose. You can know you're on the right path more or less and....

S: You trust your general instinct, but it is a trained and developed instinct. It is not just your passing whim or fancy. In a sense you know that you can't go wrong. This is a rather sort of dangerous thing to say in a way. Don't misunderstand me please. I've referred to the life of, or referred to a saying of Confucius's. I can't recollect the details off hand, I've given the complete quotation somewhere else, but he says something like at such and such age I set myself on the right path and then at such and such age I knew what I had to do and then he ends up, at such and such age - this is when he's about sixty five apparently - I could follow the desires of my heart without fear. Do you see what I mean? It was only then when he was about sixty five that he knew that whatever he naturally felt like doing was the right thing to do. He didn't have to bother any more checking up on it. So that does happen eventually or it should happen.

Padmaraja: What did he say?

S: Don't quote me too literally, you will have to look it up in the Alinx of Confucius, it is there. There's four or five stages but the fifth, the last one, is pretty much like at I think it was sixty or sixty five, it was quite advanced, I could follow the desires of my heart without fear. That is not a literal translation, in fact there are several versions.

Mangala: I suppose it's a bit like, well perhaps it's best seen in the case of like maybe modern artists, some of them. They very often observe the very strict classical form of training and It's only after years that they can just throw the paint around a bit and trust their own sort of creative response.

S: It's like in the case of music, improvisation. It's only a very well trained, highly skilled musician who can really improvise. Really a very great experienced pianist who can say improvise cadenzas for a Mozart piano concerto or something like that. Even very experienced piano players usually have to follow written cadenzas. They can't trust themselves to improvise when it comes to the point, but if your musical sense is sufficiently highly developed and you are a really trained musician and you have a fine musical sense, well, yes, when you come to that point you can just sort of leap off and improvise airily for four or five minutes or whatever is needed and then come back to the written music. It's rather like that as it were. But if you try to improvise prematurely you're just sort of messing around without any significance.

A lot of people want to improvise before they've learned the elements of their particular art. It's the same with children. We expect them to improvise before they've been trained. It ties up with education too.

So 'avoid such actions as harm thy mind and impede thy spiritual development'. It suggests

we do have a clear conception of what in fact does harm the mind, we know what harms the mind. We know from our own experience and we know what impedes our spiritual development. That suggests we have a definite conception of spiritual development, we know what spiritual development is. What it consists in.

Manjuvajra: That's pretty difficult itself, isn't it? I find I actually keep reassessing what it is I'm trying to do with my life. It's as though at some occasion I come to some understanding of what I'm doing but after a while that gets fuzzy again or doesn't fit any more; so then I have to reassess it and get another almost like another formulation of what I'm trying to do.

S: This is something we have in the past talked about quite a lot, that in the process of committing oneself the nature of commitment itself becomes clearer; so that eventually your understanding of commitment is so much clearer than it originally was it is almost as though it's a different understanding or almost as though you didn't at all get it right to begin with. You see what I mean?

So clearly you're constantly revising your ideas in this sort of way. Just as in the case of the artist, after being an artist for forty or fifty years his conception of art is very different from what it is at the beginning possibly. So as you develop you revise your conceptions of what it is that development consists in. That is one of the signs, one of the manifestations of your development. It isn't that you perfectly initially fulfil your own earliest ambitions or earliest conception, your first initial conception, of what the spiritual life is all about. Eventually you go beyond that so that you end up in a way fulfilling something other than you set out to fulfil, because in the process of trying to fulfil it, your conception of what it was you were trying to fulfil deepened. This in fact is what should happen. Because you can never know something conceptually before you experience it, as well as you know it in the course of experiencing it.

Manjuvajra: That's quite an unusual idea, isn't it? Because people normally think in terms of an ideal as something which you state.

S: Something fixed.

Manjuvajra: And then you work towards. A lot of people would see that as changing your ideal as it went along.

S: Well that is perhaps because we take certain metaphors too literally. You set out for instance on a journey to a certain place, to a certain city. The city doesn't change, even though when you get there you discover that the city is rather different in fact from what you expected, but the city itself doesn't change. You set out for a certain city and that's exactly where you get. But in the spiritual life it isn't like that so it's as though we take too literally this metaphor of setting out for a goal and arriving at a goal or fulfilling an ideal as the case may be. It's a different sort of thing, it's a different sort of experience.

The closer we get to it in a manner of speaking, the more differently we see it. So perhaps we see at a certain point that what we had thought of as a goal wasn't a goal at all but was only an intermediate stage. I mean this is the whole point of the Buddha's classic parable in the *White Lotus Sutra* of the Magic City. You think it's towards the city that you are going, you think that is your destination but actually once you've got there you find out it's only a halting place, you're only going to spend the night there, and then you have to continue your journey. So it's much like that in the spiritual life. What you envisage as the goal or as being the goal because that's as far on as you can see, as far ahead as you can see, turns out to be just a halting place from which you have to move on.

Or it may not be as simple as that or as straightforward as that. You may find that your

original conception of the goal involved serious misunderstandings of which you progressively purge yourself.

Manjuvajra: There also seems to be a type that's...you're heading towards a certain goal but the actual goal if you like is of a different nature to the one that you were aiming for.

S: Yes. To use the biblical phrase you go in search of your father's asses and find a kingdom. Some people unfortunately go in search of a kingdom and find only asses.

All right on to precept six .

(6) Avoid such acts of levity and thoughtlessness as lower thee in another's esteem.

S: Well this is a slightly ambivalent precept. One has to make quite sure what it actually is saying. What do you think is meant by acts of levity and thoughtlessness, especially levity? What does levity mean literally?

_____ : Lightness.

S: Lightness and what is it the opposite of?

_____ : Seriousness?

S: Seriousness.

Devaraja: Substance.

S: Substance.

Mangala: Gravity.

S: Gravity. Literally it's levity and gravity but gravity is rather an ambiguous not to say ambivalent word, just a levity is. Leaving aside thoughtlessness for the moment but such acts of levity as lower thee in another's esteem, would suggest sort of irresponsible, unserious behaviour, which makes others think less well of you. But on the other hand levity is a comparative term. It's implicitly compared with gravity.

If you've got a wrong, an artificial, conception of gravity, you'll have a wrong, an artificial, conception of levity. Nietzsche has got something to say about gravity, in the rather negative sense as a sort of intellectual heaviness which he thinks in fact is a sort of lack of seriousness almost. He thinks overheaviness to be the antithesis of seriousness, of true seriousness. He believes that real seriousness is consistent with, well I won't say levity; but with a certain lightness of touch, a certain humour, to use that word anyway. We've been talking about that in the other group.

So the sort of levity that you should avoid is the levity which is the concomitant of sort of frivolity and irresponsibility. Not the levity which is just lightness of heart or lightness of touch, which is completely compatible with a genuine seriousness of spirit. Gravity is not heaviness. Nietzsche was very fond of making this point probably because German philosophers or German scholars were so very heavy and ponderous.

There is a story about one of the great English scholars. I can't remember off hand whether it is Porson or Bentley. They were the two great scholars of the Eighteenth Century, great classical scholars, but one of them - I forget which one it was - it probably was Bentley but it

might have been Porson - one of them was the master of a college, again I'm not sure whether it was Oxford or Cambridge, it was one of the two - I think it was Cambridge, and he was very fond of playing around with his pupils even when he was quite an old man, and one day it is related, when he was in his seventies, he was playing around in the quadrangle with his teenage pupils at leapfrog! (Laughter) So in the midst of their fun he saw approaching two very grave and worthy gentlemen from a nearby college, so he said 'Be careful boys, let's look serious, here come two fools!' (Laughter). So there was no doubting his basic seriousness and all that sort of thing, but these other scholars - they had this sort of false seriousness which would have regarded his sort of playing at leapfrog as being real levity, tokening a really frivolous and irresponsible disposition especially in such an old man, that he could be doing such an undignified sort of thing as playing at leapfrog with his pupils in the college quadrangle.

But I think you all know what is meant by levity in the real sense, that is to say the levity which is to be avoided. It goes along with a sort of heartlessness also, with an unfeelingness. You make light of things which are really quite serious. You make light of them out of selfishness and an inability to feel, a self-centredness. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: I'm not very clear actually.

S: Well supposing someone tells you something which is really quite sad and serious, that maybe someone has died, someone near and dear to them, and you just sort of make a sort of joke about it. This would be levity, this would be lightness in the wrong kind of way. It would show your coldness of heart, your lack of sympathy, your irresponsibility, not considering the sort of effect that your joking remark would have on that sort of bereaved person. Or when you act in very serious matters without due thought, without due consideration, because you are too selfish or too self centred to realise how important these matters are and the way in which they will affect other people quite seriously. So you just deal with them in a very irresponsible light sort of way. Your acts are acts of levity.

As in the famous Aesop's fable when the boys were throwing stones into the pond as a sort of game and killing the frogs, and the frogs said "boys, what is sport to you is death to us." Do you see what I mean? The action of the boys was levity. They were guilty of acts of levity. They didn't stop to consider that their game meant death for the frogs. They just didn't care, they were too self-centred, too selfish. It's that sort of attitude.

Or for instance at a moment's notice you change certain arrangements that have been made not really thinking about it seriously, not bothering or not realising that he's going to seriously inconvenience a lot of other people. Again an act of levity is involved.

So avoid such acts of levity and thoughtlessness as lower thee in another's esteem. So how do such acts lower you in another's esteem? In what sort of way will they think of you if they find that you are regularly guilty of acts of levity and thoughtlessness? Well they'll just think you're not a person to be taken seriously, not to be relied upon, not a thoughtful person, not a sympathetic person.

Derek: The way that sentence is put is a bit strange because it seems to - I don't think it does - it seems to imply that the reason for avoiding acts of levity is because of what other people think of you.

S: Yes. It could be.

Derek: Should your actions in an ideal situation not be in spite of what other people think of you?

S: Not necessarily. You can use other people's opinion of you or the fact that other people would think less of you if you behaved in a certain way, of insuring that you don't behave in that sort of way. We discussed all this in connection with Hiri/Ottapa in the seminar on the Positive Mental Events. There is a quite positive way in which you can refrain from doing certain things because you know that they will displease or upset your spiritual friends or lower you in their eyes because you trust the judgement of those spiritual friends. It's not people, it's not society, it's not the public, it's not the group in the ordinary sense. It doesn't represent a sort of conforming to the ideas of the group. The others who are referred to here are those who accept, so to speak, the same ideals that you do yourself. So if you disappointed them and lowered yourself in their esteem, it would mean that you really were on the wrong path or you really had slid back.

So you use the fact that you don't want to lower yourself in the esteem of others whom you genuinely respect and look up to, as a means of ensuring that you don't backslide, you don't fall back on the spiritual path, that you don't commit acts of levity and thoughtlessness. Sometimes a word that is used in this sort of connection is wantonness. As for instance when say a woman flirts with a man and tries her best to make him fall in love with her but she's got no intention whatever of really having anything to do with him. She does it as it were out of a spirit of wantonness. Or in any sort of situation where you arouse somebody's expectations with no intention of fulfilling them. This is wantonness, this is levity, this is thoughtlessness. Just to give yourself a bit of fun you do it.

Perhaps we could also say something about this word esteem. It's a slightly old fashioned word or at least a word

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..... that is a bit out of fashion. Say a couple of hundred years ago in England it meant something if you said that someone esteemed you or if you esteemed somebody. It's not a word that we generally use nowadays is it.

Nagabodhi: Some business letters use it.

S: For instance in Jane Austen's novels a young lady would say something like 'I highly esteem Mr. Smith', which would mean that she was on the verge of falling in love with him. You see what I mean? But that is significant because it suggests that esteem must come first, or rather it is a very positive thing when esteem precedes love. Do you see what I mean? I read a novel about this some years ago written by Ruma Godden. Has anyone ever heard of Ruma Godden? She's an anglo-indian novelist and she writes in English and she's of mixed English and Indian descent and she's written quite a lot of quite good novels, and one of them is called 'Kingfisher catch fire'. It's about a woman, I think it's an English woman as far as I remember, who goes to live in Kashmir and she tries to make friends with the local people. She very much wants to be loved by the local people and she's very ready to love them, but the moral of the book is, you can't just go asking for people's love and expecting them to love you. You've got to earn their respect first. Respect must precede love in social life, social relations, and that is the mistake she made. She sets out to win love directly without winning esteem, without winning respect and of course she fails to win love. It's a very beautifully written story.

Mangala: Do you think that applies to social life generally or to personal relationships as it were?

S: I think it applies to social life generally and to personal relationships in particular. I think

we shouldn't be in too much of a hurry to gain love or expect love too quickly. I think esteem is a very solid basis for love or at least say, friendship, to develop on. This is why it doesn't seem quite proper in the case of some people that they try to be all very pally and even intimate in a sense right from the very beginning. I mean even sort of small ways. You hardly know them but they've already started using your brush and comb, not to say your toothbrush as though you're on really intimate terms. Do you see what I mean? And sometimes this can denote insensitivity, not actual friendliness at all, much less still love.

So there's got to be a certain respectful distance first. There's got to be mutual respect, mutual esteem, and not in any sort of stiff, formal sort of way but that you do generally recognise each other as human beings, as individuals, and you are considerate to each other, and I think there needs to be more of this between the sexes. It's as though the first time you sort of meet a girl for instance you start patting her on the bottom and all that sort of thing, well it's in a way quite offensive. Because it means you're trying to develop familiarity, not to say intimacy, before you've had time to develop a sort of mutual respect. You're sort of hurrying her into something or trying to hurry her into something or assuming that something is there when it isn't there. You're not allowing the other person any space.

Mangala: I think this could be partly accounted for the so-called British reserve. Like Americans would be a lot more sort of garrulous aren't they in this kind of way.

S: Well this sort of respect and esteem that I'm thinking of has very little to do if anything, or only superficially, with that sort of false reserve. Do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: That separation at the beginning can actually be quitethere can be quite a lot of energy there, even if it's of a fairly aggressive sort of nature to start with.

When you say that I think of two Russians meeting. They would sort of - I get the feeling they would sort of sit there staring at each other for about ten minutes and then gradually once they started to get the feel of each other then they would come together.

S: I don't think it's a matter of staring at each other or anything like that. That sounds a bit bizarre! (Laughter) But it means not trespassing on the other person, not entering into the other person's territory before they are ready to welcome you. Not forcing and thrusting your way in. I was going to say in this connection, with respect to the relations between the sexes - I really noticed in India on retreat the way in which husbands and wives treated each other. I saw they treated each other with consideration. I felt this was quite significant because you often don't see this in this country. People think that it is a sign of intimacy and warmth and friendship almost, what to speak of love - let's leave that aside - if you treat each other with lack of consideration, which seems deplorable. If you sort of take each other for granted or don't bother about each others convenience and feelings, well that shows that you're real lovers as it were. As if love, to use that rather ambiguous term, necessarily excludes things like respect and esteem.

But again it isn't an artificial thing. It isn't just a matter of certain social manners, much less still mannerisms or conventions. So to esteem somebody of course there must be something there which you genuinely can esteem and apparently young ladies in Jane Austen's time, certainly of a certain class, had what we might think the rather strange idea that they could not very well fall in love with a man whom they couldn't esteem.

Derek: Where does the feeling of metta come into this?

S: Metta is rather different. the nearest word we have for it is friendliness. Esteem suggests that you see in the other person certain worthy qualities, certain esteemable qualities, on

account of which you think highly of the other person, or at least well of the other person, and are justified in thinking well of them. With metta more of genuine feeling comes in. Esteem is a bit as it were judgemental in a quite positive sort of way. You're assessing the other person's character, even their overall worth at least up to a point or at least in ordinary social or ordinary human terms. When you esteem someone you see that they are a person of honesty, of integrity, reliability, that they're straightforward, that they're sincere in their dealings. You can only learn this about a person or feel this about a person when you've been acquainted with them over a period perhaps of months or even years. so esteem takes time to develop, it takes time to build up, and then gradually out of that feeling of esteem a warmer feeling might develop.

Manjuvajra: You could feel metta towards someone that you didn't esteem.

S: You could, yes, but if you couldn't esteem them it would be almost as though you were in a position of looking down on them and feeling sorry for them and your metta would take on a colouring therefore of compassion, without obviously amounting to contempt or anything like that. Just as if you esteem someone very very highly then of course your metta would take on something of the characteristics of devotion and reverence.

Well if you were roughly equal you would just feel esteem. Esteem does seem to be the sort of feeling that one can develop towards social equals. It's not quite respect. This seems to be the significance of the term as originally used. You felt esteem for a worthy and honourable person of roughly equivalent social position or social rank, and you got expressions at that time like 'admitting someone to your friendship'. Somebody might say well 'I esteemed him very highly and so I admitted him to my friendship'. That was the sort of language that was used and it seems very sensible and very human.

Manjuvajra: Friendship itself is quite underrated isn't it.

S: Oh yes indeed. But we know why that is. That's because romance has been over rated. Romance seems to have become the all engulfing relationship. Romance between the sexes, which swallowed up all the others. And in the end romance itself suffers because it becomes overloaded and can't bear such a heavy burden.

You could say even friendship between the two sexes has been underrated and some people don't believe it's possible at all, which say, people of Jane Austen's time would certainly have not agreed with. But I think this is because we sort of force ourselves into intimacy with someone, and we call that love perhaps and we just give ourselves no time to develop feelings of esteem and genuine friendship. In this case I'm speaking of the members of the opposite sex. There's a passage in Mallory's *Mort d'Arthur* where he says, speaking of his own times, because elderly men are always making these sort of complaints, he says that when I was young a man could woo a woman for seven whole years without any - I think he used the word licorice - lustful, thought, coming into his head, but he says, now in these degenerate times he cannot know her a week before he wishes to have his will of her and will wait no longer. You see.

So it's as though in that sort of situation there's no time for friendship to develop, no time for feelings of esteem to develop. How can they?

I don't want to look at it in a moralistic or puritanical way but you can see the point that is being made here. Instant romance really is the enemy of friendship and leaving aside say friendship between the two sexes, friendship between people of the same sex has been underrated just because romance has been so overrated, romance between people of opposite sexes. As if to say friendship is a very ordinary tepid sort of thing and in ordinary social life, especially I think among working people in England it's almost taken for granted that when

you get married you give up your pals. You don't see them any more. You're not expected to go out with them any more. You have one last wild bash of a party and that's goodbye to all your friends. You might see them occasionally but you don't go out and about with them in the way that you used to. You go out and about, if at all, with your wife. She becomes your friend which seems to me in a way a sort of perversion. Not that you can't be friends with your wife but it's a different relationship, and shouldn't sort of replace or displace your friendships with your male friends. There should be room for them too, as there is in India. Married men don't give up their male friends and they go out and about with their male friends constantly, even after marriage. Well it just doesn't make any difference.

Mangala: I don't know if it's quite that bad here actually, is it?

S: I think it is.

Mangala: People do go out with the boys don't they. Maybe they do it once a week or something like that or maybe even weekends. I think there is still....it's not as if they exactly cut off from their friends.

S: I think on the whole they do, especially among working class people. Maybe not so much middle class people but I think this is the pattern, or certainly was the pattern until very recently among working class people.

Manjuvajra: I would actually have said more so among middle class.

S: Would you say more so?

Manjuvajra: There you tend to relate purely in terms of couples. You visit another couple. You don't go out in single sex families at all. I think more so than the working class actually.

S: Well if that's so that is unfortunate.

Derek: When I was doing sociology we were told that generally within the working class there was a tendency after a certain while to be a reaction between the husband and wife, and the husband would spend a lot of time with his drinking mates and working mates and mother would end up with daughter and neighbours.

S: The thin end of the wedge so far as the man is concerned very often is the work situation, because he tends to find relating to other men in the work situation more and more enjoyable and after he's got over the initial flush of romance and has gone through the honeymoon period and two or three years of marriage and all that, well yes he may come back at least to his work mates and value their company more and stay on at work talking or playing darts or yes, drift to the pub. But what I think happens in middle class families is the wife more and more insists on accompanying. In my young days in working class areas you didn't usually see women in pubs. It was only men, but now you hardly find a pub where there's even a predominance of men. But at that time it was only women - it was said they were not of a very good type or a very good character - not necessarily prostitutes, who were found in pubs. Relatively decent women didn't go along to the pubs with their husbands. Or if they did they'd go into the saloon bar, not into the public bar.

Derek: That's still like that in Glasgow. There's very few women in pubs.

S: So that's a comparatively healthy sign though it's a pity that it has to be in the pub.

Nagabodhi: I know when I was at university doing sociology I was in quite a middle class university, hearing this, reading in books about pubs where only men went, it's a quaint old

fashioned
race I was reading about.

S: It shows how thoroughly you were corrupted!

Nagabodhi: Oh absolutely! (Laughter)

S: The idea that as a man, especially as a married man, you can't really go anywhere on your own, that is to say without either your girlfriend or your wife, that she must be your constant companion. At least on all social occasions, on all occasions of pleasure, all outings, but this is not so in India. More often than not the husband would go off say to the cinema with his own male friends and very often the wife would go separately, maybe with all the womenfolk, perhaps shepherded along by some older man.

Manjuvajra: It's actually thought weird in this country if you go out somewhere separately from your spouse.

S: Oh yes, it's a sign that the marriage is breaking up, which is really sort of significant, really weird, because if anything it probably suggests exactly the opposite. As if to say if you were really devoted towards each other you just want to spend as much time as you possibly can together which suggests that the norm is the neurotic addictive relationship which doesn't admit any element of freedom for either party. It surely should be possible for the husband to go out with his friends and the wife to go out with hers and even meet friends of the opposite sex without it interfering with the marriage relationship in any way.

Sometimes it does happen like that but it isn't very usual. I think any man who was seeing regularly a woman friend even in the most innocent way, would soon arouse his wife's suspicions.

Anyway this all arises out of a consideration of esteem. There's another aspect of the question that occurs to me. The importance that is attached in some circles, or has been attached in some circles recently, to informality. You mentioned the other day about entertaining. The sort of thing that you saw in your old hippy days. You'd go or some people would come to see you, you would open the door and they'd wander in and you wouldn't be expected to entertain them, they'd just wander around. It was expected to act all informal so that sort of attitude excludes anything like respect and esteem. If they felt like it they could wander into your bathroom, they could use your toothbrush, they could have a bath if they wanted to. They'd go and make themselves some coffee, do what they like, go and lie down on your bed. In Jane Austen's circle - to go back to Jane Austen again - things like that just weren't done were they. It would be regarded as taking a gross liberty as it was expressed then. You just didn't do that sort of thing.

I don't know how things are now, but I remember in my boyhood if you went visiting you never went into the bedroom even if the door was open. You only went into the sitting room or the drawing room. You never went into other rooms, that would have been regarded as just not done, not at all proper. But things change, at least so far as some people were concerned.

So that sort of - I call it pseudo-informality, that rather self-conscious exaggerated informality, excludes things like respect and esteem I think.

Why do you think that sort of arose, that sort of pseudo-informality as distinct from real genuine informality arising out of actual felt friendship. What does it signify, this sort of informality?

Derek: Maybe it generally seems to be a reaction against the sort of pseudo-formality I suppose you could call it. Where things are formal but rigid and can get a bit blocked, like.....

S: A lot of these sort of people have very liberal middle-class social backgrounds, not anything particularly rigid as far as I could see.

Derek: No, I mean in terms of sort of manners. The point might have been lost. The parents might tell the children that such things are good, such things are bad, without explaining why and it could be a reaction against this. And of course the reaction would become a norm itself.

S: One certainly saw that - the reaction becoming a norm.

Mangala: I think it's a way of avoiding what you really feel. It's like maybe you actually feel quite embarrassed or quite I don't know what, but you don't really want to acknowledge that you've difficulties so you pretend to be very much more at ease than you perhaps are; and start behaving in an apparently casual, relaxed sort of way, but you actually may not be that way at all.

S: Slightly impertinent way, to show how much at home you are.

Mangala: Yeah, but you actually you may feel quite uncomfortable.

Manjuvajra: I always experienced it as really unpleasant, even when I was doing it myself, it was as though I was only doing it to conform to what was expected of me. Actually it was a new kind of formality.

Mangala: I know sometimes in my own case I sometimes find myself behaving a little bit sort of rudely to people, not because I actually feel any animosity but because maybe I really feel a bit embarrassed or ill at ease and in a sense you have to show something. You have to do something in a way.

S: (Laughing) It's not done to show friendliness, much less still esteem or respect.

Also another thing that was sort of popular in those days, not so very long ago, was that you were very cool, not impressed by anything. I think it's connected with that.

Mangala: I think it's also tied up with I think in my own case I got the idea that if you were sort of friendly to someone it somehow put you in an inferior position. Somehow it gives them an advantage over you. Like if you're prepared to be friendly then you're somehow a bit vulnerable almost.

S: You're trying to ingratiate yourself with them.

Mangala: Something like that.

S: As though you wanted to get something out of them. It's as though no one could believe in genuine friendliness. That someone was always out to get something out of somebody else.

Manjuvajra: We talked the other day about the hypocrisy of social relationships and that had a lack of trust.

Devaraja: There's a thing where sophisticated became a complimentary term. That precedes that hippy period but that would have been quite an insulting word I would have thought in

previous times, that you were sophisticated.

Nagabodhi: I don't remember seeing it in Jane Austen. I don't remember it occurring.

S: No. It's a fairly recent word.

Nagabodhi: I think that whole way of relating with people was the hippy culture and that had to do with drugs and on the whole dope takes you out of your feelings, so whether you're stoned or not you kind of affected being stoned by showing lack of feeling.

Mangala: It's almost like bad form to talk (Laughter) You just get stoned, just lay back zonked, the louder the music was, the better. If you were talking it somehow wasn't quite cool somehow.

S: Especially if you were talking in a rational, logical sort of way.

Nagabodhi: The more insensitive you could show yourself to be whether to a loud bang or some terrible () the more it showed that you'd really done some trips. (Laughter).

S: It's only a few years ago, isn't it, all this, and perhaps it is still carrying on in some unsophisticated circles. It's probably reaching the provinces now.

Manjuvajra: I don't think it's around any more.

S: I just don't know.

Manjuvajra: I'm not very much in touch with that.

S: I'm told actually it does go on in certain quarters at a certain level by sort of force of habit. I don't think it's younger people catching on. It's older people just not having got out of that.

Mangala: It's still almost kind of - well let's say desirable. It's sort of considered OK when people talk about how drunk they were on Saturday night. It's almost like kind of almost respected. To say, 'oh I was really plastered throughout the weekend'. You're encouraged to be that almost.

S: It's the sort of thing you're expected to tell the boys in the office when you get back on Monday morning.

Devaraja: I had such a good time I can't remember a thing I did! (Laughter)

S: Be careful. There used to be a very special joke about that. I won't go into that now. I'll tell you afterwards. (Laughter)

Anyway avoid such acts of levity and thoughtlessness as lower thee in another's esteem. All right seven. Only a little one.

(7) Avoid useless conduct and actions.

S: Well that's very simple, very straightforward, very obvious. So 'useless' presumably means what has no direct bearing on one's spiritual development, and that gives one food for reflection, because if you think about it at all you realise that so many of the things that you do from that point of view are just useless. So if you are in fact to avoid useless conduct and actions, well that immediately cuts out quite a lot of the things that you do.

It does raise certain difficulties, quite genuine difficulties of its own, because how rigid are you to be? Does everything that you do have to be ostensibly religious, ostensibly spiritual? Very overtly connected with your Spiritual Development - capital S, capital D. Surely sooner or later you must be able to trust your own natural direction and tendency and feeling without sort of checking up on oneself in detail necessarily.

Mangala: I think we should be becoming a lot more let's say tolerant or let's say looser in a good sense in this respect in the Friends. I think like on this, well it isn't exactly a retreat, or like back to Vinehall where there's quite a lot of free time and people are playing football and volleyball and swimming and things which normally would have been a bit sort of frowned upon, which I think gave the event a tremendous kind of positive energy which I think in the past we tended to be a little bit frozen and a little bit 'oh these aren't really very mindful things to do'. There's even been music playing a few evenings here downstairs which just normally on retreat you don't play music on a retreat in a rather blocked sort of....

S: I know that a few years ago some people used to be not very pleased that I didn't actually stop people playing football, but I tended to take the view that maybe some people did need to maybe let off a bit of steam in that sort of way, and also taking the view that people ought to know what was good for them to do. It shouldn't be necessary to be chasing around after them all the time. Not after they'd been involved with things for a certain time and knew reasonably well what they were expected to do. One expects them to be able to decide for themselves about certain things, which means in a way taking responsibility for their own lives and their own development. If they feel that it's on the whole positive thing to do to play football for half an hour on retreat, well fair enough - It doesn't bother me, but a few people - especially formerly tended to be made a bit uneasy by that, and certainly yes, you don't want a retreat to degenerate into something else, but on the other hand there is room for a bit of leeway as it were, in a positive sense.

And there are retreats and retreats. They can be concentrated, predominantly meditative retreats with lots of silence and a fairly mindful atmosphere and certainly no football and no music. That's another kind of retreat. That's quite good sometimes, but all retreats don't have to follow the same pattern by any means. Just trust everyone to be responsible.

Padmaraja: I think there's a lot of room for both actually. We certainly should be having more intensive type retreats as well. I don't think there are enough at the moment.

S: It's partly because we don't have a place to some extent. I'm a bit disappointed Tyn y Ddol isn't ready yet because my original plan was it was to be ready a year and a half ago and we'd start having meditation retreats there. That was the original programme. It should have been ready I think the October before last.

Nagabodhi: I get the feeling that our retreats used to be more intensive than they are now. Some of them. Not all obviously. But even sort of three or four week men's retreats here. I talk to people about the programme and it doesn't seem as intense as mitra retreats we used to have four or five years ago.

S: I didn't get that impression of the men's four week retreat here. It was so quiet that one just got a feeling that people were very intensively into things. I don't know how many hours meditation per day there was or anything like that. The feeling I got off the retreat was it was a quite intense retreat.

Nagabodhi: I don't feel we seem to be do many things like triple meditations.

S: Oh yes they were doing triple meditations actually, yes. In the morning. They were. Perhaps people take it more in their stride now. They don't go back and say wow we had a really intense retreat. It's a bit more customary. But I certainly know they had their triple meditation but how many hours of meditation they had in the course of a single day that I just don't know.

Mangala: On the beginners' retreat in the summer for me and for some people it seemed like a fairly light affair but the people who had only been doing it for three or four days were really sort of saying how much it had effected them, how much they'd gotten from it.

S: One must bear that in mind, that what was intensive for you four years ago if you had it now it wouldn't be felt as intensive. So you mustn't forget the position of new people and you mustn't forget to make allowance for them.

Manjuvajra: We also have solitary retreats now which....

S: There's a lot of solitary retreats. A lot of people going on solitary retreats. People seem very keen on that actually. I've even I have been hearing of the solitary retreat a deux! Yes! But one wants to discourage that. A solitary retreat must be a solitary retreat.

Mangala: Also I suppose things like study have come much more to prominence now than they were a few years ago. There used to be no such thing as study really - outside the Order. But now there's a lot more sort of study retreats, there are study groups and things like that.

S: I would though nonetheless like to have more meditation retreats. This is where Tyn y Ddol comes in. I am quite sorry that it has fallen so far behind. My own programme was geared to some extent to having meditation retreats at Tyn y Ddol.

Mangala: I feel I haven't been - maybe this is just a personal thing - I haven't had a really, let's say intensive almost any kind of retreat for quite a few years actually. I remember some of the meditation experiences were really quite strong, quite.... well I just feel I haven't been on retreat

S: Well there seems a certain amount of reluctance to have anything very intensive because suggestions that Order members should have retreats just for Order members, say at Christmas, and have something more intensive seem to meet with no response at all virtually.

One would have thought that that was an ideal sort of situation and I quite deliberately don't take any initiative myself. I feel that the Order members are in a position now of being able to get it together themselves if they want it and if they feel it necessary. But that has been suggested several times but it's never been greeted with any great enthusiasm for some reason or other.

Nagabodhi: There were a couple at Aryatara last year.

S: They were not well attended.

Nagabodhi: There were about fifteen I think.

Kamalasila: Hardly anybody came for the whole retreat.

Nagabodhi: No Right.

S: On the other hand people really thoroughly enjoyed the convention which was in a way a retreat and likewise the Vinehall event for men.

Both of those were reasonably intensive though not that there's all that much meditation though, as I mentioned before, on the Order Convention I was very pleased to see how many people were getting really vigorously into the prostration practice. They got into that quite intensively. A lot of them. Sometimes there were thirty odd people doing it together which was quite impressive and clearly doing it really wholeheartedly.

Do you think much time is actually spent within say the context of the Friends in really useless conduct and actions? What sort of things would be really useless? Not even sort of justifiable as means of necessary relaxation. Are there such things or are people sort of avoiding them on the whole? [Pause]

Mangala: I think on the whole yes.

S: The useless things would be the more or less neurotic indulgences.

Manjuvajra: There's one thing that I've found that I thought was useless. At work I often get invited out for meals and I often thought that would be a pretty pointless way to spend an evening. But I did it once recently and actually found it quite good. The sort of things we talked about and the views of the people there were so different from anything that I normally come across, I actually found it quite useful. So I didn't even feel that that was useless.

S: Well it's almost like a sort of sociological study.

Manjuvajra: There's more than that to it even actually.

S: Yes you were communicating with your subject matter, not just sort of studying it externally. One of the most useless things is argument as distinct from discussion and exchange of views, just argument. I don't think I've indulged in argument for quite a few years but I occasionally overhear people arguing and it really seems completely useless and a complete waste of time.

Nagabodhi: How would you distinguish between argument and discussion and disagreement?

S: Discussion and exchange of views I said. Well how would you distinguish? You all seem to know what I mean or most of you seem to know what I mean. What is the distinction?

Devaraja: It's more of a battle of personalities.

S: Yes. It's a conflict of wills sometimes without any agreed common ground, without any attempts to find any common ground, and often quite irrational.

Derek: The difference seems to be receptivity.

S: There's no receptivity when you're arguing.

Mangala: Is it like one person trying to force their sort of opinion onto somebody else?

S: Very often it isn't even as clear as that, at least not after ten or fifteen minutes or half an hour or so.

Manjuvajra: Some people just seem to jibe you. I get this at work with a few people. It's as though they've got a bit of time to spare. They walk around and they see you and they just kind of poke and usually come out with some opinion that they know that I don't agree with. I usually find now I just state mine once and then on occasions I've just totally ignored them and walked away.

Padmaraja: Do you think there is a place for it though, just initially, for argument in the more negative sense? I find just to get something moving. There's a certain reluctance maybe.

S: No I wouldn't really call that argument because argument I think by very definition just goes round and round in a circle and doesn't get anywhere, but you can certainly come out with the odd provocative statement if that gets things moving. I wouldn't classify that as argument.

Anything else that one can think of as really genuinely useless?

Manjuvajra: There are other aspects of wrong speech like moaning.

S: Moaning, yes and idle gossip. These are really quite useless. Possibly quite draining. I think also ordinary social chit chat if carried on more than a certain length of time is quite useless. It's all right, just a few formal social exchanges to lead onto something more, but if you go on with all this social twittering for a couple of hours that is really useless.

Mangala: Women are more adept at that than men.

Padmaraja: That's a provocative statement!

S: Well they are said to be, they are said to be but I personally have my doubts about this. They sort of chatter about different things but you can overhear men talking about some pretty useless things.

[End of tape 13 tape 14]

S: I mean there may be a difference of opinion about this, but to overhear two men talking about football or to overhear two men talking about cars, to my mind this is just idle chatter and completely useless, though they seem to get a lot out of it. But women also get a lot out of the things that they chat about.

Mangala: Do you think this has got any place in the positive group? Well you could say that social chit-chat has got no place in the spiritual community...

S: It has got no place in the spiritual community, we agree. But even in the positive group I'm sure you don't need to indulge in idle chatter. A few sort of preliminary opening gambits, conversational gambits, well fair enough, but if the group is a positive group you can move into something more constructive than that almost immediately. Or don't you agree with me? Some people are looking a bit sceptical.

Manjuvajra: I do agree with you, but there is a thing that I feel could be developed and that's the art of conversation.

S: Oh yes, I agree, yes.

Manjuvajra: Which I personally feel

S: Conversation is just not chattering.

Mangala: There is a danger though that unless you are kind of discussing philosophy or... well then it's just sort of social chit-chat. I think you've got to be very...

S: Well, I've heard philosophy discussion programmes on the radio, I think they are awful, I think they are unspeakable in fact. It is just sort of pseudo intellectual chit-chat, that is all it is, it doesn't lead anywhere. And it was one of these programmes where they faded out at the end, sort of jabbering away (laughter) They really do jabber as though it just goes on and on and on and it never reaches any conclusion, and it is not supposed to. Yeah? I think that is really in a way worse than women's chattering, better chatter about babies than talk about philosophy in that sort of way. I think it is really awful, [Laughter] this is the only sort of look in that philosophy gets on the BBC apart from the Open University programs, which I wouldn't dare to listen to. And it is really dreadful, it is really most discouraging, well no, I should really say really most infuriating. Have you ever heard or overheard one of these programs, you know the sort of thing I mean, they are usually produced by Brian Magee, I think. A professional pseudo-philosopher. [Pause]

That is really useless, because they are under the impression that they are having a philosophical discussion but they are not. They are only chattering. The sounds that they make are really completely meaningless, and I mean just literally that, completely meaningless, and so pretentious. I mean when women are talking about babies at least they are talking about real things that actually exist and have some meaning.

Mangala: People often tend to chatter a lot at mealtimes, especially when you get a bunch of people round a table. I know down at Toddington sometimes it's just a relief to get away.

S: Maybe on the retreat it is a bit to be expected especially with new people because everything is new and they are making new friends also and getting to know people, so, perhaps then they need some space for that. But I think nonetheless it isn't a bad idea if towards the end of a retreat, even an ordinary retreat, certainly a meditation retreat, there are silent meals, a few silent meals - I think this is a very good thing. When people have had an opportunity to get to know one another and to talk a bit, and open up a bit. Only when they have had that opportunity, have periods of silence and even silent meals for one or two days.

_____ : It is one of the things that people actually fear - silence - isn't it, which is why you get a lot of idle gossip, or people put the music on or the radio, anything to kill that silence. They just cannot handle it.

Nagabodhi: There is something about social chit-chat, to me becomes merely that when there is no exchange of meaning. I mean sometimes at the Centre you meet somebody and maybe they are quite reticent and you can't immediately start talking to them about more important things.

S: No, perhaps they are shy.

Nagabodhi: Maybe you begin by talking about.....You can actually give substance to that just by..

S: It is quite in order to do that as an opening conversational gambit. I think there is nothing wrong because you are doing it quite consciously, quite deliberately, and you are trying all the time just to make the exchange more and more truly a communication.

Nagabodhi: Problems is another one.

S: mm, yes, problems. Talking about one's problems is often quite useless.

Nagabodhi: It is even worse listening to someone else's.

S: That's what I meant!

Mangala: Presumably you mean by that where there is no actual attempt on the person's part to actually solve anything, they are just kind of indulging and moaning about it.

S: I mean sometimes even something worse than that. They are deliberately presenting you with a problem which they have structured in such a way that it is insoluble and then they are calling upon you to solve it for them. There are people who try this particular ploy. One learns with experience to detect it very quickly, and not to get involved.

Manjuvajra: Why do you feel they do?

S: Oh, they want to defeat you. It's an expression of resentment. but they may come in a very sort of submissive and humble way to you asking you to solve their problem, but that is really not the situation at all. They don't want you to solve their problem, they will not allow you to solve their problem. But their language all the time is "Please help me to solve this problem", but actually they have no intention of allowing you to do that, in fact they have taken good care to present the problem or structure the problem in such a way that it is insoluble; it is usually in the way of presenting you with two contradictory alternatives. For instance you say - this was one which was actually presented to me more than once - "if I leave my husband he will shoot himself, if I stay with him I will go mad, what shall I do ?" You say, "well, I think you should leave your husband." "Ah, but he will shoot himself", "well in that case I think you should stay with your husband." "ah, but I will go mad." You see? [Laughter] That's a fairly crude example, though that is an actual example, they can come sometimes in more subtle guises than that, and in this way they have the satisfaction of seeing you wriggling in your embarrassment and not being able to solve it.

I often say, well if I discuss it at all, which I hardly ever do now, I say, "well the problem is insoluble, isn't it? There is nothing you can do." "But I have got to do something, I have got to do something." You have got to tell me to do something which is what they really mean. So I say, "Clearly you can't do anything. Nobody could do anything [Laughter] I cannot help you. Sorry." And that is a great disappointment, they really get annoyed, they don't like it, "well I have come to you for help, you are supposed to help me, you are supposed to be so kind and to do what you can for other people etc., etc", "well, I'm very sorry, my capacity is limited, I am not able to solve this problem." But they don't want you to solve it but they want to have the pleasure of seeing you try, and failing.

Padmaraja: Why should they want to defeat you in that kind of way?

S: Resentment.

Nagabodhi: Does this go back to the father?

S: Possibly.

Nagabodhi: What if somebody has got that problem though? I mean that is their problem.

S: It's their problem. Well they've phrased the problem in such a way as to be insoluble, so that's the problem that you have got to deal with, sometimes you can point this out to people. This is the only way that you can have any discussion. "Do you realise that you are deliberately presenting me with an insoluble problem. Why are you doing this?"

_____: Could it be that they are trying to avoid consequences that they don't actually want to face? If they find the right answer, they don't actually want to follow that answer, so they disguise it in an insoluble problem.

S: Could be, but I suspect that it is more complicated than that. But anyway, spending time trying to solve problems, those sorts of problems on those terms is a waste of time, it is useless.

Mangala: You can often tell even just people's whole sort of attitude, just the way they are talking, whether in fact it is worth putting anything into it anyway to help them. You can just tell whether they really want to be helped or not, and how important it is, actually.

Manjuvajra: Just to go back briefly to that argument of wills. I have noticed on several occasions, usually with women, I have had an argument of will and I have been able to win in the end. I recognise usually fairly early on that it is an argument of wills, but carried on with it, and at the end of it, it does seem to then open communication. It is almost as if they are saying "well look you have got to dominate this part of me before i can be open and communicate."

S: Well perhaps women are a special case. I wasn't thinking particularly of that. It is said that one should never argue with a woman, this was the advice I was given as a young man, and I think I have followed it all my life. I don't argue with women, I don't argue with men, come to that now, but I did argue with men for a while, but I don't do it now. For anything to come out of a clash of wills - if that was in fact the expression that I used, a clash of wills - one of the parties to the clash, one of the parties to the argument must eventually give way. When you get two men arguing together it is highly unlikely that one will give way. If it's a man and a woman the chances are, unless the woman belongs to Women's Lib that the woman would give way because she is a woman, it may be on account of conditioning, it may be on account of her basic psychology. But once one person has given way the other becomes more reasonable, you see what I mean?

Then perhaps a more reasonable exchange can develop. But I think this very rarely happens between men, unless it is an argument that takes place unfortunately within a context of general friendship, and there is a sort of basic good will towards each other, well then sometimes you can get out of it, but usually I would say arguments are a waste, especially say with people who follow another religion, say especially Christianity. Those sort of arguments are completely useless. It's impossible for the other person to give way, in a sense it is impossible for you to give way, if you are so unwise as to get involved in that sort of argument. But women are a special case, I would say, because they are women.

Manjuvajra: I still wonder if it is worthwhile doing that.

S: I really wonder. I mean I avoid arguments, I don't enter into arguments, if I feel that something is becoming an argument, I tend to drop it.

Mangala: I remember once I had an argument, let's call it an argument, I was hitching up here with this Christian and we were talking about I was putting a Buddhist view and he was putting a Christian view, and it was clear in a way there was a kind of stale-mate, a sort of loggerheads position, but I somehow ended up by just saying, "well, that is what I think,

that's what I feel, I can't....if you feel that, well that is" and that was all right.

S: Well I think if you feel an argument about to begin, the best thing that you can do is just to give in to the other person. Say

"well I'm sure there is a lot in what you say, maybe if I did think about things more, I'd see things as you do," and just try to get both of you to drop the argument in that sort of way. In a sense give in, before the argument has even started. You can say, "well you have probably had a lot more experience than me" or "you know this field much better than I do and it is very likely that you are right, even though I have felt in this way so far and still do, but maybe I'll have to reconsider my position." You can always say things like that, and that will very often bring the argument to a halt.

Mangala: You don't want to reinforce his position, that he is right and you are wrong as it were.

Padmaraja: That would be giving in, wouldn't it?

S: I think you reinforce his position more by arguing against it. I think you are less likely to reinforce it if you sort of give in - well give way rather than give in. And sometimes if you give way or give in even the other person will start becoming more reasonable. Might even start feeling a bit ashamed of his obstinacy.

Mangala: I suppose it is like if you are say having an argument say about Christianity or Buddhism and if you kind of pull back well then he might end up thinking, "well I am right, Christianity is better" or whatever.

S: He will probably think that anyway. I mean here you are perhaps more concerned just to safeguard your own peace of mind. Otherwise an argument can be quite ... an argument that doesn't lead anywhere or seem to do any good can be quite irritating or frustrating. But on the other hand other people don't always experience it like that, sometimes you might have what you might feel is a really useless argument and be really sorry that you had it, but you might meet that person two weeks later and say "well I really enjoyed that discussion we had" and they would be saying it quite genuinely.

Manjuvajra: What about that?

S: Well you are left sometimes a bit puzzled, but nonetheless if you feel it as an argument, I think the best thing that you can do is to bring it to an end as quickly as possible or not allow it even to develop as an argument.

Manjuvajra: It may be labouring the point but what about if you have got an audience, and it happens to be a subject about which you do feel quite strongly, supposing it is a discussion between Buddhism and Christianity, and you have got an audience. Supposing it was in a class for example, then it's much more difficult to deal with, you can't, you need to kind of fold the matter away without giving into them.

S: Well it is just your skills and technique as a debater, I think sometimes you have to play a bit dirty as it were, you see what I mean? One of the things that you can do, is to sort of switch from argument to personal experience and anecdotes from your experience. For instance, especially if you are criticising Christianity for a certain point, and that's being denied, that Christianity is like that, and then you can start dipping into your experience and producing a story to illustrate that point, and then very quickly another one and then expand that and make the story a bit interesting so that you get people's attention, and then whip back quickly to your original point, and then change the subject! (laughter) You see what I mean?

For instance somebody says, "well Christianity isn't intolerant." you say, "it is intolerant, because it believes in God" and then they say, "Belief in God does not imply intolerance, because God is Love." You say, "well belief in God does imply intolerance because of its exclusiveness." Then they say, "How can God be exclusive, God is the God of everyone, he is universal." So in this way you are getting into an argument. So you cut quickly to stories, and say, "well, look at the record of history, look at the Albigensies, look at the this that and the other, and you go into a few sort of horrific stories of that sort, and then you keep the ball rolling and then you say, "For this reason I think that Christianity is intolerant. Buddhism on the other hand is tolerant, and partly because it believes in meditation and there are lots of varieties of meditation in Buddhism, there is the mindfulness of breathing and..." (laughter) and you change the subject, you see what I mean. You have to do things in that sort of way sometimes. It is a bit sort of tricky. You are not playing quite fair, but in a way you are dealing with very dirty players themselves.

Mangala: That's the game really, isn't it ?

S: That is the game. If you don't intend playing the game, don't enter into it.

Dharmamati: I'm trying to think of an actual action that is useless, not so much in speaking, but just in action.

S: Well perhaps that is significant itself, and that is maybe why we have four precepts out the ten covering speech.

Nagabodhi: We make useless actions all the time, maybe not..... You can see people making three movements when they could do one, a lot of the time, in a quite simple down to earth way.

S: Well things which are done without mindfulness are often useless, because you make mistakes and you have to do them again.

Mangala: But doing things in three acts that could be done in one isn't necessarily unskilful. I mean it depends on the circumstances doesn't it?

Nagabodhi: I was thinking of unmindfulness, not necessarily unskilfulness, but you see people walking up and down and they are not aware of what they are doing, they are not really in control of their actions.

S: I think perhaps it is not easy to think of useless things because that's a rather negative quality. It is usually that certain things are definitely unskilful rather than skilful, not that they're simply useless. Useless suggests well just neutral, they don't help but they don't particularly hinder, they just are a waste of time, but usually actions being more as it were definitive, are unskilful rather than useless. Whereas talk doesn't in a way commit you to anything, and therefore there are more possibilities of useless talk than useless action. Talk tends to be useless, whereas action tends to be unskilful, when it isn't positively skilful.

Devaraja: I just wondered to what extent that is due ... because speech is almost like an action which demands less will or something like that whereas an actual physical action seems to demand...

S: Right, it doesn't commit you in a way.

Devaraja: Yes, and it seems to be more related almost closer to one's mental state.

Mangala: I think that is why silence is such a good practice, because it means you have to act more, not that you have to act more perhaps, but that...

S: Your action becomes more meaningful, as for instance supposing you have a silent meal, then the way in which you sort of hand the salt to somebody actually does become more meaningful because you have no means of communicating except through gesture, through action.

Mangala: And also you are not able to kind of distract yourself in quite the same way that you can do when you talk. I think talk can be used to preclude action, a way of avoiding action almost, because you can talk all night about you might do, or could possibly do, but never actually do anything... some people actually do that, don't they.

S: I certainly have noticed on retreats that when there has been a silent meal, the meal finishes much more quickly than usual, and the washing up gets done in an incredibly short time. Yes? I sometimes noticed that the whole thing takes about half an hour, whereas with talking the whole thing could take anything up to an hour and a half. The difference is sometimes as big as that, as great as that.

Manjuvajra: I am also becoming aware of useless mental activity as well. I find that my real thought, I maybe have a minute a day at the most.

S: Especially one. Thinking about things in a completely non constructive way that is just not necessary at all.

Nagabodhi: It's a kind of self-punishment, it feels like that myself, thinking quite uselessly about the problem or a worry and I am quite chained to it, it is almost as if I am punishing myself.

Mangala: And also if you are not actually concretely actually trying to solve that thing, "right, I'll do this and then this" and then doing it, but it is just like it kind of there in your mind and it just kind of takes you over.

Nagabodhi: It is like a battering ram.

S: Anyway I think we'll pause there for tea, because we come on with Precept Eight, to something quite different and quite important. In a way quite constructive.

BREAK

Nagabodhi:I mean I think have been labouring under a micchaditthi, if I am to take seriously what has just been said, but some of the people that I work with I find quite often I have to get into arguments with, I mean quite heated ones, and I have sort of thought "well, yes, this is all good for me, this all part of my development that I should be able to do this" and I don't think that I am alone in seeing this.

S: I don't think it's the argument part of it which is perhaps helpful, but so much as the fact that you are able to put feeling into what you say. It is simply unfortunate that it goes into what you say in the form of argument, rather than a honest vigorous exchange of opinion in a way that doesn't amount to simple argument in the sense of a mere clash of wills. So to the extent that you are putting emotion into it, that is good, it's just a pity that that emotion is going into argument rather than something much more constructive. Perhaps from the point of view of putting emotion into what you say, in your communication with other people,

perhaps it's better that it goes into argument than that it doesn't go into anything, yeah?

Mangala: Perhaps it is better going into argument than not into anything .

S: In the way of talking with people, in the way of verbal contact, I won't say communication, but contact.

Mangala: Is there any way of turning an argument into discussion?

S: Well you must stop the argument first, as argument. I think if you give way there is some likelihood of the argument turning into a discussion. Occasionally, yes, if there is enough warmth and residual good will let us say, sometimes an argument after the first boring and frustrating half-hour does turn into a discussion, but you cannot rely upon that. It may just get worse and worse, depending on what you are like and what the other person is like.

If you have an argument with a friend, that's a bit different. Because you are friends after all, you may eventually transcend the argument and come to something more positive. Sometimes...but you have to be careful still, after people have had a violent argument or even quarrel that they sort of start realising might be endangering their relationship, say their friendship or whatever, argument is succeeded by mutual reassurance, and if it's say a quarrel within the erotic context, it may just end up with your going to bed together, just to put things right again. This sort of thing is to be avoided - argument succeeded by mutual reassurance, because you have argued out of mutual attachment and the reassurance has got the same basis. You see how people can argue out of mutual attachment?

Nagabodhi: I can see how they can comfort each other out of mutual attachment.

S: Well the two things are different.... in the case of people with a very intense addictive relationship the two things are obverse and the reverse of the same coin. In extreme forms, fighting, really fighting and making love, they are two sides of the same thing.

Manjuvajra: In the argument you want to be together, so you want to have one opinion, so you both try and convert the other person to that one opinion so you can share the same opinion on something.

S: Yes, you don't allow the other person the freedom to differ. They have got to be a part of you, a function of you in the mathematical sense. This can be of attachment. In my memoirs I have given an example of this, this friend of mine with whom I was going around with South India, would get very upset if we differed from each other over anything and I was not permitted to differ from him. So looking back on it, he must have been very attached in a way, though I didn't realise it at the time.

Devaraja: Can you just explain how you mean in a mathematical sense?

S: (to Manjuvajra) Perhaps you could explain that function.

Manjuvajra: Yeah, A function of a variable, a function of x is something like x^2 plus three x plus five. Right, so the function contains the variable within itself, although the function is bigger. Does that make sense? (laughter)

S: It's as though you are an extension of somebody else. You may look different, may even look bigger, but actually you are linked to ...

Manjuvajra: Yeah, something that changes in them must also change in you.

S: Yes that's right, yes. In that sense, you are an expression of them, except that expression is a more static term, function is more dynamic - as you change they have to change.

Mangala: Would you say it was a group?

S: Well, I'm here relating it to relationships between individual people.

Mangala: Yeah, but wouldn't that constitute a group? Two people relating in that sort of way, like in a sense they can't bear not to be together in concord. They have to maintain that...

S: Yes, if I get interested in meditation you have to get interested, because you are my function. If you don't then in a sense I'm not, because I have this sort of pseudo-identification with you. I cannot do anything unless you do it. I mean sometimes people actually say this, "well if you don't want to do it, it means I can't do it. If you don't want to go to the concert, it means I can't go, so you're being selfish, in not wanting to go." You hear these things.

So in this way the argument, when it can be to establish that identity of opinion, one person having to give in to the other's opinion so that there can be this consolidated oneness in the relationship, this is only the obverse of the sexual relationship, or sexual act itself.

_____: That does the same thing physically.

S: That does the same thing physically.

Devaraja: Is there an element in that thing of that argument between people in that situation, as being something to stimulate a situation in which there is a big mutual reassurance at the end of it.

S: Sometimes people do get into a neurotic pattern of having a really flaming row for the sake of the consolatory coming together afterwards, and giving a bit of zest to it all. It's a really neurotic pattern. Better not even to talk about it, it is really just useless.

Manjuvajra: Again connected with arguments, supposing you are working with some other people in a team to do something and supposing somebody else in the team is always argumentative. So, whenever you are trying to come to a decision to do something, then that person always argues against it. Now if you are continually giving in that means that after a while you begin to feel very impotent in the situation because all that person has got to do is start an argument over it and you immediately give up, as it were, "I don't want to be involved in an argument, so we will do it your way", which also seems unsatisfactory.

S: Oh yes quite. You cannot have an argumentative person of that sort in a team. I wouldn't have a person like that in my team.

Nagabodhi: You've got a lot! (laughter)

Manjuvajra: A lot of our teams have got that element in them. I think they've all got that element in them.

S: Oh dear, what a pity.

Padmaraja: What element is that again?

Manjuvajra: Well the element of argumentativeness.

Mangala: People being contrary.

S: But you have to be careful not to dismiss genuine difference of opinion as expressed in discussion as simple argumentativeness. You must be careful not to sweep discussion under the carpet in the name of argumentativeness.

Manjuvajra: Yeah, I am making that distinction.

S: Well if you have too much argumentativeness in a team, it just cripples the team. The two are contradictory.

Mangala: If someone is just being bloody-minded basically...

S: Yes, you do get that. You can't have argumentativeness on the battle field. And our teams are on a battle field so to speak. We can't afford to have argumentativeness, it is a neurotic luxury which you cannot afford. It really means in group terms, clearly establishing from the very beginning who is boss, this is what it means in group terms. In terms of spiritual community it means clearly establishing from the very beginning that this is a spiritual community, or co-operative as the case may be.

Mangala: What would the implication of that be?

S: That commitment was required of all those involved and therefore honest communication, which excludes argumentativeness. Argumentativeness is a real drag. There is nothing good that can be said about it at all, It is an utter waste of time and mental energy.

Mangala: So it's like a reluctance on somebody's part to commit themselves.....

S: To the situation what ever it may be, including if it is communicating with somebody, they are just reluctant to commit themselves to communicating, they just want to argue, which is not communication, except in a very very remote negative sort of way. I mean people who just argue are a pain in the neck, I mean they may have other good qualities, but you should be very careful about involving them in a situation where they may have an opportunity to argue, just keep them out of such situations, especially if those situations are situations of importance which matter to you. Keep the argumentativeness for your private amusement.

Manjuvajra: I'm just thinking of academic conferences and seminars, that is all they are made up of, they are really draining.

S: Ah, yes, there was a bit of this at that meeting in Paris I imagine.

Manjuvajra: It wasn't too bad.

Nagabodhi: You felt it under the surface all the time!

Manjuvajra: I've known much worse.

S: Yes, right.

Nagabodhi: I just remember the atmosphere there. Constant tension.

S: Sometimes of course you can put a stop to argumentativeness by being deliberately rude, but you must be quite sure before you do that, that the other person is not capable of being even more rude than you. (laughter) Your rudeness must be of such a quality as to put a stop to the argumentativeness and not spark off even further rudeness. It must be the last word in rudeness. Of course you must be able to do this quite deliberately and mindfully and without upsetting your own peace of mind.

Nagabodhi: I remember arguing with somebody years ago at Aryatara - no names - and it was an old battle that we had been fighting for a while and it got more and more intense, we were the only two people in the house, there was no inhibition at all, and eventually I just let everything go, I absolutely screamed at him, and to my amazement he just quite happily rose to the same level, and I saw that he hadn't even started! (laughter) I just ran. (laughter) He probably saw what I had done as a little squeak.

S: Yes, I think people like us, if I may say so, must be a little careful, because what we regard as really being very rude indeed, for certain other people it is only the beginning. I hope it wasn't you!

[Tea arrives]

Mangala: Perhaps there ought to be more organised debate in the Friends.

S: This point was raised some days ago, perhaps it was in the other study group, and I said that only if it was very formalised, because I thought if it was not formalised it could degenerate into just argument. You could have for instance a definite topic or proposal and two speeches on either side under the Chairmanship of somebody or other, and then leave people to draw their own conclusions.

Mangala: Perhaps that would be a good thing for one of the weekends up here.

S: Yes that's true. I think also it is a good idea if sometimes people take the side with which actually they are not in agreement, because then it becomes as it were more like a game. It's understood in a way it is not for real. At the same time as an artistic exercise they are genuinely trying to make out the best possible case for the side that they have temporarily adopted. It might be quite a good thing to organise. Say some particular motion and two speakers on either side. We could at least do it once and see how it went down and how useful it was or otherwise.

Nagabodhi: There was a famous Buddhist sage who was unbeatable in any direction whether he was arguing for the thing or... nobody could beat him.

S: There are some very interesting implications there aren't there?

Manjuvajra: That was the whole of Nagarjuna's approach wasn't it? He would argue with anyone, he would take the opposite philosophical view.

S: No, that wasn't so much Nagarjuna's attitude, because he did not seek to establish any positive position of his own, not even to establish position A as against position B, he simply sought to show that every possible philosophical position that one could hold was logically inconsistent with itself, that it was self-contradictory, not that it was contradicted by any other thesis, and therefore reason and logic were inherently self-contradictory. And therefore they could not be relied upon to establish the nature of Reality. This was his view.

But successfully opposing one argument to another that's another matter, perhaps he could do

that, but that was not his characteristic attitude.

[End of side one side two]

S: I mean that is perhaps a good thing to remember when one wins an argument, or even a discussion, that, had you been arguing or discussing with someone more intellectually brilliant, you would certainly have lost that argument or that discussion.

Mangala: Why do you say it should be remembered?

S: Well you will pride yourself less upon your victory.

Mangala: Oh I see, you realise that it is only a relative thing actually.

S: Yes it's only a relative thing. It is not so much that you are right and the other person is wrong, you've just got a bit more skill in establishing the fact that you are right, but you could meet another person with even more skill in establishing the other point of view than you have in establishing your point of view, in which case you would be defeated. It doesn't mean to say that you would be convinced, but you would be defeated. But anyway lets go onto precept Eight which is really very important.

(8) Avoid concealing thine own faults, and speaking loudly of those of others.

S: We are still in a way concerned with speech, we have been talking quite a bit about speech. But we are also concerned - by implication - with confession. Far from concealing one's own faults you should confess them. And sometimes it is said far from speaking loudly of those of others, you should even conceal them.

Mangala: Are you actually saying that one should conceal?

S: In a sense yes. I mean I don't wish to suggest that you should tell lies about others, but it is just as though if you have found someone naked in the market place, well you would give them something to cover themselves with, just so that they shouldn't be embarrassed. So sometimes you can even as it were conceal people's faults, at least on the social level, just so that they shouldn't be embarrassed. As when someone catches another person out in telling a lie, and says, "Aha, you, I've caught you out in a lie" and so you just sort of step in and say, "well I don't think that he was quite telling a lie, there seems to have been a bit of misunderstanding here", you just try to cover it up so that person on the spot is not exposed as a liar and say held up to scorn and ridicule. You see what I mean? You don't join in the exposure, you just try to not exactly cover it up, but you have consideration for his embarrassment and shame, even though he is in the wrong, out of general human feeling, you don't take delight in exposing him still further, or joining in the exposure. Far from that, you try to sort of cover it up a bit. I mean there are for instance I said within the social situation, within the spiritual community this should not be necessary, but within the spiritual community there wouldn't be that ruthless stripping naked of somebody else. It would be gently and kindly pointed out if someone had happened to tell a lie. But sometimes in social life, people expose other people's faults and shortcomings in a very cruel ruthless sort of way, not with a view to helping the other person, but simply holding them up to scorn and ridicule. So in that sort of situation you could well step in and not exactly conceal, but sort of just try to smooth things over a bit to save the other person's face as it were, even though he was in the wrong.

So this is sometimes said, that not only should one not speak loudly of the faults of others,

but even on occasion as it were conceal them. Or you can even try to balance things up by even if you acknowledge the person's faults, which have been pointed out, just draw attention to some good points that he has got.

Mangala: As regards confession, I think I have heard you say at some time or other that it is not necessary to have to tell absolutely everything, that you have to bare your soul, as it were.

S: Yes, right. Otherwise it is like again checking up on every single individual action, which might have an inhibiting effect. Well you can't tell everything. There is so much that happens, so much that you do, so much that you say. But of course one mustn't use that as an excuse for concealing anything of importance.

Manjuvajra: Can't you normally tell when there are things that you ought to be confessing?

S: Oh, I'm sure that you can, yes. I am sure you know this. So avoid concealing thine own faults. So concealing suggests that you know that it is a fault, you know that you ought to be confessing it, but you don't, you cover it up. And this eventually blocks communication with other people. But for it to be possible for one to confess, to use that term, your own faults to other people you really have to trust them, you would have to trust them not to take advantage of you. You have to have quite a lot of confidence in them.

Mangala: But you also said in that connection, Bhante, that you have to trust them not to take advantage of you, but you said once that the more you opened up, or if you opened up completely, in fact nobody could take advantage of you, ...

S: If you were strong enough, if you were strong enough they couldn't, but very often you are not, very often you are not strong enough, you are vulnerable.

Mangala: But in a way isn't this strength gained through the total opening up?

S: It is.

Mangala: So in other words you can only be susceptible to someone's ill will or manipulation or whatever if you are not totally open because if you were totally open in a sense you can't be hurt, because you have accepted...

S: Right, yes, but it also suggests that your opening up very often isn't a complete opening up. We open up to a certain extent, and then we sort of stop short, but if we were to completely open up, if it we could possibly do that, well it wouldn't be possible for us to be hurt. To the extent that we open up to that extent we are invulnerable. Unfortunately we don't always open up fully and so therefore we are not always fully invulnerable. But certainly to the extent that we open up, yes we are invulnerable.

Mangala: A vulnerable situation might be as it were, perhaps if we were afraid to tell somebody something which may be indicated as a weak area in yourself, which they might take advantage of.

S: Well I think what one is usually afraid of is that they will like you or love you less, when they know what you are really like. There is almost a classic story of somebody in the early days of the Friends, who kept hinting to me that he had something really awful to tell, something awful to impart, and he kept giving me broader and broader hints, and then he started hinting that if I knew this I would never want to speak to him again, I couldn't possibly ever want to speak to him again if I knew this particular thing, so of course he wasn't ever going to tell me because my friendship or my esteem or whatever meant so much to him,

so he kept giving me broader and broader hints and of course meanwhile we were getting to know each other better and better, and I was able to assure him that well all right I promise that whatever it was I wasn't going to like him less or think any the less of him, and one day, I think it was after two years of these hints, the awful secret came out, I don't know whether I'd better tell you! [Laughter], but anyway the awful secret was he said, that he used to have strange sexual fantasies, he used to have fantasies of there being a street with houses upon houses, just a whole row of houses, and he had the fantasy of going systematically from house to house and raping all the women in each house [Laughter], So he said, "you'll never want to speak to me again", I just laughed, I couldn't help laughing when this came out, so I said this is just sort of silly in a way, I'm not going to like you the less even though you do indulge in this kind of thing, but this is what it was.

Very often one of the advantages of compassion is that we see things in perspective. As long as we keep it to ourselves it seems so awful and so terrible, and sometimes we do exaggerate things, but when we have communicated that, and somebody laughs, you see, we just see things in perspective, we laugh ourselves, we realise that we were making too much of that fault, that to some extent it was an imaginary fault. So I mean before he confessed, I was thinking well maybe he has committed a murder, or something like that, it must be something really awful, but it was just this fantasy that he had to confess.

So sometimes what you're concealing is not even a fault, You're even sometimes at the other extreme - you conceal what is good in you, I mean some people are ashamed of their feelings of devotion. You see not unoften, that some people really feel very devoted, they would like to go and offer flowers in the shrine say, but they are not sure what other people will think, think that they are being a bit too sentimental, or something like that, so they don't. Or they meet you and they feel really warm towards you and they feel like giving you a big hug, but they don't because what would you think or what people might happen to see, or something like that.

So, it's not that we conceal only our faults we only too often we conceal so to speak some very positive aspects of our own character and our own being. So it is not so much a question of confessing your faults, it's more a question of general openness. If you are generally more open well your faults will come out along with everything else.

Mangala: Perhaps the word confession is a bit.... It does seem to suggest bad, the evil, the faults, the dark side, and it does have a slightly Christian sort of connotation.

S: Well the sanskrit term is *desana*, which is more like explaining or making clear, or bringing forth.

Mangala: Do you think it would be worth reconsidering the use of that word confession or do you think... it is a very evocative and emotional sort of word, so perhaps on those grounds it might be better than something like explaining...

S: Even in the English the word confession doesn't have such a narrow sense. For instance, there is such a thing as confession of faith, when you say what you actually believe, like the Confession of Augsburg or the Westminster Confession, that isn't an acknowledgement of faults, it is a sort of announcement, maybe announcement is the word for *desana*, an announcement of what you believe. So confession also has this... it's what you say with faith, I think, etymologically. I think the confession part is connected with belief.

Kamalasila: Isn't it such a loaded word because people do find confession difficult.

S: Also perhaps because people are conscious of a lot of guilty secrets, and perhaps have

strong guilt feelings generally on account of their Christian bringing up and conditioning perhaps. But it is just general openness and communication which needs to be stressed, not just talking about your faults, but joyful communication, and not just avoiding speaking about other people but drawing attention to their good points, their virtues, rejoicing in their merits. Speaking well of them. One of the signs of friendship according to the Buddha's teaching, that you speak well of your friend, habitually. Wherever you go, you sing his praises. It is quite interesting that the Buddha sings the praises of his disciples, he says, "Well, Bhikkhu so and so is best at that, and Bhikkhu so and so is best at that", he didn't say "well Bhikkhu so and so has got that weakness that he needs to correct, and Bhikkhu so and so has got that weakness that he needs to correct", he sang their praises, he announced what they were all good at, what they were all best at, what each one was best at. Even if it was only collecting food.

Manjuvajra: It is very difficult to do that.

S: It is very difficult to do it sincerely and to sound sincere. So if you sort of say, "Oh I think you are a really good chap", you start feeling a bit sort of self-conscious, it is as though you are saying it with tongue in your cheek, which it may not be.

Manjuvajra: I find when somebody asks me what someone else is like, and they don't know that person, I find myself automatically coming towards errors, or what I would consider their faults. It is as though in a way determining them, defining them by what's wrong with them, not really by what is good about them.

S: People do this about themselves.

Devaraja: In a way, I feel that that tendency in myself is a result of not feeling enough metta towards myself.

S: Yes. It reminds me of some Order days when people have given what I call a patient's progress report, "I'm a little better this month, I'm not quite so poorly as I was last month", it is as though they concentrate on reporting the areas of weakness and infirmity, rather the positive glowing qualities as it were. Well perhaps those weren't very much in evidence that month, but perhaps they were, perhaps you don't remember them sufficiently or give sufficient attention to them.

Mangala: It indicates a whole sort of way people ... what you are actually saying to somebody is "Tell us what is actually important, what has happened of importance in your life in the last month and if that is the best that they can come up with, it shows in a way where they are at, what its says about them.

S: I know these patient's progress reports are becoming much fewer now. In fact a couple of Order Days I didn't hear them at all. I really used to get a bit disappointed with that sort of reporting in.

Mangala: Perhaps there have been things of more value of more importance which have actually happened to them, but maybe for some reason or other they think that they are expected to talk about their bad periods or whatever.

S: Well, I hope I have never given that impression I'm sure!

Mangala: No, but perhaps it is a sort of idea that people have. The sort of thing they should be talking about.

S: Well perhaps they think of it in too much in sort of encounter group terms. It is something that is wrong that has be brought up and aired.

Mangala: It is much too subjective isn't it.

S: Yes, it is much too subjective often in a unhealthy way, I feel. That people don't bring up enough and communicate to others enough about their objective interests. Sometimes somebody mentions a book that they have read and give some account of it, and that is really quite positive and interesting.

Mangala: But actually I think it's because probably a lot of the time, most people's energy still is very subjective, is very much going on themselves, and they are doing some other things, but by and large they are preoccupied with their own situation.

S: Yes, feeling their own pulse all the time.

Mangala: Still in a way too problem orientated.

S: Yes, I think this about sums it up, actually. Anyway I think we are developing or encouraging a relatively problem free generation. I think the younger people who are coming into the Movement nowadays and beginning to be ordained are much less problem orientated than people were even five or six years ago, much more ideal orientated so to speak. But it's a great consolation in a way to feel that there are at least a few people to whom you can say absolutely anything and with whom you can be completely open and perhaps if you think things over you might conclude that there are in fact very few such people unfortunately, whereas it should be possible for you to be really open with all the people that you really know, or think that you really know, but most people are conscious of areas within themselves that they have opened up with reluctance and some hesitation and to just a very few really trusted friends, or very guardedly or indirectly. And sometimes things that you are hardly conscious of, for instance you might not think about or think of being open about the fact that you are shy, because you are not really sort of aware that you are shy, and don't really think of it as anything to talk about because you are so accustomed not to talking about it that it is difficult even for you to even think of the possibility of talking about it. Even when you think about things that you ought to be communicating or talking about, that doesn't occur to you because it is so absolutely out, talking about that particular thing, you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: What? because you are not even aware of it yourself, I suppose.

S: Well, no, it is more than that, you are not fully aware of it, but it is so much a part of you - that shyness - you don't even think of it as something that can be talked about. Even the possibility of talking about it doesn't occur to you as a real possibility. And I am sure there are lots of areas of that sort within quite a lot of people.

Padmaraja: What is shyness?

S: I am using the term very loosely, as we often do. What do you think it is? I have recently have distinguished between shyness and bashfulness. There is also the term modesty, these are all associated, but they are all a bit different, there is shame too. But what is shyness, say in ordinary parlance, in ordinary social life?

_____: Fear of communication, I mean that is how I used to experience it when I was young. I was really afraid of people, when people used to come to the house, new people that I didn't know, I'd actually hide.

S: Yes, mm...anybody else got any ideas about shyness?

Manjuvajra: Kind of wanting to hide, maybe because you get very nervous when you come into contact...

S: Not liking to be seen, really you could say, shyness is not liking to be seen, not being very comfortable to be seen, hence the tendency to conceal, which can be physical and also mental. And why do you think that you don't like to be seen?

_____: You don't have a high enough opinion of yourself.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: You feel weak, but you possibly wouldn't have the strength, you wouldn't be able to ...

S: You wouldn't be able to stand up to the scrutiny in one way or another, and perhaps you are conscious of certain things within yourself that you wouldn't like the other person to see, it could be for instance anger, or aggressiveness which you wouldn't like the other person to see was in fact there.

Mangala: Is it not more fear?

S: Well, shyness can mean ... there are shades of experience obviously, but shyness can shade off into fear. Shyness is more a sort of superficial as it were social manifestation of that sort of thing, isn't it? But more basically why don't people like to be seen? I think it goes even deeper than not really liking yourself.

Mangala: Lack of confidence?

S: Lack of confidence.

Nagabodhi: Guilt.

S: Guilt.

Mangala: In a way it is a fear, perhaps I'm not sure of this, maybe it's a fear of having to change, to be different.

S: Well perhaps that comes later, perhaps it is also bound up with a fear of rejection, fear of non-acceptance, that someone will see you and just not like you. But it is also as though some people are very sensitive. I don't think it is just that shyness....

Kamalasila: There is a positive aspect to it, some people hold back because they are so sensitive in a way that

S: They don't want to be roughly handled.

Kamalasila: Yeah, and they don't really want to go along with you, because that would compromise their own feelings about things, but at the same time they don't want to be rude, well maybe they cannot be rude in some cases, ...Maybe they are shy in the other way as well.

Mangala: Maybe shyness isn't a very good word then?

S: Well it is a word that we use quite often, but use quite loosely, it isn't a very precise word.

Shyness can be a sort of shrinking from something because you don't feel quite ready for that. I mean sexual shyness can sometimes be of that sort in the case of sexually immature people, they don't feel really quite ready for it, and their feeling may be very well justified, so they sort of shrink back, and don't sort of open themselves up to it very readily and this is sometimes called shyness, isn't it? So you can be shy in the sense of not being prepared quite to open yourself up to something for which you are in fact not quite ready and you know, you feel, that you are quite not ready for it, or not quite able to handle it just at the moment or just yet.

You may be shy in the social situation where perhaps certain other people are rather strong positive powerful personalities. You don't really feel strong enough to handle that yet. So your shyness is of not opening, not exposing yourself to the impact of those personalities, because you know or you feel or you sense it would be just a bit too much for you. And in that case shyness is quite sensible.

Devaraja: It is like emotional immaturity.

S: It may not always be immaturity, but just perhaps not readiness at that particular moment.

Dharmamati: Do you think there is much childhood conditioning? As in parents being overprotective?

S: That could well play a part, yes.

Dharmamati: So that as soon as mother is removed, the child is lost.

S: Yes, right.

Mangala: Do you think in fact that it is right to maybe encourage people not to be shy, to say well look come on there is nothing to be afraid of, kind of thing ...

S: I think you must be a bit careful, you have to be very gentle and encouraging and sensitive yourself, and not as it were to brush aside their shyness, or sort of brush through it, I think that wouldn't be right, it wouldn't be fair. Maybe allow them to take the initiative, don't insist on taking it yourself, just create a situation which they feel themselves able to take the initiative and overcome their shyness, don't as it were force yourself upon them as a means of overcoming their shyness. You may either just sort of ...if you are not very skilful, a bit clumsy, you may do them a bit of damage or you may just make them more shy still.

Devaraja: It seems to me that you have been emphasising a bit in both groups a thing about Order Members, in particular as Chairman, as becoming a bit more nurturing, is that ...

S: I wasn't consciously emphasising this. I think there are more chairman around than usual around, so perhaps I just take advantage of the opportunity of saying certain things which are a bit more relevant to them than to others, but I wasn't conscious of especially emphasising this question of the Chairmen being a bit more nurturing. Perhaps they should be, but I don't recall that I was particularly emphasising this, and certainly I didn't intend to.

Dharmamati: Something I notice about shyness is that there seems to be, especially the generation straight after the War seems to me to be particularly like that. I looked on it as

very much from my own point of view, because I was shy, was the fact that my parents were very protective because they had been through the War, and they wanted to nurture the children so that there was this really 'don't play with those kids, they are bad kids', or these sorts of things, a quite negative sort of thing, wanting to protect the children so much that they cut off a lot of natural human communication.

S: Or giving the impression that the world is dangerous, "don't talk to anybody if you got outside".

Dharmamati: Which of course they thought was dangerous.

Mangala: Sometimes shyness can be really painful. I can recall as a kid standing in a room full of relatives, and I'd be sort of standing there, "Go and talk to auntie so and so" "hand her a biscuit", you were almost ridiculed, if you know what I mean [Laughter] Just feel very uncomfortable and you were almost forced into positions.

S: Some little boys and girls just love doing that kind of thing. But they usually grow up to be rather unpleasant little boys and girls (laughter)

Padmaraja: To pursue the point, where does blushing fit in?

S: Blushing seems to be associated with over self-consciousness. You are sort of conscious of being the object of attention in a slightly painful, slightly perhaps embarrassing way, and it can be associated with the sexual situation because in that situation, you may become conscious of becoming the object of a kind of attention which is slightly embarrassing to you, though not maybe altogether unpleasant, and that makes you more self-conscious and you blush.

I have talked about this on the Seminar on the Positive Mental Factors. And I have suggested there that this sort of slightly painful self-consciousness may well be in the case of the child - we usually get it with adolescents - it may be a manifestation of the development from childhood to maturity, maturity being the stage of self-consciousness in the positive sense, self-awareness. And I suggested that perhaps the rather or slightly painful self-consciousness that the adolescent goes through is a sort of stage on the way to that, that more mature self-awareness.

Mangala: Sometimes something that I find that I do, you actually find you feel shy in situations, and (have rounds of?) acknowledging that, you kind of assume a sort of air of confidence or whatever, which really negates how you're actually feeling. I'm not quite sure why. It's to feel more included, but if you're shy you just want to be on the edge of things. Even though that isn't actually how you feel.

S: I think that the slightly painful or embarrassed self-consciousness with or without blushing at adolescence is associated with the development of sexual feelings, because sometimes I think adolescents think, "well if people knew that I was having these sorts of feelings, what would they think of me? Do they know, can they see, maybe it is obvious", and they start becoming uncomfortable and embarrassed in this sort of way. "Supposing people did know how I was feeling, they would think I was a little horror or little monster and chuck me out perhaps, or certainly not love me any more." So there is a painful sort of self-awareness in that sort of way.

Padmaraja: Do you think that is what blushing could be, sort of body language? A way of something finding expression, maybe you cannot admit something to yourself, you are quite unconscious of it, but it finds expression physically.

S: I don't know what the physiology of it is, that might be interesting, but it does seem symptomatic of, what shall I say, self-consciousness emerging but in a painful sort of way, that you don't find it particularly easy to accept.

Mangala: I think Freud said that blushing was like a sublimated erection. Like something like you cannot accept as it actually is, so it does find expression in some sort of sublimated way.

S: But girls also blush.

Mangala: But girls can also have erections apparently as well.

S: Well we live and learn. (laughter)

Dharmamati: And blushing does happen in quite psychologically healthy societies as well.

S: You can blush out of a pleasing awareness, you can blush out of modesty. I mean the Greeks apparently - one gathers this from the Socratic Dialogues - the Greeks thought quite highly of a modest young man who blushed when he was addressed by his elders. But it suggests a pleasing sort of consciousness that he was the object of attention, in a sort of friendly playful sort of way, that he was being asked a question, or being asked what he thought about something. You see what I mean? Here it's much more healthy as it were. It's almost as if it is a phase in the process of his becoming actually self-conscious and self-aware in a positive sort of way.

Mangala: In a way the word shyness is a bit of misnomer. It is almost like you say, "oh he is just shy", in a way it doesn't say anything.

S: It really doesn't.

Mangala: It really sort of covers up what could be anything.

S: Shyness also suggests avoiding as we say, he shied away from the issue. It really does seem to be able to cover up a whole range of experiences and reactions.

Padmaraja: Is there some connection between Amitabha and blushing?

S: Well again, I have mention this in that particular Seminar, that Hrih, Hiri, means shame, and according to Lama Govinda it is a sort of blush of shame, the red colour, hence the red colour of Amitabha whose seed mantra is HRIH, which means as a word shame in a positive sort of way, the consciousness that you are object of attention. He makes these sorts of associations.

Kamalasila: What was your distinction between shyness and bashfulness?

S: We haven't mentioned bashfulness really yet, we haven't gone into it, but what do you think bashfulness is? Bashfulness doesn't seem quite so extreme as shyness, it seems a sort of playful thing. The shyness of the young Greek that I was mentioning this seems more like a bashfulness, bashfulness is perhaps slightly more pleasurable than shyness.

Devaraja: It is almost like in the bashful thing there is an element of emerging self-confidence and awareness that you have got something to contribute.

S: Yes, indeed. And also with bashfulness there is a sort of awareness that you are the

recipient of a sort of positive awareness on somebody else's part. You just have this slight reluctance to accept that pleasant attention, but it's only quite slight, you are reconciling yourself to it quite quickly. Whereas when you are shy you find it quite difficult to reconcile yourself even to a pleasant attention, in a sense quite friendly attention.

And then what about modesty? Modesty is connected more with a sense of propriety, that it would be proper for you to maintain a certain reserve, like the modesty of a young man in front of his elders, it's not becoming for him to say too much. The Greeks were quite strongly of this opinion, weren't they? Well, the Indians are, the young men don't say very much in front of their elders, elder men, they say what they like in front of womenfolk - they don't count as it were, I'm afraid that is the Indian attitude. You say what you like in front of your mother, she is only your mother, but you are quite careful what you say in front of your father, uncles, elder brothers and so on.

Mangala: You certainly find some people, like good little boys, yet outside they're kind of terrors.

S: Well in India mother is usually very indulgent, you get away with anything with mother, but not where father is concerned, not even where your elder brothers are concerned, even if they are only a year older than you in some cases. There are different words for elder brothers, you don't just call them brother, there is a distinct word which means elder brother, as though to reinforce the point that he's older than you are, and in the absence of father your elder brother takes the place of father.

Mangala: There are so many social conventions and customs, that when you hear things like that they sound really archaic and quite strange. That idea to us just seems ludicrous. You could laugh at it almost. Yet in fact it might be quite a good healthy sort of thing to have. But one's first reaction is that it sounds very backward, behind the times and so on.

S: But I think that's because we don't always realise what a very strange and unusual and even abnormal phase of civilisation, if we can call it that, we are in. When I say we, I mean we in the Anglo-Saxon twentieth century middle class West. I mean something like the nuclear family is abnormal in historical terms; the mixture of the sexes, this is abnormal; so many things that we have been brought up to accept as normal are in fact historically quite abnormal.

Mangala: And because so much stress is laid on freedom, you can do whatever you want, you can go wherever you want, everybody has got money, there is no restrictions, you go up the social scale or down, you can do all sorts of things, that you think that this is necessarily a good sort of thing and it is progress, it is freedom, and these are just old petty restrictions is how we see them.

S: Well you see that sometimes in advertisements for flats: "NO petty restrictions", you know what that means, don't you? It means you can have women overnight if you want - this is what it is meant to signify. So it is significant that you say "Petty restrictions" as though that the landlord or landlady should not wish you to have members of the opposite sex staying overnight. It's a petty restriction you see?

Manjuvajra: I don't see what you mean.

S: Well the modern pseudo-liberal point of view is of course you should be able to have, even though you are living on somebody else's premises, you ought to be able to have whoever you wish staying with you overnight, if that's what you want, and any attempt to interfere with that is quite unacceptable, and people who try to do that are being very small

mind and making a big fuss about things which are really very minor. You completely exclude the possibility that to them at least that may be a quite important matter. To you it's just a petty restriction that they are trying to impose on you and your freedom; so to reassure prospective

tenants, landlords sometimes add to the advertisements, "no petty restrictions", and this is in fact what it means. No attempts to curb your complete sexual freedom.

Manjuvaja: I suppose, modern - let's say man - is very sort of arrogant in this respect, we think that we know it all and things have never been better.

[End of tape 14 tape 15]

S: For instance, we take it for granted that respect should not be shown to the old, or consideration shown to the old. This is completely abnormal. We haven't really had this, to this extent, in history before. You still don't find it in many parts of the East.

We think it is quite normal and natural. We take no notice of what our elders say. We have no care and no consideration for them. They have got to look after themselves now. Formerly it was regarded as very natural that you should feel, "Well, they have looked after me when I was young and helpless, now that they are old and helpless, should I not look after them?" This was regarded as a natural sentiment. We don't regard it as a natural sentiment now. "They can look after themselves, we've got our own lives to lead," we say. We don't want to be burdened with them. That is our modern attitude. It may be right or it may be wrong - I'm not saying that at the moment - but it is certainly unusual, not to say abnormal, just as a matter of simple cultural history.

Devaraja: Do you think it's partly to do with - I can remember I think from about the time of the anti-Vietnam War protest is that one of the catch phrases went something like this: "It's the old who create the wars, but it's the young who have to fight them, have to die."

S: Well, this of course was true in the past. There's not much doubt about that. Except when of course you had young hot-blooded kings starting wars and things like that, but in more recent times, yes, more often than not, it was the older people who started them because they were in the positions of power and responsibility. And the young, the young men, that is to say, who have to fight and die.

Devaraja: And there have been wars on such a horrific scale.

S: Indeed, yes. So there is some truth in that, one must admit.

Mangala: You said in one of your lectures, Bhante, that this lack of ethical values in our society in some ways - the overthrow of traditional values - is a good thing in some respects in that it opens up the way for a new ethic to emerge. Do you think that's actually happening, or likely to happen, or going to happen?

S: I don't think it is happening. I mean the best that people can seem to think of in this country - those that do think about it - is getting back to Christianity, because it's only the traditional religion which can provide you with an ethic. I think this is really quite dangerous, this sort of line of thought. And sometimes the issue is deliberately obfuscated as if to say if you want an ethic, well, OK that means getting back to Christianity, you'd better face the facts.

Dharmamati: Like there's no other alternative.

S: There's no other alternative. So I don't think there has been - except in some quite small humanist and secularist circles - I don't think there has been much of an effort to think out or to create an ethic which is independent of Christianity, especially as in such circles they are usually against any sort of religion at all, or what appears to be a religion, and very often they are subsisting on the ethical remains of Christianity in fact.

Mangala: So what do you think is likely to happen? Do you think it's likely that people will start feeling the need for some kind of moral values and return to Christianity; or do you think Christianity's just had it and people have just had enough of it.

S: I think there is a danger of people returning to Fundamentalist Christianity, among other things for the sake of the moral values, though more for the sake of psychological security, and I think it's only quite thoughtful and in a way cultured people who are thinking in terms of an alternative ethic. There are signs here and there, I think principally, perhaps among rationalists and humanists.

And there are some people in France now who are beginning to think in terms of what they call the New Right, which is a rather unfortunate expression -in fact very unfortunate. Have you heard about this? The New Right? They repudiate Christianity. They want to get back to classical cultural and moral and spiritual values, and they also are quite open and sympathetic to influences coming from the East. And they have sympathy with movements such as Gnosticism, but they are anti-Christian, especially anti-church and against theism, against the belief in a personal god. For some reason or other they have called themselves, or are called by people who have written about them 'The New Right' which seems to me really unfortunate.

Mangala: Where do they is there any sort of primary source of their values?

S: I don't really know. I've only seen one article in *the Guardian Weekly* which Buddhadasa sent to me, and then a bit, I think it was in *the Telegraph*, about them. Apparently people who belong to this group, and they are French intellectuals based on Paris, have been writing in the columns of, I think it is, *Figaro*. And apparently some of them are quite influential people or at least well-known journalists, intellectuals, and you probably know that in France they have intellectuals in a way that we don't have them here in England.

Nagabodhi: They have them in the way we have rain!

S: No, I wasn't thinking quite in that way. I wasn't being pejorative. We don't have that type of intellectual activity or expression. This is what I was meaning. So perhaps it merits looking into, but I'm just not personally happy about this term 'the New Right'.

Mangala: Do you think they are - I don't know whether it is - it would seem it is - a purely intellectual, philosophic

S: It would seem to be at present, but then it's only just now started up.

Mangala: Because if they are sort of intellectuals, they may be very closed to

S: No, but on the other hand, don't forget they are French intellectuals who have a tradition of commitment and even political commitment.

Mangala: I'm not quite sure what that means.

S: Well, French intellectuals are usually associated with active social and political

movements, like Jean-Paul Sartre or like Andre Moreau or like

Nagabodhi: Marcuse.

S: Yes, you could include him I suppose - yes.

Mangala: Do you mean that they don't just remain with the idea of abstract philosophical

S: No, they have what they call commitment - or engagement, they call it.

Mangala: A social

S: An actual involvement in practical affairs and even politics. French intellectuals differ to a great extent from English intellectuals in that sort of way. That's why they are news very often. They are not just academics. They have their special limitations - no need to go into those - but it's an interesting phenomenon nonetheless.

Manjuvajra: I can see a bit why - I mean it does have some reminiscences of the early right wing movement in Germany. There was a return to classical values and also an interest in Eastern ()

S: But normally, of course, anything right wing has been linked with the Catholic Church, or with Christianity generally, on the Continent. But this especially repudiates Christianity and theism and God. And seems to be saying that if we want values for Europe we have to go back beyond Christianity.

I think this may be an outgrowth of the effort to find cultural values at least, possibly spiritual values, on which to base the sense of European Community. Because some people have been saying, some conservatives in Britain have been saying, that we need as it were an ideology for Europe and that can only be Christianity. Do you see what I mean? If you want to bind Europe together, have one Europe - well, you need a philosophy for that one Europe. There have I believe been conferences called about this very issue. But some people, clearly these intellectuals are amongst them, are not happy at trying to make Christianity the basis of this united Europe or to have Christianity providing the philosophy for this united Europe. I think this is quite a danger, saying we must have a united Europe: it's only Christianity can hold Europe together: therefore we must have Christianity.

Nagabodhi: The whole question just seems redundant somehow. There was a bit of that behind the E.B.U. conference in Paris. Some people seemed to feel that the fact that the Common Market was established was () from Europe together. Actually, I don't think that

S: It's a good excuse, but it isn't a real reason. If you are looking for an excuse to call a conference, well, that'll do as well as any perhaps, but one shouldn't take it too seriously.

Manjuvajra: Do you still have that article?

S: I do. You'd like to see it? I'll find it for you. [Pause]

Mangala: Do you think it would be worth us at any point then as a Movement taking a more active initiative in contacting other sort of - maybe even other Buddhist groups - and trying to bring them round to our way of thinking?

S: Personally I am in favour of this, though I think you are wasting your time with most Buddhist groups. But I'm certainly in favour of contacting groups with - or individuals within

groups essentially - with whom it might be possible to make some headway. I've been quite encouraged by the response to *Buddhism and Blasphemy* and I recently had a very good letter, just in the last few days from James Kirkup, saying that he's really impressed by what he's heard or learnt about the Friends, so far, and more recently by *Peace is a Fire*. He really likes some of the sayings in that, even some of the poems, if I may say so, and he's received Newsletters also along with *Buddhism and Blasphemy* and he has written to me before, but I haven't really had time to write to him. He's sent books, and he's sent a tape of himself reading poems, and he's sent a poster of one of his poems. But now he seems to be being a bit bowled over by the FWBO and he inquires whether he could come on a retreat, and would it be possible for him to join the Order. He likes what he hears about it so much. But clearly he hasn't understood very much about it. But this is what he had written.

So these sort of contacts, which I think, often have to be one-to-one contacts, are really worth making. For instance, as a result of *Buddhism and Blasphemy*, I entered into a whole correspondence with a woman called Kit Muat who used to run a humanist book service and who is also an active feminist. But she started writing to me in a quite interesting way, so I was able to write back. This is before I went off to India and New Zealand. And we had quite a correspondence. And she's ended up quite a sympathiser. I () literature with her, and I've been invited to have tea with her the next time I'm down near where she lives. So I think this is sort of the way in which it has got to be done. I think you concentrate on certain individuals within certain groups and you really get to know them and to open up correspondence and feed them literature. And it may take quite a while but I think it's really worth it, once you latch on to the right person. And even if they don't join the FWBO, it's good that you have friends everywhere. This is quite an asset.

Manjuvajra: How about letters to magazines? Why I say this is - in the *New Statesman* recently there's been quite a discussion about God

S: Oh, I didn't know that

Manjuvajra: and I just wondered whether it would be worth entering into those.

S: I think it would be good us entering into this sort of thing and writing letters to editors, but I think it isn't enough just to write in the name of Buddhism, as it were. But definitely bring in the FWBO (when you have a chance). Just to write in terms of Buddhism isn't enough, it could even encourage current misunderstandings. Don't even say Buddhism doesn't believe in God. Say the FWBO is a flourishing spiritual movement in Britain which does quite well without any form of theistic belief, and mention incidentally that it is Buddhist, and that Buddhism doesn't teach any form of God. Draw attention as much as you can to the FWBO and what is distinctive about it rather than Buddhism in a very general way, which might send someone straight along to their nearest so-called Buddhist group, which wouldn't be the FWBO. See what I mean? You might send them straight into the arms of the Buddhist Society and out again quick. Make it clear you are talking about the FWBO - I think this is very important.

Mangala: Do you still think we need the word Buddhism or Buddhist?

S: I don't see how we can avoid it, really. Or at least not the fact, because we do go back to the Buddha. So you'd have to acknowledge the Buddha out of gratitude if nothing else, and great Buddhist teachers whose teaching we do find helpful. We could not use the word *Buddhism*, we could say use the word *Dharma* or speak of the tradition of Enlightenment or something like that, but we'd have to rephrase it in some such way. We couldn't really cut ourselves off from whatever we may like to call it whether Buddhism or the Buddhist tradition.

Mangala: I still think an awful lot of people would probably, if they come and see our co-ops, our meditation (techniques?) they'd probably think, "Wonderful" come on a retreat, communicate with us, but if they hear the word "Buddhist", they would just want to run a mile probably

S: Well, I think that's to some extent their fault even though one can understand it. Because they should be prepared to consider that they'd got it all wrong about Buddhism. After all they must surely acknowledge they haven't made a profound study of Buddhism. It shouldn't be too difficult for them to acknowledge that the odd impression they've got about it from the odd reference in some article or book just wasn't adequate. Surely they could acknowledge that.

Mangala: There are so many kind of, let's say similar groups around, it's so easy for the popular imagination just to get them all confused and tarred with the same brush.

S: Yes, right.

Mangala: Like almost anything that smacks of Eastern or Indian culture.

S: I don't see really there's any way around that, really. Except you just have to make as clear as possible what you stand for. Say - forget that we're Buddhist, forget that we're religious - but this is what we do, this is what we stand for - call it anything you like. If you don't want to call it Buddhism, we don't care one little bit. If you don't want to call it religion, we don't care one little bit - call it whatever you like. But this is what we do. This is the path that we follow.

Manjuvajra: I think when people actually come into contact with the FWBO they'll accept that, but it's that first contact - it's almost like religion has a nasty smell.

S: Well, this is why I think we have to project FWBO first, Buddhism after, and religion last of all, if at all. It's FWBO-ism really. And then you can say when they've got into that, "Well, yes - it is historically a form of Buddhism." And then - if you are very careful to define your terms and admit the possibility of non-theistic as well as theistic religion - well, yes, you could say Buddhism is religion. You could even go so far as that. But it's not enough to project Buddhism. I think you have to project so far as the public is concerned, the FWBO with a very definite image and character. It's as though people subsequently discover that it is in fact a form of Buddhism. Not put the Buddhism first and the FWBO second. I think this will not work correctly.

Mangala: I'm thinking of something like TM which projects in a very scientific sort of way, and therefore gets fantastic acceptance all over the World.

S: Yes, they don't say they are teaching Hinduism though in fact they are teaching a form of Hinduism. They just say they are teaching TM. So I think we have to do something like that. Do you see what I mean?

Mangala: That's what I mean.

S: Project the FWBO, but we haven't really got a general term, because it is quite a rich complex as it were. It isn't just a meditation technique as in the case of TM. We have to have some sort of phrase or something that crystallises the whole thing without amounting to what I call a premature synthesis. Maybe we won't find it for a while, but will just have to make do as best we can with those clumsy initials - FWBO.

Nagabodhi: People very quickly find out what they stand for.

S: Yes. Well if they find out Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, that's fine. That's all right. That it's not just Buddhism in a vague general sort of way. It's something quite specific and concrete, actually existing as an institution so to speak - a definite individual movement. It might not occur to some people that Friends of the Western Buddhist Order has in fact all that much to do with Buddhism, as they read about it in books. People don't make connections all that quickly or easily always.

Mangala: I think the words 'Buddhist Order' are quite religiousy in a way. I mean I just sort of wonder - I'm not sure about any of this - but if somehow the Movement was projected morewell, if in a sense words like Buddhism, even the Buddha, were in a sense almost not brought into it at all at least until people were maybe more into things, so it's presented much more in terms like meditation, communication exercises

S: I think you are going to find it very difficult as it were to conceal from people the fact that you are a Buddhist. You need to have a completely different set up, with completely different people, and no overt connection with other say Buddhist type centres, and I think for some people it would be such a shock, when they eventually did find out the connection - they'd almost feel they'd been led up the garden path.

Mangala: Well, I think like the path of regular steps. It used to be that we closed off the shrine for a meditation class, then after a retreat or something you opened it. People say, "Oh look there's a Buddha there!" (laughter)

S: I think people eventually concluded that more people were attracted by the shrine than were put off by it.

_____: Thank goodness (inaudible)

S: I think we just have to project FWBO first, Buddhism next, and religion last of all, and wait for a proper term

Mangala: And also perhaps be very very careful about how we actually do project ourselves. Probably the best way is through individual contact. There's less chance of misunderstanding.

S: Well, depending on the individual and whether () otherwise people just get the impression, well, if the individual FWBO member is interested in poetry, well, OK the FWBO likes poetry, but if he isn't, the FWBO is against poetry, as I mentioned when I gave the instance of the two people I met in New Zealand.

Derek: I think, from probably the meditation courses, I think, sometimes centres have tried that attitude of hiding the Buddha image. I don't think that's a very good attitude. I think it's better along with the - you have to compose a brief talk explaining the meditation - along with that talk it's a good idea to give a brief talk, just a brief explanation of why the word Buddhist is used in the FWBO, just to sort of clear the air.

Manjuvajra: One thing about beginners' meditation classes at the LBC is that you cannot possibly deny it (laughter). You know there is a 500 foot Buddha sitting though I find people really respond to that, if you say quite clearly at the beginning, "This is a Buddhist Centre. We are working within the Buddhist tradition, which means we are teaching meditation with this particular angle." And then to talk about development - people really respond to that. They feel that they are being given meditation in a much wider context than

just sort of going along to the sort of relaxation.....

S: On the other hand you can say, "If you are only interested in the meditation and want to come just for that - well, you are perfectly free to do that without getting involved specifically in Buddhism. It's entirely up to you." They can be told this too.

Well, I think we ought to start winding up now. Any final point about shyness or modesty and bashfulness?

Mangala: They're very often seen as things to overcome aren't they?

S: What are?

Mangala: As if they are almost like intrinsically wrong - well like modesty, bashfulness, shyness.

S: Well, we really have got so many of our values completely topsy-turvy. Well look at the word - I don't know whether I mentioned it in this group or the other one - virginity. Well, you use the word virginity now or virgin even - people laugh. This is again a completely recent thing. A young man would be ashamed to say he was a virgin, wouldn't he? Nowadays I think a young woman would be ashamed to say - if she was over fourteen anyway. (laughter)

Well what does it mean?. I'm no good. Nobody wants me. I can't find a boyfriend etc., etc. Look at the way we've changed. In a sense look at the depths to which we've sunk. In a way, from a certain point of view, at least.

Devaraja: I remember reading a really good in a book by Gurdjieff in which he was talking about particularly he was taught as a young adolescent by an Orthodox priest, a very progressive Russian Orthodox priest, a really open-minded intelligent, Russian Orthodox priest. (laughter) I just wanted to get it right - that it was important that a young person should remain chaste until such time as they were capable of fully taking responsibility for themselves.

S: Which didn't necessarily mean responsibility for a family? He said fully responsible for themselves?

Nagabodhi: That must never come for some people! (pause)

In the lecture *The Spiritual Significance of Confession*, you talk about the distinction between confession as a spiritual act within the Buddhist context, and confession as a means of eradicating guilt or trying to eradicate guilt, and you said that to the extent which one confesses with guilt, to that extent it is not a real confession, but I think being Westerners, it's going to be quite hard, there's

S: I'm not saying you shouldn't confess, so to speak, unless you can confess without guilt. I'm not saying that, but the perfect confession is guilt-free.

Nagabodhi: You shouldn't let guilt stop you from confessing?

S: No, or trying to confess to the extent that you can. I have a feeling, without being able to recollect exactly what I said, that perhaps you're taking me up a little bit just on terminology, that is the actual definition of confession.

Nagabodhi: No, I'm not just interested in the words, but it's like the whole spirit in which

the confession is made should be that you are really

S: Well, clearly, I'm speaking of ideal confession in the fully Buddhist sense, or in the fully spiritual sense, but not precluding the possibility that you can confess in the sense of didn't I use another term for that?

Manjuvajra: I did.

S: What was that?

Manjuvajra: Admission.

S: Admission, yes, in the sense of admitting something about which you felt guilty was not confession in the full sense. Admission of guilt is not confession in the sense that I was talking about in that talk.

Manjuvajra: I'm very interested in what you said about thinking in terms of confession, of areas of yourself which you are not actually aware of as

S: No I'm not. It's more than that. It's - you've as it were become so accustomed not to talk about that thing, that the very possibility of talking about it honestly doesn't occur to you, so that with your conscious mind you really do want to talk about everything, you do really want to confess, but the possibility of talking about that thing genuinely doesn't occur to you, because if you did think about it at all, which you don't, it would seem impossible to talk about that thing to such an extent.

It's usually something to do with sex, more often than not, or something which is so basic to your thinking that you take it absolutely for granted. Yes? You are not even conscious of it as a belief or attitude that could be changed, or as something not very positive that you could, in fact needed to, confess. But very often the inhibition is so strong with regard to that particular thing, that the possibility of confessing, of talking about it, doesn't really occur to you. You're not aware of that at all really.

Mangala: You don't really acknowledge that thing, I suppose, consciously that is.

S: It's not even that you refuse to acknowledge it, because you are not even aware that it's there to be acknowledged. It's so much a part of yourself it would be like tearing your heart out almost. I mean I've mentioned more than once, that it has been said that when someone sits down to write his autobiography, the first thing he becomes conscious of is what he is not going to tell. But it's more than that. When you sit down to write your autobiography, or when you start to confess, there are certain things that it is not possible for you to be conscious of as things to be confessed, because the inhibitions are so strong.

Mangala: In other words they're still unconscious.

S: Largely unconscious. They might not be completely unconscious, but largely unconscious. But even if you are conscious of them as phenomena of your own mind, your own consciousness, you are not conscious of them as things which can be confessed.

Mangala: Do you think that's because you are not conscious of them as faults or....

S: No, no, not that. If you thought about it, you may even be conscious of them as faults but not as faults or things that can be confessed. The possibility of talking about them to somebody else is so remote from your experience, you can't really imagine it. It's more like a

failure of imagination. I mean this is a state a lot of people are in.

Mangala: Do you think it's because you think the thing is so disgusting or what?

S: No, no, it's more than that. It's not that you think, "This is so disgusting I couldn't possibly tell anybody about it." It isn't that. It's more than that. You don't even think of the possibility of confessing it, even to the extent of rejecting the possibility of confessing it. If you start sort of being indecisive in that way and think, "Oh, I ought to confess it, but I really can't!" Well, that's a good step forward, from the point of view of what I'm talking about.

Nagabodhi: Is it something addictive?

S: It's like giving up. You are so addicted to something, that you don't even really think about the possibility of giving it up, even though you might think, "Well, I know there are all sorts of things I ought to give up. I ought to give up what I'm attached to and what I'm addicted to." You sincerely say that. But that particular thing is always unconsciously accepted because it's so much part of yourself you cannot really even imagine yourself as giving it up. So you just don't think about it - don't include that. It's your one treasure that you just don't even consider the possibility of surrendering. Or not surrendering - you don't even think about it to that extent.

Mangala: Could you call these X-factors?

S: You could, though that's again from a slightly different point of view. To the extent that they hold you back from doing certain things and you are not conscious of them, to that extent they are X-factors.

Nagabodhi: Would you say that those are precisely the things that you need to give up, or you need to confess?

S: Well, you need to really be able to imagine the possibility of confession first.

Manjuvajra: You wouldn't be able to, would you?

S: You wouldn't be able to. You really need the help of spiritual friends to point out these things to you again and again and again until you see them.

Dharmamati: Blind-spots.

S: Yes, that pretty well sums it up. They are really blind spots. Because you've a blind spot, you don't see what is actually there and don't therefore take it into active consideration. Just because it is a blind spot you just can't see it! You can't give up or you can't confess what you honestly don't see and which it is very difficult for you to see even when it is pointed out repeatedly by your spiritual friends etc., or your spiritual enemies. Or worldly enemies.

Devaraja: You've never really experienced oneself as functioning in a different way in order to be able to perceive that particular aspect of one's functioning.

S: Yes, right, exactly. You cannot imagine yourself functioning in any other way. It's partly bound up with identification with yourself as a certain kind of person. You can't imagine yourself as being another kind of person, as giving up this or confessing that. It goes pretty deep doesn't it?

_____: It can cause quite a lot of anguish I think.

S: But there are these hidden areas, or blind spots, in most people, of one sort or another. So people just have to help one another to see their blind spots. It's usually a service to be mutually performed, if that is any consolation.

Padmaraja: In the light of what we've just said, rather than saying it's ignorance that stops us from developing, you could almost say it's inhibition.

S: Hmm, yes. With the proviso that inhibition contains a strong component of unconsciousness which is of course ignorance.

Mangala: Inhibition of what?

Padmaraja: Inhibition of, I guess, being what we essentially are.

S: What we are, acknowledging what we are.

Anyway, I think we really better end there because it's only two minutes to half six. Anyway we've covered quite a lot of ground. It's good to think that everything is on tape, because I'm sure you wouldn't remember it all. [Laughter]

End of Day Six

Next Session

S: Anyway - ten things to be avoided one of which is delay. Anyway that bit's extra!

Would someone like to read precept 9?

(9) Avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health.

S: We have had something a bit like this in a positive form in the previous section - 'adopt such regimen and manner of living as will keep thee in good health'. So here is: avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health. This might seem a sort of simple, straightforward obvious sort of thing, but do you think people always do avoid such food and habits as disagree with their health? And why do you think they don't do this? For instance smoking. I mean people know very well that it disagrees with their health. Why do they do it? Can anyone throw light on this psychological curiosity?

Derek: People presume that the wee bit of pleasure they get out of it is greater than the harm it will do them.

S: Yes. Also lack of imagination. They cannot see in their mind's eye these pictures of blackened corroded lungs, if you see what I mean. Lack of imagination. Could it not be connected with lack of love for oneself? You can want to please yourself without loving yourself. In fact you could even go so far as to say that the pursuit of pleasure or let's say the excessive pursuit of pleasure or the pursuit of pleasure to the disregard even of health, definitely shows lack of self-love. Because self-love is wise. It is informed. It is far-seeing. It's as if you really love a child. Supposing you love a child. You won't give a child to eat something which you know it likes sucking at, but which you know is going to cause a painful disease later on in life. If you really loved the child you wouldn't treat it like that. So it's the same with your own self.

Nagabodhi: What I've felt about myself and smoking it that it's almost the experience of the

pleasure, or kick, is the substitute for love.

S: I don't want to be extreme here and seem to be coming down heavily on the odd cigarette. That's another thing. But I mean the habitual heavy smoker. I'm thinking more in terms of such a person, not someone who has the odd social cigarette or something of that sort which doesn't affect his health one way or the other. I'm thinking definitely of the confirmed heavy smoker who's smoking really will definitely affect his health, after say 10, 12 or 15 years. So I think that that sort of habit which definitely does disagree with your health, at least in the long run, does suggest a certain absence of self-love. Again I don't want to make it too sweeping. But a certain lack of self-love.

Padmaraja: What about that point of Nagabodhi's that in fact it is a substitute for love?

S: Well, yes, clearly it is in a way. It's not a complete substitute, or a healthy substitute, or a satisfactory substitute. In a way it is a neurotic substitute, because if you really loved yourself, you would in a manner of speaking get pleasure from yourself, and wouldn't need to seek pleasure from something which actually harmed you.

Padmaraja: This lack of self-love - do people not love themselves because in fact they've never really been loved - as babies for instance they've never really received it?

S: This is what we are told, but in practice it doesn't seem always to work out like that. As a sort of: well, no love when you're a baby then you can't love yourself when you're adult, and if you love yourself as an adult, you must have been loved as a baby. I don't think it's quite as clear cut as that. Because one does see people who don't seem to have received much care or love or attention as babies, but who turn out well, who seem to love themselves and to get on well with others, and similarly one does see some people who seem to have received every care and attention and love even, when they were babies, but not to turn out very well, so I don't think one can regard it as an absolutely decisive factor in all cases. Though no doubt, if you are brought up lovingly, it does help you to love yourself and to love others. I wouldn't say though that it's invariably the decisive factor, or that if you are brought up unlovingly then you cannot possibly love yourself or others. I wouldn't make it as sweeping as that. Human nature is very resilient and has very deep resources.

[End of side one side two]

On the other hand it is also very perverse sometimes. But certainly as a mature adult, as a mature individual, even, one should be able to love oneself. One should love oneself. There should be - well- content. Content is an aspect of self-love perhaps. You enjoy yourself, but not in a sort of self-indulgent, narcissistic way. You don't make yourself an alienated object to satisfy yourself as an alienated subject, if you see what I mean.

Yes, there is a lot of that sort of thing. Well that is indulging in self complacency and narcissism. Your self-love, the pleasure you take in yourself is a positive total experience of yourself, without dividing yourself into an object to be enjoyed and a subject that does the enjoying. There's just that sort of healthy glow of joy in yourself. Perhaps it's more joy in yourself than self-enjoy-ment. You can probably feel the distinction.

Just as you can take delight in somebody else, as distinct from really enjoying them, or making them the object of your enjoy-ment. That is rather a different thing from just delighting in them for their own sake - for the sake of what they are. Delighting in them is more aesthetic. It's more in the nature of an aesthetic experience. There's less of a grasping and grabbing. There's no tendency to get your grubby little paws on the picture. You are quite content just to look at it, admire it, delight in it.

Padmaraja: Why do you think it is then, that people do find it so difficult to love themselves?

S: It's quite difficult to say. Also I think we must be careful from what samples as it were, we are generalising. We talk about people and human beings when usually we mean our own particular section of society in the West. I don't know that people have such difficulty loving themselves say in India or other such places.

Derek: Do you think it would work the other way round? That if we're in a society which sort of boosts and induces pleasures of that sort, then that would cause lack of self-love?

S: Oh yes. I mean if there's a habitual tendency to emphasise enjoyment of pleasures, well, this could sort of discourage the development of metta, let us say, for self and others - yes.

So perhaps one could say, the extent to which people do indulge in food and habits which disagree with their health is a measure of their lack of self-love, at least to some extent.

All right, we've mentioned smoking, but what other things should be avoided - what other foods or habits - because they disagree with health?

_____: Drink. Habitual drinking.

S: Habitual drinking, especially habitual heavy drinking. This certainly disagrees with health doesn't it?

_____: Some drugs.

S: Yes, some drugs. Even tea and coffee to excess.

Padmaraja: Television. Watching television.

S: Well, yes, this could actually disagree with your health. Apparently it does have a protracted and injurious effect on the eyesight, not to speak of other factors. We are concerned here with this precept with food and habits that disagree with our health. So let's keep on that and not go into say the psychological effects of TV. But certainly excessive TV watching is bad for the eyesight. One can at least say that about it. [Pause]

Lack of exercise. Over-sedentary habits disagree with health usually. Over indulgence in starchy foods and sweet stuffs - these disagree with one's health. Living in unsanitary conditions, breathing polluted air. Very often you don't have a choice, so if you do indulge in breathing polluted air you don't necessarily not love yourself. You perhaps have no choice in the matter. But if you do have a choice - well - avoid breathing polluted air. Do whatever is in your power to see that air is not polluted and don't yourself pollute the air. I think it's quite a good sign that no-smoking areas are extending now more and more to public places. You notice the difference on the tube in London now. It's sometimes difficult to find a smoking compartment if one wants one. You see there are more non-smoking compartments. It certainly wasn't like that even just a few years ago. You get the no-smoking areas in cinemas, whereas formerly a blue haze would be hanging over the whole audience. You couldn't possibly get away from it. I believe that similar extensions of no-smoking areas are taking place in hotels and places of that sort - restaurants I believe.

We don't have smoking at the Centre, do we? People do go out for a quick fag in the courtyard. Quite a few people do that, but I suppose eventually even that won't happen. It was

quite a point in the early days whether to allow smoking in the Centre itself, but it seems to be more and more felt, without anything very much being actually said, that it's inappropriate.

Nagabodhi: I remember this sign at *Pundarika*. It said something like After much debate we have decided to suggest that you don't smoke at the Centre. [Laughter]

S: That was almost bold wasn't it, as though you're infringing on people's rights. They have a right to smoke. But one must be able to hoist the right people on their own petard by standing up for the rights of the non-smokers. Non-smokers also have rights. That was not really generally conceded originally. It's as though the non-smoker had just to put up with foul air and unpleasant odours.

Nagabodhi: The original idea was that the non-smokers are weedy and puny.

S:or eccentric - right, yes

Nagabodhi: and real men smoke. So the non-smoker would never have the guts to ask a smoker

S: Well, any other example of food and habits that disagree with our health?

Padmaraja: I can imagine studying the precept in a mitra study group and almost just passing over it. Avoid such food and habits - Oh yes, we all know about that. But when you look at it more closely it just seems so fundamental an issue. When you look at the situation we are in today with pollution The human race seems to be poisoning itself in so many ways, it just seems to be so

S: Well, not to speak of the human race, there was a very sad item, as I felt it, on the radio this morning, that it's been officially announced that I think it's the Greater Blue butterfly is now extinct in Britain. I was quite pleased in a way that they made it a news item. Because in a sense, somebody realised its significance. The Greater Blue or Larger Blue, which was just managing to hang on to existence in Devonshire, has it seems not reproduced itself this year. So it has been officially declared extinct and of course there's been a sort of chain. They didn't give very much information. It appears to live and to breed in sort of heath-like areas with not too much grass. And apparently - what is that thing that rabbits suffer from and which has been artificially induced?

Voices: Myxomatosis.

S: Yes, that's the thing. So many rabbits have been given this disease and have died, they have not kept the grass cropped, and therefore these Larger Blues had lost their habitat virtually. So a direct result of man's interference with his environment. So another species of insect, another species of life is extinct. And this is going on all the time. If you follow articles about this sort of thing, hundreds of living creatures, hundreds of species are being exterminated every year as a result of the direct action of man. And some of them very beautiful, and one would have thought valuable species.

Manjuvajra: There's an actual campaign out to exterminate badgers now in this country.

S: Yes, I heard about that. But there is a counter campaign, which has its own publicity, and even its own propaganda which states apparently that the badger is not so harmful as the anti-badger people suggest.

But this raises the point of view - the point of discussion: well, certain species are classified

as pests because they interfere with certain human activities, as though Man alone has got the right to exist, and whatever gets in the way of man, not only man's existence - because man's existence is threatened by no animal species whatever - whatever gets in the way of Man's pleasure, comfort, convenience, has to be immediately exterminated.

Mangala: What about things like killing greenfly?

S: Well, they look after themselves in the long run. The ladybirds look after them.

Mangala: But people spray plants and so on, don't they to kill off greenfly and stuff?

S: I don't want to go into detailed ecological arguments, but I understand it is said that if you put too much pesticide into the soil, which is where it ultimately goes back, that in the long run has a deleterious effect on human beings anyway. And also the insects you are trying to kill off by means of the different pesticides develop resistant strains, so that you have to use stronger and stronger insecticides or different ones, and this makes it worse for human beings in the long run. I think this is the essence of the argument.

Kamalasila: And yet the people know that. People do know that.

S: This is another example of this, you see. They disregard or they don't avoid habits that disagree with their own health, for the sake of certain pleasures. In this case, perhaps, pleasures of the palate.

_____: In the Fen country, the farmers are putting down so much fertiliser now that it's actually destroying the top layer of the soil every year, which blows away and they reckon that within twenty years the whole Fen land is going to be a dustbowl, just farmed out of existence like happened in the States.

S: Yes, well, dustbowls have been created in the States. It is said - well, it is known that the whole of North Africa including the Sahara was once fertile land. In Roman times, North Africa was the granary of the Roman Empire.

Padmaraja: So what happened there?

S: Over-farming. It's happened in India too in some areas and the topsoil is blown away. This is what essentially happens.

And then you've got the way in which they are destroying the forests of Central America. Millions of acres are being cut down every year now. They're beginning to realise that this is a false policy. They did the same sort of thing in New Zealand. The greater part of New Zealand was deforested to make grazing for sheep. Now of course they have realised their mistake they're beginning to afforest again. At first it was more with conifers - the good old conifer - but they are re-foresting now with native bush. I saw quite a bit of this in different parts of New Zealand. They call it the regenerated native bush, which comes back actually quite quickly and easily. Well, they aren't just planting conifers now.

It's the same in Britain. They've tended to plant conifers all over the place in plantations. I also read an article recently to say that there is the likelihood of the Oak being threatened in Britain in just the same way that the Elm was. Well, the Elm was more than threatened. About 12 million Elms were wiped out. That's quite a lot isn't it? 12 million big trees. Britain is now, according to another article I read, the least well forested country in Europe.

So I feel quite strongly that this is something that the FWBO needs to look into and to take

even an active part in. I think this is one of the sort of - in a way the clearest - issues in which we can involve ourselves. One of the clearest issues of a more public kind: the general ecological issue. And we shouldn't only involve ourselves in the way of writing and talking and even campaigning, but actually planting trees.

Padmaraja: It would be good to do a Newsletter on conservation.

S: Yes, that's true. Conservation in relation to Buddhism or Buddhism in relation to conservation. Buddhism's attitude to other forms of life, yes.

Padmaraja: Make the precepts much more relevant.

Derek: Do you think it's alright for the FWBO to act as a pressure group?

S: Well, technically not. The FWBOs in the plural are all registered charities and pressure groups aim at changing the law, and that is regarded as political. So if a pressure group is by definition a political group, so a registered charity cannot be a pressure group without losing its charitable status. So you'd have to set up something quite different for that sort of purpose.

Manjuvajra: A charity also actually is also meant to believe in God.

S: Well, that has to be changed clearly. I haven't actually seen this myself.

Manjuvajra: You know Red Lion Square, who are they - Conway Hall.

S: Oh yes, I've been reading about that.

Manjuvajra: They lost their charitable status about 15 years ago, because it was discovered that they didn't believe in God, and there's a big court case going on over back tax of some 50 million pounds.

S: Well, what they have done is over the last ten years they have been quietly gathering ammunition and have now themselves launched a court case, with a big reserve of funds behind them, to prove and to regain their charitable status. And their main contention is that the definition of religion in this country no longer involves belief in God. This is their main point, their main plank. Also, of course, apart from that, they are an ethical society, and they believe that in any case ethical groups and movements as well as religious ones should be entitled to charitable status. So they seem to be fighting the battle on these two fronts. So the outcome of that will be quite interesting. They have been preparing their case very carefully and systematically and are prepared for quite a long battle, and have collected the necessary financial resources. And, of course, among other things, they are claiming the repayment, I believe, of the taxes that they have had to pay, as a result of being deprived of their charitable status, which they maintain was done unjustly. They are definitely taking the offensive with the backing of quite a few of the secular and humanist groups. I think they've got about a hundred thousand pounds in the kitty for a start - something like that.

Kamalasila: If they lose their status will that affect Buddhist charitable status?

S: They have lost their status.

Kamalasila: Well, why haven't Buddhist charities been refused charitable status?

S: Well, they say that they are not a religion, but they seem to be arguing that the distinction between ethical and religious cannot really any longer be upheld. That you can have a

religion which doesn't believe in God, and that religion would be entitled to charitable status, because it is a religion and they, as an ethical movement and not believing in God, could be given the same treatment as such a religion. I think this is roughly their line though it is probably much more complex than that. But they themselves have launched the campaign and the legal case. They've taken the initiative there. They believe that they should have charitable status. In fact they believe that charitable status should not be confined to religious organisations in the narrower sense - this is what they are saying - or educational. It could be cultural and ethical - whatever conduces to the well-being of the people in a more general sort of way. Whatever is of an altruistic nature, let us say.

They are raising questions like, for instance, they say that if you can't campaign for the changing of a law without losing your charitable status, the Catholic Church systematically and officially, as it were, campaigns with regard to the laws relating to abortion. So they say if you enforce that strictly - well - all the churches which are against abortion, or try to change the law on abortion, should lose their charitable status. They are bringing up quite powerful arguments of that sort.

Mangala: What about things like nuclear power, and these things?

S: I think that is debatable. There's much to be said on either side. I don't think that is as straightforward an issue as the ecological one. I personally haven't come to any final conclusion about that. Clearly there are risks. There are also advantages. You have to weigh them one against the other. And it seems that equally well-meaning people can arrive at different conclusions. So I wouldn't like to say anything very definite about that. But I think the ecological issue is quite straightforward.

Mangala: It does seem to come down basically to kind of almost hedonism doesn't it and people living with a total disregard or appreciation of the environment.

S: Right. Well, one of the things that really shocked me a few years ago: I read in a colour supplement an account of the way in which in Italy the shooting of small birds has become a sport. And 2 million small birds, mostly song birds, are shot by Italian so-called sportsmen with shotguns of all things, every summer. (murmurs) Yes, I was really appalled. And I couldn't help noticing when I went to Europe, 10 or 12 years ago, that in the markets you often had tiny plucked songbirds for sale. Just like little plucked chickens. No bigger than that. There were larks and song birds of all sorts. They were just there, plucked, for human consumption, which seems terrible.

But in Italy it seems these sportsmen apparently have a special sporting outfit to wear when they go shooting these little birds. There were pictures of them I remember in this particular colour supplement. They don't shoot the birds to eat them. They shoot them for the fun of shooting them. We do get a certain amount of that sort of thing in Britain with regard to the bigger birds. Some of them, no doubt, need to be kept down, but one can hardly think in terms of keeping down songbirds, I would have thought. If one has to - well - it's as though something is seriously wrong with the way human beings are living.

Mangala: Thinking of Hemingway - he was very much into hunting wasn't he? Shooting and stuff. It seems a bit inconsistent with, let's say, an artistic sort of nature, if that's in fact what he had, or was.

S: Yes, well, he was very much into the cult of masculinity, and his writing reflected that, so perhaps it isn't surprising that he used to go out hunting and shooting and all that.

Mangala: He eventually shot himself didn't he, with a shotgun.

S: Did he? Well, perhaps that too is not surprising. But it's another example of human beings' thoughtlessness. It's an example of, in the words of a previous precept, acts of levity and thoughtlessness. This is what it often is - levity and thoughtlessness. Anyway, again avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health. Any other examples?

Well, I would say something - a habit - that disagreed with your health was over-indulgence in patent medicines: pills, potions and nostrums of various kinds. The really dangerous drug industry in Britain is this one. Again in today's news there was news of a great haul of drugs which they'd discovered hidden away in a wood in Bedfordshire. I won't give you the full details, but it's five million pounds worth of LSD tabs. But what is the turnover of the drug industry in Britain? It's not a miserable five million quids' worth. It's not even five hundred million. It's nearer five thousand million. I don't know the exact figure, but it no doubt is nearer five thousand million than five hundred million. No doubt a proportion of that consists of drugs that are actually medicines and which do help people, but I'm sure that at least nine tenths is just actually harmful to health, I'm sure of this.

Devaraja: I'm just wondering whether it's advisable - for instance in the case of the *Distillers Company* - the fact that it produced the thalidomide drug and the damage and harm it caused - whether there's almost a case to be argued for any businesses of ours ensuring that they don't use or buy material supplied by, say for example the *Distillers Company* - but there must be other companies like that.

S: Well, it's going to be very difficult to avoid this altogether, but I think it would be a good thing if we, as it were, compiled our own blacklist of notorious offenders, whose products could actually be avoided with a little thought. I think this would be quite a useful thing to do.

Devaraja: I think in a way it would be quite a contribution that we could make to society as a whole, because the fact that often these things are done by individuals in a kind of disconnected way - these boycotts. But actually for the major Buddhist Movement in this country to actually put forward that these things are socially undesirable

S: Well, the major Buddhist Movement as it were officially boycotts that particular product made by that particular company. Of course, this could have repercussions in the long run, you realise that! You'd have to think that out too and be prepared for that, and not be surprised if there were some unpleasant repercussions later. If you start affecting those sorts of interests in a big way, there are bound to be repercussions sooner or later. Big business can be quite ruthless.

Devaraja: Are you you don't have a specific instance?

S: No, I don't. I just don't know enough about the field. Another thing that occurs to me, I mean, as an example of a drug. There are side effects from the pill, for instance, are there not? At least certain kinds of pill which women take as a contraceptive and these are beginning to be appreciated now.

So avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health. It could involve avoiding medication as much as possible. Just as well Virabhadra's not here! But he'd agree no doubt up to a certain point. I mean, over-recourse to aspirin and things of that sort. The drugs industry is really a big one, which means a lot of people do ingest drugs. It seems really so extraordinary that so much attention is paid to things like LSD and things like ordinary dope, and drugs in this sense are given a comparatively free hand. There are certain restrictions obviously, but they are not adequate.

Mangala: I suppose in a sense to some extent they are needed to counterbalance the other neurotic habits in people's lives overeat, over drink, over smoke and, of course, when they do that they have to get something to counteract that. You've got to get your antacids etc..

S: There's that too. To help society calm.

Mangala: Whereas if you are on a more healthy regime well, then you wouldn't want

Manjuvajra: Supposing one was in the position of being offered money and support that came from a drug company, what would you do how would you

S: Well, it would depend on the drugs for one thing and how they were used. If the drugs were drugs which would be expected on the whole to be harmful in their effect, I would say it would be better to refuse money coming from that source. I don't want to be too precious about this because practically all the money in circulation is tainted in one way or another. But certainly one should avoid the most obvious instances of that I think.

Manjuvajra: I suppose it's better, if you accept it from individuals rather than from companies.

S: I'd be very suspicious about money that was offered to the FWBO by a company. But we haven't yet been offered any. We are unlikely to be so offered. I don't regard it as a very pressing issue to consider really.

But anything else - any other food or habit that disagrees with health? Can we get away from these particular examples and open up some fresh ground?

Mangala: There are things like newspapers and films and so on.

S: Yes. We're thinking of health though. Don't let's get away from health - physical health.

Mangala: I was thinking more of mental health, actually.

S: Yes, that's true, but that's probably a different topic. But, yes, we have to consider that as well. But physical health would seem to be so basic and if you actually almost systematically indulge in things which are detrimental to health, well, there is something quite seriously wrong with you, inasmuch as, well, at the very least you don't have adequate self-love in the positive sense.

Dharmamati: Rushing food is another one.

S: Rushing food. Eating quickly. Over eating, of course, which may be for psychological reasons, but isn't good for you.

_____: Undereating.

S: Yes

Devaraja: What about things like travelling too fast?

S: Travelling too fast. This is certainly not good for health as I know from my own experience.

Also, driving cars and motorbikes recklessly. I mean this is more than bad for health, it's not very good for life sometimes. Sometimes, people do that. They don't exercise enough care and caution. It's as though they don't regard their own lives. They are foolish and reckless and silly. One sees this, especially in the matter of overtaking. People are so stupid. I frequently am really astonished at how stupid they are. Perhaps it's an exaggerated form of competitiveness, overtaking, really dangerous overtaking. You really wonder why there wasn't a smash.

Mangala: Or just a question of having cars at all even.

S: Well, even that, if it isn't so to speak necessary.

Manjuvajra: About 40% of road accidents are involved with single vehicles, so they're not actually accidents usually. Those single vehicle accidents are bad driving.

Mangala: You mean somebody crashes into a tree or something?

Manjuvajra: Yeah, and comes off the road.

Mangala: Not actually hitting another car?

S: Well, Kovida was telling me that when he and Kulananda parked only the other week in Norwich, they watched a woman drive inside the multistorey car park straight into a crash barrier. So that's an example of the sort of thing you are talking about. No doubt it is coincidental that it was a woman. But it was this particular driver, let us say, driving straight into the crash barrier from being stationary. And they just looked in amazement just watching. Just straight in! Wham! I believe it was quite a nasty smash. So this is the sort of thing you mean presumably.

Manjuvajra: Women are actually better drivers.

S: So it is said, I believe, yes. Probably because of the relative non-competitiveness. I don't remember seeing a woman overtaking in that sort of reckless way. It's invariably been men, which perhaps is significant. Perhaps it does show that there are actually differences between men and women. I've never even seen a women's libber overtaking recklessly - their feminine restraint comes to their aid as it were. Better not tell the women's libbers that. They'll start trying to overtake deliberately to show that they are just as good as men (laughter) - and have as many accidents as men. Well, some of them are so foolishly logical they might even do that.

But anyway that's just by the way. Have we really covered this topic of avoiding such food and habits as disagree with your health? No doubt there's quite a lot one could go into if this ever became material for a *Mitrata*. There's quite a lot one could go into really thoroughly with new people, and especially Mitras.

Mangala: Perhaps on the whole we need to emphasise more the whole aspect of physical health as much as mental health.

S: Yes, I really feel this myself sometimes even though I haven't been myself a particularly good example, but then I just had to discover quite a lot of things late, just because there was no one around to tell me in my younger days. Well, this is certainly one of the things that I have felt. We have touched on this before, haven't we - that care and attention of the physical part of one's being, one's physical body, is in a way, an integral part of the whole process of one's development as an individual, and here the Greek or rather Hellenic ideals are to be

very much admired. So if you see that, say, a young man who has started coming into the FWBO and becoming interested in the Dharma, is thin and weedy and knock-kneed and round shouldered and stooping as some young men unfortunately are, well, don't only concern yourself with his spiritual development in the narrow sense and merely see that he is meditating and all that, suggest that he takes up physical exercise and even try to understand why it is that he is neglecting himself physically, and try to encourage him to look after himself better in all ways. I mean don't concentrate on the purely spiritual side of things in a narrow way. Don't make him feel least of all that any form of physical activity and exercise is somehow unspiritual. So that if he goes off riding on his bicycle it is in some way a deviation from the Dharma. It might be if he goes off on a motorcycle - that's a bit different - but the ordinary pushbike, no. Or if he goes out running he's not being necessarily unspiritual. Or if he goes camping, or if he likes climbing trees, it's not necessarily unspiritual. Or even if he turns somersaults on the lawn, it's not necessarily unspiritual. You see what I mean?

_____ : I read a quote somewhere once. It said the body is the temple of the mind.

S: Well, you could put it like that. I don't personally like that sort of phraseology if you see what I mean but - well - probably it's better to think like that than to disregard the body entirely, if thinking like that does help you to look after your body, sweep the temple, as it were.

Devaraja: It's almost like sort of the macrobiotic people not soiling the temple of your body with a jam doughnut! (laughter)

S: I'm fairly sure the temple of your body has sometimes been positively fouled with jam doughnuts [Laughter] not to speak of meringues and chocolate éclairs! (laughter)

But again, looking at it from another point of view, this emphasis on health and physical development is only possible really now because you've got young people becoming involved with the FWBO. I was going to say Buddhism, but it isn't quite that. Whereas formerly the Buddhist movement in Britain consisted almost entirely of the elderly and infirm almost, [Laughter] so the question hardly arose. You see what I mean? But it does very much arise now. If your audience consists mainly of ladies in their 60's and 70's there's not much point in talking about cycling or about physical culture or anything of that sort. But even older people can be encouraged to keep themselves in optimum physical condition.

Padmaraja: Is that what it was like when you first came over?

S: That's a wee bit of an exaggeration, but I remember the first summer school that I attended or it might have been the second one, I remember one good lady came to me clasping her hands with delight and astonishment and saying to me, "Oh Bhante! What do you think? A young person has arrived at the summer school!" And there was a young man standing at the door looking rather forlornly around, yes?

But I believe I was the youngest person there until then. I was then, I think, 40 and I was the youngest person very often in the whole gathering. Whether it was the Buddhist Society or whether it was the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara or the summer school, more often than not I was the youngest person present. So quite a change from the FWBO, you see.

Mangala: This is another aspect we could emphasise more in our talking about the FWBO - or even try to get people to come on retreat, not just to meditate, but live in a healthy environment, eat good food and do exercise and things.

S: A total environment. Yes, especially in our wider publicity. For instance, we have decided

to have a folder which will give details of all the retreats during the year, wheresoever they are held, with a few factual details. This is something that could be emphasised - a healthy environment with wholesome food. I mean, as regards Padmaloka, perhaps we could mention the point that most of the food, the vegetables, come from the garden. A lot of people consider this quite important, but we tend to take it for granted. And that there are opportunities for walks and even exercise. But please don't swing on our oak trees. It isn't good for our oak trees. It isn't kind to our oak trees in fact.

But also attention to one's health does imply, does involve a certain degree of mindfulness -

[End of tape 15 tape 16]

- a certain degree of forethought, and these are all qualities characterizing the individual surely. Mindfulness and forethought.

Well, another basic thing is, with regard to habits that disagree with your health, late nights. I'm not saying late nights in the purely clock sense, but not going to bed when you feel tired. People's, what do they call it, there is a term, their bio-clocks, differ a bit. Some people are actually not tired at 11 o'clock. They don't start feeling tired 'til 12 or 1. They go to bed and they naturally wake up at 9 or 10, say. So your diurnal rhythm is not necessarily the same as the next person's, but taking that into consideration, allowing for that, don't go to bed late. Make sure you get enough sleep. This is a very basic thing, but some people seem very reluctant to go to bed even when they are tired. They seem to want to hang onto things, not accept the fact that the day is over and they feel tired and that they should go to bed. You all know that sort of holding on. Children do it quite a bit, until they get quite fretful and irritable; but adults do it too. So make sure you get enough sleep, enough rest. This is really very basic. Avoid habits which prevent you from getting the rest that you need. I mean avoid work for instance, thinking of it in terms of employment - right livelihood - avoid work that obliges you to keep, not just unsocial hours, but hours that actually disagree with your health.

Nagabodhi: But, bearing in mind that some people's personal rhythms are different, it is actually quite hard to accommodate your life-style to that, if say you are one of those people who works best at midnight.

S: Well, you have to make adjustments and not insist on burning the candle at both ends; and if you live in a community explain the situation. Make some adjustment, but also ask others to make a little adjustment or allowance for you. That you are quite happy to join in, say, the evening meditation, but you are going to work until 12 or 1 after that, because it is easy and natural for you, and that therefore you will not be joining the early morning meditation, but that you will be meditating, nonetheless, after you get up. It doesn't mean that you are slacking off. Just make that clear and spell it out.

Nagabodhi: I remember having quite a fierce debate at an Aryatara committee meeting a couple of years ago with Jory who was claiming that the human body is thoroughly adaptable and anyone ought to be able to actually adjust their rhythm to any time span.

S: It is adaptable to a high degree. I'd say it is not so easy, judging by what I've seen of some people. It seems to go quite deep. But surely if one can adapt, and it seems a positive and skilful thing to do, yes, adapt by all means; but sometimes, with the best will in the world, you can't.

Mangala: I think personally it is really more of a matter of training, I don't mean in a forced, hard way; just I think it's sort of conditioning.

Padmaraja: You mean developing good habits, like bad habits?

S: When you say good, do you mean in accordance with your own natural rhythm, or in accordance with what to you is an arbitrary time scale?

Mangala: Well, no, what I think is, I just question this whole idea of there being a natural rhythm that suits you, and that is your actual best organic way of functioning.

S: Well, in terms of hours of sleep, this is definitely so.

Mangala: But, well, perhaps some people need 6, some people need 8 hours sleep. I think there are such differences there.

S: No, I mean the actual time during which you sleep. This has been definitely established. That people are broadly of two types, the early birds and the late birds, and this goes quite deep into their metabolism and it isn't easy for many of them to resist this, or at least they don't give of their best if they are having to resist this.

Padmaraja: What, the early riser and the late riser?

S: Yes. The late riser, leaving other psychological factors aside, being the person who's gone to bed late because it is natural for him to be alert and lively and able to work during the early hours.

Mangala: I would say that probably most people in the "Friends", obviously you can't generalise, most people I would say, probably before they got into the "Friends" or around the time they got in, certainly a lot of people I know were getting up at 10 o'clock, going to bed at 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, this sort of thing, but look at them now. Now they are quite happy or fairly happy to get up at half six or seven, and it's not because they're following their natural rhythm ...

S: Well, no. You are talking about something quite different. I think the majority of those people were not, say, going to bed late and getting up late because that was in accordance with their natural rhythm, but they'd got into a particular lifestyle which regarded that as the sort of thing to do. And very often it isn't in accordance with your natural sort of rhythm to go to bed late and get up late; you'll just feel terrible when you get up late and many of them did. But someone whose natural rhythm is to go to bed late and get up late, feels fine when he gets up late. So I think this must be taken into consideration. I mean, maybe there are degrees, and some people can adapt; or you go to bed a bit later or a bit earlier than you might otherwise have done, but I think for at least some people, if you are to give of your best results, you have to be allowed to follow, more or less, without being pedantic about it, your natural biological rhythm.

Otherwise, in extreme cases you should be able to say 'jet-lag' can be ignored. You ought to be able to immediately to adapt. Well, perhaps in theory you should be able to, but the plain biological fact is that you can't, and again they've done studies on this and they've said people should not take any important decisions within 24 hours of a long plane journey. It affects you as much as that. It affects your powers of judgement, because your basic rhythm has been disturbed and you don't sleep as well as you might have done, so therefore your powers of judgement may be impaired. It's really terrible to think that politically, very often, our destinies depend, our future depends on decisions made by people who are not able to exercise their best judgement just because simple factors of that sort have been disregarded. People who are overworked and tired.

So yes, don't be sort of fussy or prissy or precious about these things, and don't insist too rigidly upon keeping to your particular rhythm, as it were, but I think it's a fact that needs to be considered and certainly not ignored. I remember when Vajrakumara was staying with me, he really tried hard to get up early and all that sort of thing, but it was, in a way, quite pitiable to see him trying because the effect on him was so bad.

Mangala: Was he going to bed early as well?

S: Yes, he tried to go to bed early because he needed a certain amount of sleep, but then he just couldn't meditate in the morning, say at 6 or 7 o'clock; but give him 'til say 10 or 11 and he was fine and of course he'd work until 2 o'clock in the morning and be quite wide awake at that hour. But it really did seem to me, because I did try to get him to meditate early in the morning at that time, it really did seem one was really forcing someone into a shape which was quite unnatural to him.

Mangala: You don't think it could be that had been his conditioning up to that point and that maybe that's not something you can change immediately, maybe it's going to take a longish sort of time.

S: Well we tried for a couple of years and then I gave up. It seemed to be just asking too much of someone. It just didn't seem necessary, especially if someone's quite happy and ready to meditate later. Why should one insist on a particular hour, this is what I felt.

So, yes, the human organism is very flexible. It is very adaptable, but I think we have to be careful not to carry willed adaptation to the point where we are in fact abusing the system. I mean I don't want to encourage preciousness or anything like that; and some people have even, as it were returned to the attack, and said well it's better if you work during the small hours, if your biological rhythm is such as to permit that. In a way you're lucky because it's so quiet then and you can get on with your work better, you are free from interruptions, the phone will not ring etc., etc. you can just carry on working smoothly, quietly and uninterruptedly and you should be allowed to do that rather than forced to go to bed, and not sleep properly until about 2 or 3, and then forced to get up early and meditate and do things when really you are tired and your mind is blurred, which, doesn't seem very sensible.

Devaraja: I know that thing, of being able to work late at night, when it is really quiet, that seems to be its main advantage, but do you think it might possibly be before you can get a satisfactory night's sleep you need to have a period of where you feel you've achieved an intense level of work?

S: I think for a healthy person you don't get real rest until you've experienced real work, work both physical and mental. It's as though to keep us healthy we need a certain amount of work. Of course play can be work in that sort of technical sense, if you see what I mean. If you've been playing several hard games of tennis, well, that counts as work, biologically speaking.

So it's as though to experience full rest, you need to have exercised your whole psycho-physical organism during the day, especially if you're young, I think.

Devaraja Taking that further, that would mean presumably in an uninterrupted and concentrated way?

S: You are talking about work now or rest?

Devaraja: Work.

S: Yes, I don't think interrupted work is very good for you, if you keep getting interrupted and have to break off and do something else or think about something else. I think this can be very irritating. I don't think this is good for the system as a whole. Avoid that sort of work if you possibly can, or avoid those sort of work conditions. Don't surround yourself by telephones if you really want to get on with creative work which is of course what sometimes happens, we know.

Devaraja: I just wondered in that case if this difference of late and early sleeping cycles are possibly due to the fact that there's a certain type of person's creative work must be done in a completely uninterrupted environment whereas whether, for instance, a person who was into administration where their intense work would involve a lot of contact with other people and of telephones and so on, would tend to be an early ...

S: I don't think actually there is that sort of association. It does seem to be definitely biological, judging by the experiments that have been done. It is not that one cannot function in opposition to one's natural biological rhythm, but more that one gives of one's best if one is allowed to function in accordance with it.

Padmaraja: If you can't function in your natural way through circumstances, by the end of the week it just seems to accumulate and by Saturday or Sunday, you're just dead and you just have to lie in bed, have a good lie in - that's what I do! (Laughter) Sometimes.

S: What is your natural biological rhythm then?

Padmaraja: Ideally I like to get up at about 8 o'clock, but I have to get up at 6 to lead the meditation, and I'd like to go to bed about midnight.

S: Of course, some people do need more sleep than others, there are genuine differences here. Some can get by on 6 hours a night quite comfortably, and others need 7 or 8, a few need 9 or 10 - without it actually involving a neurotic psychological element - and one has to accept that people's requirements are different. And once you've found out what your requirements are, well, you ought to do your best to see that they are met. I think one of the advantages that you have as you get older is that you know your own system better. When you are young you are so full of life and energy you very often don't know what is basically better for you or worse for you, and in a sense, within certain limits, it doesn't matter, you're very, very resilient, but as you get older and you become less resilient you have to learn to respect your basic rhythm more and be more observant of it. Otherwise you suffer more if you go against it, or because you suffer more because you go against it.

Manjuvaja: This comes back to establishing a regimen.

S: Yes indeed, it does, and when you establish that regimen you take into account your own biological rhythms and so on. I personally would not like to have to say take a study group late at night. I could do it but I don't think I would give of my best then under those circumstances. I would certainly manage, but there'd be a little spark I think which would be lacking.

Padmaraja: What is your natural rhythm?

S: It's to get up early and to go to bed early, yes. Early was getting quite early. 5 or 6 is quite easy now for me and I like to be in bed by 10, 10.30 - at the latest 11. I have to really force myself to go on functioning after say 10, 10.30.

Mangala: It used to be I used to like to go to bed about half 12, get up about half 8 something like that, but then I think really since I've been into the Friends, living in a community, now I get up quite easily at about half 6 or 7.

S: Well, I adapted when I was in the army. I adapted to night duty. I was getting up in the middle of the night, every night, and going on duty for 2 hours or 4 hours or whatever it was. But I don't think that that did me any good, and I didn't function particularly well. Otherwise one can say, well, why this pattern of say half the day of sleep and half the day waking? Can't you break that? Well, perhaps you can under certain exceptional circumstances, but you'd need to be very careful how long you forced yourself to go without sleep. So that applies to the basic pattern too. I'm not saying that adaptations and modifications can't take place, I'm also not saying that everybody's basic biological rhythm is established equally definitely. Some people are sort of borderline cases, they can adapt a bit this way or a bit that way. Other people are rather extreme cases and don't have so much leeway. So just find out what one is.

And also I think it involves tolerance for other people. If you feel that you yourself are adaptable, fair enough, but I don't think you can always expect other people to be equally adaptable. They with the best will in the world may not be as adaptable in that respect as you are, and it's almost cruel to insist that they follow the same pattern that you do or one that is objectively more convenient. They may just be doing harm and damage to themselves. I think that must be taken into consideration. Otherwise you might say, "Well, I find it quite easy to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning" and you insist that everybody else ought to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and if they can't or don't or won't they are just simply backsliding and that's all there is to it. Well, it isn't quite as simple as that always. Of course, there's a great deal of backsliding - we know that very well too - but we don't want to go to the extreme of thinking that everything of that nature is backsliding. Of course, you love the warmth and comfort of your bed, and of course you're not exactly looking forward to a meditation always and of course you need sometimes to have the bedclothes just pulled off you, especially if you are young, and be encouraged to get out of bed, but take these other factors into consideration too.

Nagabodhi: Something you often hear people talking about - I've heard it on retreats, people talk quite a lot about sleep and you often get this relationship being made between sleep and spiritual development, that the more spiritually developed you are the less sleep you need - do you think there's any substance in that?

S: It does seem that the more experience of meditation you have, in the sense of experience of the dhyanas, the less sleep you need. But experience of the dhyanas by itself does not constitute spiritual development. There is the question of insight to be involved, and that is on another plane as it were. So one cannot say that someone who was doing with less sleep has necessarily developed more insight, no. You have to distinguish between Insight and dhyana experience. You could find someone with a good development of Insight still needing a good night's sleep but that person too if he had more dhyana experience would tend to need less sleep.

Padmaraja: I think that ties up with - I find on retreat my whole sleeping pattern changes then I'm very happy to go to bed early and get up early, feel very fresh in the mornings. Could be to do with the situation you're in.

S: Well, it could be a more stimulating situation. Even if one's natural tendency is not to get up early, well, you are so much looking forward to the day that that natural basic, even biological, reluctance is overcome.

Anyway, the broad principle that emerges is that one way of avoiding habits that disagree with your health is just to make sure that you get the rest and the sleep that you need, when you need it, without being say too precious about the whole matter. And also bear in mind that others' needs, or others' patterns of need may not coincide with your own. Your pattern also can change in the course of your life, I can't say that I fully understand this, and I haven't really read anything about it, but I think the pattern can change also as you get older, in some cases. I found myself say over the last year that sometimes for months on end, though I went to bed at my usual time, I'd wake up at about 2 and be completely wakeful, not feeling tired in any way, and I'd just read or think or do some work or something of that sort. By 5 o'clock I'd be ready to sleep again and sleep until about 7, get up then, and I'd feel just as normal. I don't know why that happened, but it has happened in the course of the last year for months on end sometimes. It isn't happening at the moment probably because I need a bit more sleep because I'm giving out more energy during the day but this is what was happening. So I attribute that to age but that doesn't really explain anything. But it seemed not inconsistent with a healthy way of life. I didn't seem to be needing that sleep at that particular time, so I did quite a few things in between the hours of 2 and 5, and quite happily.

Padmaraja: It's good that you were sufficiently in touch with yourself to, for want of a better term, go with the flow, not just lie there in bed worrying about not being able to go to sleep, but just think 'Ah, I'm awake'.

S: Yes, right. Well, once or twice to begin with I thought this is a bit odd, but then I checked with myself and I realised I'm not feeling tired, I'm feeling quite refreshed, I don't feel physically tired, I don't feel mentally tired. All right I'll just use this time for reading or doing something else, and come about half past 4, quarter to five I'd start feeling both physically and mentally tired again, so all right I went off to sleep, then woke say about 7 quite refreshed as though I'd had a full night's sleep, so up I got and went through the day as usual.

So I think maybe as you get into middle age for certain reasons which I don't actually understand, your certain basic patterns can change. One should be prepared for this too. Anyway we are getting going a bit off the track aren't we?

Manjuvajra: Can I just say I find I go to sleep very easily, most afternoons at work. I just am working and fall on the desk asleep, [Laughter] and on tube trains.

S: Well, some people have the faculty of falling off to sleep. Churchill is the famous example of this. Perhaps you have certain qualities in common with that great statesman! He used to retire from cabinet meetings during the war and have 20 or 30 minutes sleep and come straight back refreshed, while the others were carrying on talking.

Manjuvajra: When that sort of thing happens though, I really feel as though I sleep very, very deeply and come out feeling quite refreshed. I've always regarded it as particularly healthy.

S: In the course of my life I have found it on the whole quite impossible to sleep during the day. It's only in recent years I'm able to have about 2 minutes sleep in the middle of the afternoon, but not if I lie down. If I lie down, especially on my bed, I'm at once as wide awake as ever. But if I'm just sitting in my armchair, I can manage to get 2 minutes sleep in the middle of the afternoon which is quite refreshing. And also, another exception, if I'm being driven, on a car journey, I can nearly always get in a little nap which is quite interesting, but not on any other occasion. Sometimes, a nap, even in recent years, for 15 or 20 minutes, which is extraordinary. Because otherwise I'd never sleep like that during the day. But the psychology of it I don't understand. Maybe there is no particular reason or explanation. It could be a combination of nothing to do: you can't read, lack of fresh air,

(Chuckles) it could be as simple as that! And also that one may be travelling in the afternoon which is not the best time anyway, so to speak. Could be quite a simple combination of those factors.

Mangala: Maybe you're just becoming a happy, healthy human! (Laughter)

S: Me? It could be! So if I go on a long car journey now, whether it's morning or afternoon or evening, I take it for granted that I shall have a little doze at some point, just for a few minutes and that's quite pleasant. Even a little dream if one is lucky. Anyway we've spent longer on this precept that we might have anticipated, haven't we? 'Avoid such food and habits as disagree with they health'. It's not quite so simple and straightforward as one might have thought, it seems. Any further point before we pass on?

Right, I think we'd better pass on to a healthful drink, just see if there's anything to add to the discussion so far.

Mangala: I think, about what we were saying that perhaps the older you get, in a sense the more aware you become that maybe you do actually have a kind of rhythm or certain needs in a way which perhaps you don't when you are young.

S: I think it's part of one's general self-understanding, one's general greater self-understanding. And also you can look back thoughtfully over quite a number of years and see perhaps a certain pattern and make comparisons between different parts of one's life, and really come to an understanding of what is good for you in the true sense, especially as regards one's whole way of life, one's regimen, one's habits.

Mangala: Yes, I think perhaps now when you are young maybe you think you can do anything in a way or live in any way.

S: Yes, up to a point you can. You don't bother. You have a really wild weekend and you don't have any sleep, you drink a lot, drive around a lot, listen to lots of music, even if you meditate a lot, things like that, you just don't think it's going to have an effect on you, you just do what you feel like doing. And very often it doesn't have any effect on you, at least not just then.

Mangala: I suppose to that extent in a way you are less of an individual.

S: In a way, I think you are. You're more like a sort of happy, healthy animal, in a quite positive sort of way, one could say.

Mangala: I suppose, on the other hand, you want to avoid maybe being set in your ways.

S: Well, some older people can be very set in their ways - even some younger people.

Mangala: What would you say is the difference between being set in your ways and having a sort of, let's say, positive regime?

S: Well, I think being set in your ways is having fixed ideas and insisting always in living in accordance with those, but having a regimen is sort of intelligently co-operating with your own psycho-physical organism, and always taking it into consideration, even if sometimes you decide, as it were, on higher considerations, or more important considerations, to disregard it for the odd occasion. But the latter is just based on an intelligent understanding of the situation whereas the former is just unintelligent, unaware rigidity. Maybe the feeling of a need for security, all that kind of thing. I mean some young people can be very rigid in

their behaviour patterns and way of life unfortunately.

Manjuvajra: There's someone I work with. He's only in his twenties, but he's so rigid! He arrives in exactly on 9 o'clock. He leaves at exactly 5.30. He leaves at exactly 12.30 for his lunch, and arrives back at exactly 15 minutes past one. And he's got this whole way of going through things. I find it totally impossible to work with someone like that. It's as though there's an air of superiority that goes along with it.

S: Mm, rectitude.

Manjuvajra: Yes, uprightness. But it means you've got no space to work. If you are really getting, supposing you start to get into your work at 10 past 5, you can feel him sort of getting ready to go at half past.

S: But some people do work better if they follow that sort of rigid pattern. They work better if they work by the clock as it were, not everybody, but some people.

Manjuvajra: It's very difficult to work with though, if you don't work like that.

S: Oh yes. If you have a lot of that type, obviously it's difficult to work with them, and they find it difficult to work with you. When it's time to work you're not ready to work, you're still sort of meandering around. You're having another cup of coffee and still chatting. (Chuckles) But you don't mind if you go on working after it's time to go home. It doesn't mean anything to you.

Mangala: Sometimes maybe it's not all that easy to distinguish - what shall we say - a healthy regular pattern from a neurotic attachment as it were.

S: Well, probably the criterion is that you're able to depart from that pattern, and happily, reasonably happily when it becomes objectively necessary, as occasionally it will become necessary. Or if you resent having to depart from that pattern even when it's necessary that means you are, as it were, overrigid - you are attached to the pattern, you can't sort of give it up when required. Well, you're probably a different type of person from Manjuvajra in this respect by nature so to speak, not to say the opposite type. You probably like working regularly and almost by the clock.

Mangala: Yeah. I suppose you tend to hear words like 'rigid' and so on and think 'am I just being rigid?' You start to think 'I ought to change, I ought to throw the clock out the window and just sort of do things in a very haphazard sort of manner', which would just be like forced in a way, not really ...

S: Yes, yes. I think some people are naturally regular and systematic and that is their natural, in the sense of healthy, way of functioning. One shouldn't sort of disrupt that in the interests of a quite artificial concept of naturalness. Well, naturalness is not necessarily disorderly, or unsystematic. On the other hand, yes, by all means, keep your eye open for over rigidity as for rigidity of any kind, and in the case of the opposite type of person keep your eye open for carelessness and actual instability and unreliability. But both, though with different ways of functioning, can be quite healthy positive character types, it seems to me.

I mean, if circumstances require you to work regularly you should be able to do so at least sometimes, even if that is not in accordance with your natural bent, and similarly you should be able to throw regularity to the winds sometimes and quite happily, if circumstances require that. I mean supposing you go away on holiday and you can do anything that you please, it would be a little odd if you organised your day away on holiday in the same completely rigid

way as when you were at work and then you looked at your watch and you said to the children, "Come on, it's 5 past 10, it's time for building sand castles now!" (Laughter) Well, some people do allow themselves their pleasures by the clock as it were. Anyway that's something perhaps we need not go into here.

All right, let's allow ourselves our pleasures whether by the clock or not. At least our regulation morning cup of tea or coffee. Or those who feel like not keeping to regularity are free to dispense with it if they so wish! (Laughter) Be gloriously irregular!

Devaraja: All right, don't all jump at once! [Laughter]

Padmaraja: You just mentioned the word 'pleasure'. What exactly do you mean by pleasure? I remember once having an informal discussion, a group of us, and you referred to pleasure as, I think, the Cinderella of emotions.

S: Oh ... did I?

Padmaraja: I wanted you to pursue it, I didn't want you to leave it there, it was such a beautiful term, I wondered if maybe you could ...

S: Well, strictly speaking pleasure isn't an emotion, strictly speaking. Pleasure is more like the raw material of an emotion. But pleasure seems to be connected with, or to be an expression of, the sort of natural healthy exercise of the senses including the mind, taking the mind as one of the six senses in the Buddhist sort of way. I mean the exercise of a faculty or an organ which you are able to exercise, and it gives simple pleasure simply by virtue of the fact that you are able to exercise - the exercising of it is pleasurable. This is what pleasure essentially is: the exercising of an organ, or the exercise of a faculty which you are able to exercise. It's as though the free functioning itself is pleasurable. You can't really give a definition of pleasure, it's something irreducible. If you haven't ever experienced pleasure it can't be described. It's just like a colour. If you haven't experienced the colour blue, well nobody can give you an idea, so to speak, of what the colour blue is like.

So if for instance you've got a tongue, you've got taste buds and you eat food, well, pleasure is the, one can only say, pleasurable experience that you get by exercising your taste buds in that particular way. It's as the pleasure therefore had a tonic effect on the organism. If you are deprived of pleasure I think your organism gets out of tone. I think the problems arise when we confine our pleasure to too narrow a range. There's all sorts of things we can enjoy, pleasurable sense activities. We can enjoy breathing, we can enjoy waking. We can enjoy feeling the air, feeling the sun, feeling the earth beneath our feet. Enjoying the sensation of our own bodies being in motion or at rest. All these things are pleasurable. They all represent functions and activities of our senses, of our organs. Running is a pleasure, walking is a pleasure, and so on. Feeling water is a pleasure. Feeling earth is a pleasure. Feeling fire, that is, warmth, is a pleasure. Experiencing all the elements through the sense organs, which perceive those elements is pleasurable. We tend to think of pleasure in a much too narrow sort of way, and it's associated only too often and too frequently, I think, simply with things like sex and food. There is a much wider range of pleasures available to us.

Mangala: It's usually associated very much the ego's likes and dislikes, isn't it, rather than the more total organism, if you like?

S: Yes. The ego tries to appropriate the pleasure and exploit and manipulate the senses for its own purposes. And in the same way you enjoy mental activity, you enjoy using your mind. You even enjoy solving problems. You enjoy being creative, mentally creative. Because there is joy, there is pleasure and maybe more than pleasure, in the exercise of your

mind. You can enjoy speaking if you speak well. You can enjoy communicating ... Well here more complex factors come into operation, so one doesn't speak so much of pleasure as of enjoyment and happiness and so on. But I think pleasure is in a way the foundation certainly from an ordinary human point of view. So I think pleasure, as I said, has a tonic effect on the system. I think one should be careful to see that one is getting sufficient pleasure in a quite objective, non-hedonistic sort of way. Hedonism is the deliberate exploitation of the physical senses or the senses' ability to experience pleasure in the interests of the alienated consciousness, in other words the ego, the alienated self.

Manjuvajra: That's really putting pleasure as an ideal?

S: That is putting pleasure as an ideal. That is perhaps a more sophisticated form of the same thing. Pleasure should not be an ideal. It should just be a simple fact of existence.

Manjuvajra: One of the things I really enjoy is just walking around naked. I used to do it quite a lot in Cornwall, swimming on the coast.

S: I think quite a few people do. Kulananda sometimes talks about that. It really irritates him, he says, to have to wear swimming trunks on the beach. It's a more total sense experience. There could be an element of narcissism in it for the sake of argument in your particular case. But, generally speaking - what does it mean when you walk around naked? Apart from any possible psychological satisfaction that that may give you, whether positive or negative, there is the fact that your skin is exposed to the air,

[End of side one side two]

which is a sense experience. Otherwise it's almost as though you're only being allowed to see with a portion of the eye. You're not being allowed to use the whole eye. You're only allowed to squint through just a narrow aperture. In the same way much of the time you experience the air only with your face and your hands which is only with a part of your skin. So it would seem to be quite normal and natural and healthy to enjoy the possibility of being able to experience or to perceive or feel the air - the atmosphere - with the whole of the skin simultaneously. But that fortunately or unfortunately involves divesting oneself of one's clothing and walking around without any clothing, i.e. in a state of nudity or nakedness. Do you see what I mean? (Chuckles) I think it is a perfectly natural sort of thing. The climate in this country doesn't always permit it, but that is only a pity. Then I think if people were able to experience the air, the atmosphere, with the whole of their skin surface, there would be less of an unhealthy emphasis on other possibilities of sense contact. Some people like rolling in the grass and rolling on the earth or even clasping tree trunks and things like that. This seems quite natural, quite healthy.

Devaraja: That's interesting. I think that possibly one of the ways around that is looser clothing.

S: Again if the weather permits, if the climate permits. or requires, as it does in India for instance. I can't resist a little story.[Laughter] A few years ago I was staying at the Brighton Centre and someone wanted to go to the shrine or something, so they went to the shrine and then they came back and said they hadn't been able to do what they wanted to in the shrine? So I said 'Well why not?' They said 'Well, Mangala was there.' So I said 'What difference did that make?' They said 'Well, he was doing his yoga'. So I said 'Well, what difference does that make?' So they said, 'Well he was standing on his head without any clothes on at all.' (Laughter) So I was trying to imagine what Mangala might look like, standing on his head without any clothes on at all! In front of the shrine. [Laughter] But it didn't seem to be an apocryphal story - they came straight and told me. One never knows, I suppose.

But another aspect of this is, it's all right to walk around naked when other people are not around but it might not be a very pleasant thing if certain people were to be walking around without any clothes on, not a very pleasant thing for other people on account of their generally unaesthetic appearance. We talked a bit about this at a community meeting at *Sukhavati* not so long ago. Somebody raised the point that he had felt that he was not sufficiently in touch with his own physical body, in fact in a way ashamed of it, and he thought that it would help if he went away for a couple of weeks to a nudist colony. I said I didn't think it would help at all. I asked him if he realised that, at least as far as my information went, nudist colonies were filled with elderly people with protruding stomachs and other portions of their anatomy, that walked around in complete oblivion of their bodies, were in fact quite alienated from them. And I said if he wanted to get more in touch with his body in that particular way he ought to consider sometimes walking from his room to the bathroom without any clothes on, and that would help more perhaps. And he admitted he hadn't thought of that. So I said it seemed really ridiculous that you had to go outside the community in which you lived into a special artificially set up, possibly not very healthy sort of situation in order to do something like that.

It's rather like saying, well, you've got to go to an outside communication course instead of communicating with the people you actually live with in the community itself. Do you see what I mean? But this is what I have heard about nudist colonies, that they are mostly full of elderly obese people, who go around professing not to notice that anybody is naked, if you see what I mean. This is the sort of procedure. You pretend that you are not like that.

Manjuvajra: I don't think that's true actually. And I've been to a couple. I've got a particularly interesting story about one. It was in Yugoslavia.

S: Oh, well, I'm thinking about Britain, yes. It may well be different abroad.

Manjuvajra: I did wonder about that afterwards. In Yugoslavia there were two campsites, one each side of the village. One was a nudist one, and one was a sort of straight one. And we stayed at the straight one first for a few days, and there was an incredible kind of sexual vibe in the atmosphere. And then we went to the nudist one and it was completely absent. It was really weird. I just put it down in the end to the fact that in the straight one people were wearing bikinis and tight swimming trunks, whereas in the other one because there was nothing, there was a much more friendly open atmosphere. And in this country my parents are quite keen nudists. They've developed this over the last five years. But the people they've got to know are actually quite a wide age range. Some of them are quite young, in their twenties. They've got quite a lot of friends between twenties and eighties. They say there's a wide range of ages.

S: Well, that may well be now.

Derek: Do you not think that it would be again blocking off emotions, (words unclear) the sexual impulses from the eyes would be so strong that it would bring the whole thing (words unclear)

Manjuvajra: Well, what seems to happen is that the sexual impulse comes up when you first come into the situation, but after about five or ten minutes it just fades away, because it's not sexual - a naked body isn't a sexual thing. It's only a sexual thing in a certain kind of environment. Normally we only see the naked body in that particular environment, which is why we associate sexuality and nakedness.

S: Yes, right. Animals are not aroused apparently by the nakedness of other animals, and so-

called primitive people who are accustomed to go about naked don't seem to find it sexually stimulating at all. That would seem to be quite natural in a way because most people, physically speaking, are not very attractive, and more often than not, it's what you imagine underneath the clothing that you find attractive rather than what is actually there. But I think there is a distinction between a healthy experience of one's own physical body and a sort of cutting off from what one actually experiences in that situation, in the way that I suggested earlier. I think this is a possibility too, that this does sometimes happen, that you sort of anaesthetize yourself. It reminds me of what a German writer on sex once said. He said: this is at the beginning of the century - he was referring to the fact that people of opposite sexes working together side by side in the office, without any sort of sexual arousal taking place, he said a healthy young man if he is normal, ought not to be able to work side by side with young women without sexual arousal, do you see what I mean? To him it represented a degree of repression or alienation from what was actually happening.

_____: Who said that Bhante?

S: Weininger it was actually.

Devaraja: That's a relief! (Laughter)

Padmaraja: That doesn't just apply to sex, it seems to apply to almost any pleasure. There seems to be this cutting off.

S: No, here it's not just a question of sex-pleasure, because the experience of the arousal, if it cannot be satisfied, can be painful rather than pleasant. I think when the full sex experience comes into it, something more complex is involved than simple pleasure probably. I'm thinking more of the pleasure of seeing, the pleasure of feeling with the skin in a more general sort of way, the pleasure of hearing, the pleasure of movement. This sort of basic fundamental pleasure that we should be more concerned with. The pleasure of being physically alive - it basically comes down to this. I think if you feel that basic pleasure of being physically alive, say more highly, more specialised sources of pleasure become less important to you. Not that they don't or may not have their place, but there is less emphasis placed on them and less urgency about them.

Padmaraja: Given then that Cinderella is pleasure, who would the ugly sisters be in the situation?

S: Well, you could say, her elder sisters Puritanism and Pseudo-Asceticism and hedonism, yes? They are more like the ugly sisters. Perhaps there are others. Perhaps somebody else could suggest some.

Mangala: I think that there is in the Friends still an unhealthy physicality somehow, or a lack of ...

S: I feel an unhealthy physicality in some of the Yogis, in some of the Hatha Yogis. It's almost as though they are preoccupied with the physical in a slightly narcissistic sort of way. I get this impression sometimes.

Mangala: I suppose what I mean was it might be good to have a nude retreat or something like that. (Laughter)

S: Well, we'd have to have it in Greece or Italy.

Mangala: I think something like that would be a really healthy thing actually.

S: I did hear a story - again I don't know if it's apocryphal, that someone visiting the *Heruka* Centre found four people sitting round a kitchen table with no clothes on at all! (Laughter) They are not denying it, you see!

Mangala: I think this is probably very good, because I think there's a lot of physical inhibition in people. You know, like if you go to a beach and you see people trying to wriggle into swimming costumes under their towels. (Laughter) I think that isn't very healthy, it's ridiculous.

S: Well, it is the covert or overt association with sex I think which creates all the difficulty, I think it is simply this. Because small children don't bother unless they've been trained to bother.

Manjuvajra: A friend of mine's just come back from America and he said he went to the swimming pool, and there were a number of little girls, about 5 or 6 running around with just the bottoms of their bikinis on, and their parents were told by the guards that little girls must wear the tops of their bikinis as well. So these little girls of 5 and 6 had to wear bikinis tops in the swimming pool. That's puritanism.

S: Well, it could be distorted hedonism that even little girls should look a bit sexy. I think there's probably something of that sort along with it too. Because you can find this sort of hedonistic unhealthy preoccupation with sex, and nudity and non-nudity and so on.

Manjuvajra: Well, I think of Americans generally as being quite puritanical.

S: Well, they are hedonistic and puritanical. The two things go very much together, not necessarily in the same person, but sometimes even in the same person. These are the two extremes which are complementing and attracting each other.

Mangala: There's a couple of nude beaches in Brighton, actually.

S: Yes, there's been a big controversy about it. Apparently what was found very objectionable was that some Baptist Ministers and their wives said that they were accustomed to have their annual conference in Brighton and to go to a particular beach, the ministers and their wives, for quite proper sunbathing and all that, and that was one of the beaches which had been designated a nudist beach! (Laughter) The leader of the campaign was a hotel landlady apparently, a grandmother who'd been on nude beaches on the continent and was very much in favour of it. They agreed to have two nude beaches and that there should be notices posted so that people could avoid if they wished to do so. But I think one has to beware of this self-conscious self-indulgent hedonistic nudism. I think one must really watch this, and make sure that it is healthy and natural, and it is in fact pleasurable in just that very simple way.

Mangala: Is there such a thing as therapeutic nudism, just to go to something like a nudist colony just as a way of disinhibiting oneself.

S: I don't think one needs within the Friends to do that. It's much better to do what they are alleged to have done in Glasgow, and just sit around the kitchen table and have tea! They were having tea, actually. (Laughter) This is what I was told. Having tea, having afternoon tea, in fact.

_____: With the vicar!

S: No, just the four community members. This is what I was told. There might have been a vicar or congregational minister there for all I know! (Laughter) Might have been the man come to look at the meter for all I know!

Nagabodhi: Perhaps, one of the reasons alienated awareness develops is that when you start to become mindful of yourself you actually start finding it pleasurable - in a way mindfulness should be an intensely pleasurable faculty. And it may be if you've got the wrong ideas about the spiritual life, you think, Oh this can't be right, so you cut it off because it's pleasurable.

S: Right. Well there has been a certain inhibition of pleasurable activity early in the lives of most people, in connection with sex, and this has no doubt had quite an effect on the psyches generally, of some such people.

Nagabodhi: Would you say that in a way you could talk about mindfulness as almost in essence being pleasurable? As getting the most out of ...

S: No, no. Mindfulness - let's not go too far - mindfulness is in essence mindful. But it is also pleasurable. Because it is not just an alienated awareness but an experience of one's self so it is in a way a heightened enjoyment of existence itself. But to cultivate mindfulness for the sake of the pleasure of it, or the pleasure it gave you would be hedonistic in this quite alienated ego-oriented sense that I was talking about earlier on.

Derek: Would you say that happiness is more to do with fulfilment, integrated fulfilment, than pleasure?

S: Oh yes, very much so, especially self-consciously manipulated pleasure. Happiness can subsist even in the absence of pleasure actually, but for it to be possible for one to feel happy with the absence of pleasure you must be a quite developed human being. For instance you may be very ill, and because you are ill it may not be possible for you to have any pleasurable sensations at all. At best you are just experiencing relief from pain. But you can be mentally happy nonetheless, and these are two quite distinct things. So you can have happiness which is associated with pleasure, and happiness which is quite dissociated from pleasure and which subsists independently of pleasure. So I think what is important is that your pleasure should not be your happiness. Your pleasure should be your pleasure, and your happiness should be your happiness. You shouldn't try to make yourself happy because of pleasures - that is the hedonistic attitude. You are trying to make pleasure do the work of happiness. So you can be enjoying a pleasurable experience and be happy, but you shouldn't be happy because of the pleasure. It is quite a fine distinction.

Mangala: The happiness is not dependent on the pleasure.

S: The happiness is not dependent on the pleasure, and should not be dependent on the pleasure, nor should the pleasure be mistaken for happiness, nor should you think that you can become happy by manipulating the possibilities of pleasure. I think as you get older, the pleasure tends to become less, within certain limits that can be discussed separately, and the happiness tends to become more. Or perhaps I could say the possibilities pleasure in a way becomes less, with one important proviso, or one important exception, and the possibilities of happiness become greater, if you are a positive developing individual.

Mangala: On the other hand would you say it's possible to be happy without experiencing some pleasure?

S: I think that would be very difficult. I think it would be very difficult, historically, so to speak, to be a happy person without ever having experienced pleasure. I think if you've never

experienced pleasure it's doubtful whether you would survive, it's as simple as that.

Mangala: So to that extent happiness is dependent on pleasure?

S: Well, pleasure provides as it were a basis in that sense, in the sense that it provides a healthy organism for the experience of happiness. On the other hand, again, human nature is so resilient you can meet people who've suffered, say through ill-health, all through their lives, who've never really experienced unalloyed pleasure but who are happy people.

Padmaraja: Do you think sometimes even the denial of pleasure can lead to happiness, say as in the case of ascetic practices?

S: Oh, well, that again is a complex issue. You can have the denial of pleasure or denial of pleasure to yourself as a means of sort of self-assertion, and enjoying the supremacy of the mind over the body, and the control of the body by the mind, in a slightly negative, even alienated, sort of way. But yes there is a sort of intelligent satisfaction even amounting to happiness to be obtained from just not allowing the senses to run away with you. But then I'd say again the healthy senses don't run away with you. Do you see what I mean? People do sometimes have the impression that if you let the senses have their own way they'll get completely out of hand. I don't really believe that this is so. I believe they get out of hand, so to speak, when they are being wrongly used and manipulated and over-manipulated by the alienated consciousness in search, hedonistically, of happiness, thinking that pleasure can give happiness. I don't think the senses themselves really lead you astray. I think it's the mind misusing the senses that leads you astray. So I don't think you need think in terms of controlling the senses, in a manner of speaking. Does the eye lead you astray? No, it's the mind looking through the eye that leads you astray. It's the mind that feels craving, that latches on to something not the physical senses. The physical senses according to Blake, and the Vajrayana, are quite innocent in themselves.

So in a way pleasure is innocent, pleasure - just as simple pleasure - is innocent. This is something which is very difficult for us to understand in the West because it's so mixed up with other things. But pleasure in the sense of the simple enjoyment by the senses of their objects is quite innocent. The senses don't hang on to enjoyment because the senses are only in the present, they've got no conception of past and future any more than an animal has. So they don't hang on. It's the mind that hangs on, the mind that envisages the possibility of continued possession of the sense object, not the senses themselves. So it is the mind that corrupts the senses, not the senses that corrupt the mind - no, never!

Mangala: I just wish orthodox Buddhism spoke in this sort of language. It would surely give people quite a different impression of it - a much healthier approach.

S: In *'The Voice of the Silence'* by Madame Blavatsky there is a verse 'thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind'. That just doesn't happen, it's the wrong way round! It's 'thou shalt not let thy mind make a playground of thy senses'. This is what it really is.

Manjuvajra: That's quite the opposite view isn't it that most people have of Buddhism.

S: Well, yes, except that I can find justification for this if I'm called upon to do so, in the Pali texts themselves, quite definitely. The Buddha's own words, supposedly.

Mangala: We talk about positive emotion but there's very little actual reference even in the Friends to the senses.

S: Well, we've corrupted the senses. We have to work with corrupted senses. That is the

difficulty. If you speak in favour of the senses, or in favour of pleasure, people take it for granted that it is the corrupted senses that you are talking about, pleasure in the hedonistic sense that you are talking about, so you will be misunderstood.

Nagabodhi: People hearing about this discussion secondhand and saying 'Oh apparently Bhante said sex was all right'. (Laughter)

S: Right. Or it doesn't make any difference if you indulge yourself in anything. But you can see from the whole discussion what actually we are trying to get at.

Mangala: It just sort of brings some blood and guts back into things - some sort of passion into ...

S: For instance, we have discussed this before from the point of view of enjoyment of food. Somebody maintained, I think it was on a retreat in Holland, and this matter was referred to me, somebody maintained that if you were enlightened or on the way to enlightenment you would no longer enjoy your food and everything would taste the same to you. Did you hear about this?

Nagabodhi: I've heard of a similar ...

S: Yes. So I was really surprised. This is not the Buddhist teaching. That an enlightened being would experience pleasure in eating just as much as an unenlightened being, in fact would experience more because neurotic cravings would not get in the way of the enjoyment of the unalloyed sensation. But what would not happen would be that the pleasurable experience would not become a basis for the arising of craving. This is the difference. So it's useless trying to eradicate pleasure. You should try to eradicate craving if you're trying to eradicate anything.

So you don't become nearer to desirelessness or a state free from craving by eliminating the experience of pleasure. Maybe as a sort of disciplinary measure to get your mind less attached to pleasure, yes, you can suspend the pleasurable experience for a while, but only in that sort of way, for that sort of reason. You've only created the situation within which you can deal or try to deal with the problem, you've not actually solved the problem, by suspending the pleasurable sensation, or introducing a painful sensation.

Manjuvajra: Really it's the craving that you have to get at, isn't it that very element that's present in our ordinary enjoyment that stops it being a real enjoyment?

S: Fully pleasurable, yes. This is the important exception I was referring to. Actually as you get older, before you get very old one of the things that happens is you are able to enjoy more pleasure just because you have fewer cravings. You enjoy for instance, your food more because you don't have a neurotic craving for food, you are not just trying to stuff your mouth full of it and really fill your stomach. You become more judicious, more selective, more appreciative, more mindful. You're not gulping your food down so that you can go out and play. So in that way as you grow older, I mean not just older but as you become more mature and more of an individual, yes, your pleasures are heightened. But on the other hand, as you get older still, your whole physical organism doesn't function so well, so the possibilities of pleasure are reduced, that doesn't matter, because the possibilities of happiness are increased. But you don't automatically ... I mean happiness is not pleasure, pleasure is not happiness, but you don't attain happiness by simply killing off pleasure.

Nagabodhi: What would you say happiness is, Bhante?

S: Well, happiness is the functioning - this is just a rough off the cuff definition - happiness is the free functioning of the individual, individuality, as such. It's freedom to be yourself and to realise yourself in thought and word and deed. Not just in a subjective, selfish, whimsical sort of way, fully taking into consideration the objective component in your experience.

Padmaraja: In that case would you say that it was synonymous with freedom?

S: In a way, yes.

Mangala: Doing what you really want to do.

S: Yes, that's another way of putting the same thing. Again with the emphasis that it's not just what you feel like doing in a very superficially subjective, whimsical sort of way. There must be a you, an integrated you, first of all to begin with anyway. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: This might be a little bit of a detour but sometimes we try to relate the individual to a Buddha or to an enlightened being, would you say that the perfect individual is a Buddha, or is he a stream-entrant or is it a different kind of (Unclear)

S: Ah. Well to put it very simply one could say that the Buddha was the highest conceivable kind of individual, if you use the term individual at all. There is quite sort of traditional justification, there was a school of early Buddhism called the Pudgalavadins. Conze translates that as 'Personalists'. I would prefer to say 'Individuals'. Or rather the Pudgala being the individual, it was the school of those who believed in the Individual. So when we recite the Sangha vandana we say these are the eight pairs of individuals, don't we? The word 'Pudgala' is used there. The Arya Sangha consist of the Stream Entrant and so on up to Arahant, so they are clearly called Pudgalapurshas, 'persons who are individuals' this means. So if you include the Buddha in that hierarchy being as it were beyond even the Arahant, then you could say the Buddha was the highest purisa pudgala, the highest of all those persons who were individuals, i.e. the most developed individual. So one has got a traditional precedent for this kind of language, quite literally. You see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: The most individual individual?

S: Yes, and therefore the most unique, if you can use that expression. In a sense the only unique, and of course, yes, the Buddha is unique.

Manjuvajra: Would you go so far as to say that the uniqueness of the Buddha is his Buddha quality?

S: I think that would be an acceptable way of putting it, yes. It means that in him there is complete individuality which is - I would also say - complete universality. You don't achieve the universal when you simply achieve the general. The universal is not the general. The general is the collective, it is either the highest common factor or the lowest common denominator but it is the general nonetheless. The universal is not the general, so the universal is the particular. The universal is unique, because it includes everything so to speak. The individual is also unique, so the individual and the universal come to the same thing. So the Buddha is the most individual individual, so he is unique therefore he is universal. You can look at it like that.

I think, I have thought, it would be possible to develop a whole sort of 'theology', inverted commas, or 'Buddhology' of Enlightenment, expressing Enlightenment itself in terms of the individualness of the individual.

Mangala: To get back to what we were talking about before, do you think you could say most people aren't sensually healthy?

S: Well, most people are not sensuous. Again, let's not generalise. We are actually talking about our own tiny corner of Britain, yes? We're not making statements about the Indians or the Chinese or the Americans or the Dutch etc., etc. The sort of people that we usually come up against, or associate with or hear about in say London and South East England, it's not really much more than that. Yes, a lot of them aren't sensuous people. This is why sensuousness has become almost a sort of ideal - this is because people haven't any real sensuousness. It's become an ideal in the hedonistic sort of way. So if one means by sensuous, what shall I say - it's difficult really to phrase it, because it is so basic - a sensuous person is a person who is not alienated from the actual experience of the pleasurable functioning of his senses. He is not a person who is attached to sense experience or sense pleasure or makes much of it or upholds it as an ideal, or is consciously in pursuit of it. Though sometimes the word 'sensuous' has that sort of slight connotation.

Mangala: I didn't mean it in that way actually.

S: Well, one can take it in the way that Milton uses it. Milton says that poetry for instance should be simple, sensuous and passionate. When he says sensuous here, he means that it should be concrete and not abstract. That is should have a definite sense content. It should speak of colours and textures and contours. It should have a rich content derived from a vivid experience of the external world through the physical senses. Do you see what I mean? This is what he means. And of course for him in this context the senses are innocent as I said a little while ago. This is sensuousness which is an essential ingredient of poetry and of life itself, of human life itself.

Mangala: It's really like in a way that provides the sort of basis for spiritual development, or would you say that achieving that sort of state is itself an aspect of spiritual development?

S: Well, both expressions are equally valid, I would say. You can put it either way. I think if one has developed healthily as a happy, healthy human being, by the time you get around to thinking about individual spiritual development you should be sufficiently in contact with your physical body, your senses, and have had sufficient amount of pleasure, pleasurable experience so to speak and then by way of a process of natural development, get involved with, say, the spiritual life. But often we find that people come to us maimed, so sometimes they have to go back a bit before they can go forward, or even in certain respects be going back at the same time as they are going forward in other respects. It's not really very straightforward or simple, especially if they are older people perhaps. At the same time that they are learning to meditate, maybe get into the dhyanas, they're trying to really appreciate food, and to be conscious of the taste of things, when actually they should have carried that experience with them quite naturally all the way from their childhood but they've been deprived of it somehow along the line. I won't say that they can't make any spiritual headway until they succeed in recapturing that, but I think in most cases it's a question of working on a number of different levels at the same time, so you can be a more and more complete human being, on more and more different levels strengthening your base at the same time that you are adding a few upper storeys!

Mangala: Because otherwise the spiritual life becomes a very emasculated, dry, dull, lifeless affair, doesn't it? I wonder if maybe some people come into the Friends, or see spiritual life as a way of maybe avoiding having to deal with those sort of areas in themselves.

S: I'm sure this is so, or at least it used to be so, perhaps not so much now. Or thinking that spiritual life was an ethereal, bloodless anaemic emasculated sort of thing. One did see

people -

Mangala: And a way of transcending all that. Perhaps they just can't come to terms with it.

S: It could be, but on the other hand one must be careful not to go to the other extreme here. One can see that too. One doesn't want to provide a sort of philosophy of what is in fact hedonism.

Padmaraja: In some countries, Bhante, you get the five, sometimes six, sense offerings. What exactly is the significance of these?

S: Well, it is said that it means that the senses must also be offered up to, not in the sense of sacrifice in the good old Christian way, but integrated with the spiritual life, the spiritual life can have a component of non-neurotic pleasure. I'm sure that the Buddha enjoyed the food that he had begged once he'd got used to that particular diet. He didn't enjoy it at first, but that was before he became a Buddha.

Devaraja: So basically it's the integration of the senses into the spiritual life.

S: No, - yes, you can say senses, but it's more the element of sense pleasure into - it's not that it's a part of spiritual life itself, it's part of your life as an individual, and it is not, it doesn't get in the way of spiritual life, nor does spiritual life get in its way. But it's not a part of spiritual life in the sense that the more you have of it, the more spiritual you become.

Manjuvajra: It's like your spiritual life will affect it, almost as a kind of side effect.

S: Well, it will provide it with a wider context simply. It's as though the saint, to use that term, to use Christian terminology for a bit, is not just a maimed human being, or becoming a saint does not involve becoming or making yourself a maimed human being. This has sometimes happened. There's been very little of this in Buddhism, it's remarkable how little of this sort of thing there has been, it's quite astonishing really, when you compare the history of Buddhism with that of Christianity. There's been plenty of asceticism in Buddhism but it's always been a healthy asceticism almost invariably.

Devaraja: There's a beautiful Spanish painting round about 16th or 17th century ... (words drowned by aeroplane) ... saints ...

S: You find this in some of the Russian icons too, don't you? The saints are attenuated and bloodless and stiff and strained as though - well, there may be a gleam of happiness, but there's certainly no pleasure. There is that possibility as I've mentioned in the case of the sick person who can be a happy person, even though suffering physically, but I don't think that should be held up as an ideal. The ideal is pleasure and happiness. But if you have to choose between pleasure and happiness, by all means choose happiness. But if you have the opportunity of pleasure with happiness by all means have both, why not? There'd be something neurotic about you if you refused to have both, if you could have both.

But, yes, some people have lost their capacity for pleasure, in a non-hedonistic sense. In fact they are hardly able to distinguish between innocent pleasure and what I call hedonistic pleasure, which means possibilities of sense pleasure as manipulated by the overly unhealthily alienated self-conscious mind. As when you feel bored and think, oh, I will just work up some sense pleasure for myself. That is really dreadful.

Mangala: That is just a kind of distraction. Trying to use pleasure to distract yourself from your own uncomfortable state.

S: Yes, right. And of course you don't really experience the pleasure very vividly under those circumstances.

[End of tape 16]