

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 17]

S: So a lot of the so-called enjoyment of people, nowadays, especially in certain groups, in certain circles, is of this nature. It's people who are really inwardly empty trying to extract for the sake of their alienated consciousness as much 'pleasure', inverted commas, from their unfortunate senses as possible, and in the end it becomes almost a punishment of the senses.

Manjuvajra: Those sort of the people - they really do turn into ghosts, in a sense.

S: Well, they are a bit preta-like. They have senses but no pleasure. The senses do not yield them pleasure any more. They've sort of killed their senses.

Manjuvajra: It's a bit like over-using the senses, you kind of deaden.

S: Yes, or wilfully use them, not just allowing them to function in their natural healthy way. I think this happens especially in connection with sex. In fact I would almost go so far as to say, being a bit paradoxical, sex should be excluded from the pleasures.

Mangala: I don't quite follow you.

S: Well, in most people's experiences, it's as much a worry as a pleasure. It's such a complex experience and situation that it's very, very rarely that it is experienced as simple pleasure. I mean the emotional element comes into it more so inevitably, which it need not do, well it certainly need not do.

Devaraja: It really feels like that sometimes, that you've been actually scarred.

S: As though the sexual situation does not contain any possibilities of pure pleasure, for virtually all people. Because of the instinctual element, then there is the emotional element and so on, especially the neurotic emotional element. Though by all means, as it were, I was going to say concentrate on pleasure but that's even not quite right, but allow the senses to function, don't get in their way. Allow them to function more. See and feel and hear more of nature, so to speak. This is another aspect of the non-pleasurableness of much of our existence, we are not sufficiently in contact with nature, the fact that our whole life has become virtually urbanised. It means we are also cut off from sources of pleasure. I think even our climate has something to do with it, because it really makes a difference when much of the time there's brilliant blue sky and sunshine. It has an effect on the senses and through the senses, on the mind.

Mangala: It's funny that, because I remember like at school we were told why people should choose to settle in somewhere like the temperate regions such as here, apparently it's quite a stimulating environment. If you go to Africa, it's just so bloody hot that you just crash out, you can't really do anything, whereas if you go where it's too cold, you can't do much either, but here there's a kind of balance between, you have to sort of - maybe -

S: I'm not completely convinced about that. Because in India it's pretty hot but they've done an awful lot in India, culturally and spiritually. I personally felt very stimulated in every way when I was in India, and in New Zealand, when it was even quite hot, even very hot sometimes. I really worked well and happily. I felt as though - I said to somebody - all the rheumatism had been drawn out of my system. I really was functioning physically very smoothly as though everything had been well-oiled. This is how it felt. And a little bit like that down at Sukhavati when I was there and it was very hot and others were tending to flop out, not to say flake out, and I was functioning really happily and able to work really well under those conditions. So I don't think it's invariable that when it's very hot you can't do very much. I prefer the dry heat, the warm dry heat that enables you to function in that way,

but I believe in North Africa, for instance, it is very dry and it was a great centre of civilisation at one time.

Padmaraja: Going back a bit, and it's quite a big subject, but we were talking about sex, and there's that saying that sex rearing its ugly head, just thinking back to childhood and just moments of pleasure and happiness, very simple and uncomplicated, and then round about the time of early teens, adolescence, those things going. I'm just wondering whether there's any correspondence there.

S: Well, what rears its ugly head at the time of adolescence, or say puberty, is genital sex. It's as though before that - well, perhaps one is being a bit vague and speculative here, but it's as though, and some writers have certainly maintained this, before that time your sexuality, your, as it were, non-genital sexuality, if that is not a contradiction in terms, perhaps one should use the term erotic rather, is more generally diffused, is diffused over your whole body, and you enjoy your whole body. Though adults, with their own distorted ideas of things, sometimes prevent you from enjoying certain parts of your body in an erotic way, that is a non-genital way though, because those parts have got certain associations for them, which they do not in fact have for you the child. Do you see what I mean? For instance, small children are told not to play with themselves, because they are clearly getting a pleasurable experience - well, that is not sexual in the adult sense because actual sexual behaviour is not involved, it is merely pleasurable, maybe intensely pleasurable, you call it erotic in involving those particular areas which later on do have that particular specifically sexual genital reproductive function. And perhaps a lot of the damage is done around that time.

But there is, to go back to the point rather that you were making, that at that time of puberty, and certainly at the time of adolescence, well yes, sex does rear its ugly head in a different sort of way. It's as though the reproductive urge comes into play, and eventually the urge to seek out the opposite sex, which is quite a different thing that seems to be more related with a sort of general instinctual need, biological need, and then again linked up with the need for a sort of psychical completeness and looking for that outside of oneself. It's as though one needs to recapture the innocence of the child and the pleasure of the child on a higher level which is not incompatible with self-consciousness and individuality.

Mangala: What if that reproductive instinct doesn't rear its ugly head? What if you are not attracted to people of the opposite sex?

S: Well, I take the sexual instinct as basically reproductive, let's say, and when it isn't, or assumes any form which is not reproductive, it is a sort of deflection, though I don't sort of assess that morally in any way. You see what I mean? I think it differs with different people, but I think the eruption, and it really amounts to that for many people, of the sexual instinct at the time of adolescence, when the possibility of full genital functioning develops, can be very, very disturbing, even at the best of times, because it may be experienced, whatever it may be in itself, as an eruption of something sort of foreign, something from outside the, as it were, the self-contained sphere of your being, your personality, and people find it sometimes very difficult to adjust to, and to handle, as it were, especially in our society, where that has become a very loaded subject. Do you see what I mean? Even taboo in some places. We seem to be going to the opposite extreme now and giving it too much attention and treating it too sort of self-consciously, too self-consciously 'enlightened', inverted commas, with regard to this particular area, too scientific, too manipulative, even too cold.

Mangala: Yes, a lot of adolescents are say attracted to the opposite sex, which I suppose is largely biological or instinctual, but what about in the case of homosexuals who are attracted to men and not women?

S: I don't think basically there's any difference. I don't really think there is any difference. Well, there is a certain difference, obviously, the difference of the kind of object, I don't think there's a difference in results, so to speak. I don't think there's any real difference either biologically or psychologically.

Mangala: You think it's just as biological and instinctive as ...

S: Yes, but it is deflected, in strict reproductive terms, but the fact that it is deflected doesn't change its basic nature. You see what I mean?

Mangala: No, I'm not quite sure that I do. I can see it's deflected but ...

S: Well, it doesn't change its nature from so to speak a subjective point of view. For instance, supposing the sex object is a member of the same sex, well, it means that subjectively, the biological, instinctual side, the emotional side etc., are exactly the same. All that happens is that there is not the possibility of actual reproduction. Then of course in some cases there are social factors, and cultural factors and so on.

Mangala: From that point of view, it could be regarded as a perversion.

S: Well only in the reproductive sense. I've avoided the word perversion, I've spoken of a deflection which I hope is a neutral sort of word. But I think one has to accept the fact that biologically, in the biologically reproductive sense, there is a deflection. Yes? But subjectively there would seem to be no difference, between the deflected and the non-deflected. Otherwise, for instance, if a man and a woman don't have children, the biological instinct is deflected, but does that mean that the experience of a man or a woman who don't have children, the sexual experience of a man and a woman who don't have children, is quite different, from the sexual experience, including emotional experience from a man and a woman who do have children? It is really no different from that. In the case of the man and woman, husband and wife, say, who practice contraception, in their case too, the biological instinct has been deflected, but the physical instinctual, emotional side of the relationship, the function in itself, remains exactly the same.

Manjuvajra: I've noticed a kind of difference - I mean I'm not very experienced in sex with men, but there does seem to be a completeness that comes when you have sex with a woman that is not there with a man. That may be - I accept that that can be through lack of experience, but there does seem to be a sort of biological completeness.

S: I wouldn't say there's a biological completeness. There could well be a psychical completeness, just because of the factor of emotional projection and you can also get emotional projection between people of the same sex. I think the experience of completeness when you are with another person, whether sexually or non-sexually, members of the same sex or opposite sex, comes from the fact that you are experiencing through them something which you are not able to experience at least as fully within yourself. I don't think that on the biological level, strictly speaking, you can speak of completeness or non-completeness. Though of course in the case of male and female, there is a certain appropriateness of the respective organs which is not the case with two members of the same sex. I don't think really you can say anything more than that. There's a physiological correspondence which must not be mistaken for sort of completeness in another sense.

Manjuvajra: So that the intense feelings of completeness are associated with emotional and psychic projections, would you say?

S: Yes, yes. On the other hand, of course, when an instinctual need - taking sex as an instinctual need - is fulfilled, there can be an intense feeling of instinctual satisfaction, leading to oblivion, which could in retrospect be interpreted as a sort of feeling of completeness or wholeness. I think that would be a mistake though.

Padmaraja: You spoke a few days ago about some people being naturally celibate. Would such a person be more integrated, would have no ...

S: Yes, this is what I intended to say. Someone who was naturally celibate, assuming that he or she was a healthy person, would be the person who was more integrated. Because as far as most people are concerned, sex is part of a search, as it were, for wholeness but they tend to look for it the wrong direction. But a person who was psychically whole, I also made this point, would not thereby be excluded necessarily from biological functioning. But it would be much less urgent because the biological is very often with human beings impelled as it were by the need for emotional and psychological wholeness or completion. It is completion rather than wholeness that people are usually looking for.

Padmaraja: The ideal then is that one should achieve this androgynous nature, but do you think that some people can actually be born with that?

S: Well, it depends how much importance one attaches to karma and the possibility of bringing over from a previous life a certain character. I mean some of the people that one does meet do strike one as sort of complete, even pure, and more developed, than other people are, without them having apparently made any effort in this life itself, and that could apply also to or could include this particular aspect. Sex doesn't bother them so much, they are not so much in search for completeness because they are more whole than most other people, and so on.

Padmaraja: So they are almost born with a higher degree of integration?

S: Well, yes, this is possible I'm sure. Not everybody is born surely with the same degree of integration, even admitting that your early upbringing plays a great part here and you could become more or less integrated as a result of the way in which you were brought up when you were very small.

Padmaraja: So presumably for such a person adolescence or puberty wouldn't be such a terrible ...

S: It would seem not. Some people seem to go through it relatively easily, for others it is quite a traumatic experience.

Mangala: Could sex not also just be experiences, a functioning of the senses, a pleasurable functioning of the senses?

S: Well, I said that sex is very rarely simply just sex. It is very rarely just, as it were, skin contact and a certain amount of instinctual activity. It becomes overlaid, not to say overloaded, with all sorts of other factors, mainly emotional, psychological, so to that extent it ceases to be a purely pleasurable - a purely sense activity in fact - and therefore not just a purely pleasurable activity. If you just think, for the majority of people, their sex experience, their sex life, has not been one of unalloyed pleasure. But why should it not have been? It's only because the mind, the emotions etc., have intervened. But most people have got very mixed feelings about sex and very mixed experience. I mean the majority of people that one meets, or sees, even on, say the Tube presumably have or have had some sort of sex life, but they do they look as though they have had a large component of sense pleasure in their lives?

They certainly don't. So even allowing for all the wear and tear of office life and all that, well, even then one surely would expect them to be looking more fulfilled as regards sense pleasure than they actually do. But how many of them have got that look? Very, very few indeed.

Mangala: Do you think that sex used to achieve physical closeness would be

S: Well, it's used to achieve closeness generally. I think a lot of people assume that if you have sex with someone you automatically become close to them without any further effort. But I think most people know that that is not so, and that you can say, have sex with somebody, have a sexual relationship with somebody over a certain period, when that stops, it's almost as though you don't know them any more, you cease to know them.

Mangala: What I was thinking of was like using sex as perhaps a way of achieving a more sort of infantile physical warmth which perhaps one didn't have as a child - would that be a sort of an invalid use of sex, if you see what I mean?

S: I'm sure this does happen. I think it would be an invalid use, yes, it does happen a lot. There's a lot of infantilism in sexual relationships. What is the significance of the baby talk that a lot of lovers indulge in? What does it mean? People just don't consider these things. Why do lovers indulge in baby talk instead of discussing things intelligently? (Pause) I hope these young men aren't learning too many of the facts of life! (Laughter) Anyway, it really is astonishing, isn't it? But I mean people don't think about these things, but there is a reason. The reason is infantilism. You go right back to infancy, or one of you at least does, very often both of you, and that doesn't help your development as an individual.

So it really is astonishing, just to enlarge upon this a little bit more, it's something I have sometimes thought, it's astonishing that people don't get more pleasure than they do out of sex. It's really strange how little pleasure most people seem to get out of sex. I think it is just because the actual sense experience is overlaid with so many psychological, especially emotional factors. I think this is one of the reasons why people who are concerned with their individual development need to be very careful how they allow themselves to get into sexual experience and sexual situations. For some of them the sense element and the emotional element not to say the neurotic emotional element, are so mixed up, not to say confused, they'd be best advised to avoid the sexual experience, or sexual experience, altogether, at least for the time being, just because it was such a mixed situation or experience for them. And again paradoxically one could say, it is only when you become more truly an individual and only when you become relatively free from emotional attachment, neurosis, and addiction that you can afford to let yourself go into those sort of situations and only then that actually you can attain pleasure from them. But certainly in a completely non-addictive sort of way.

Nagabodhi: I think sometimes in sexual activity, pleasure, it's like Macbeth's dagger, hovering just in front of you all the time, trying to make you remember a time when it was just pleasure, maybe the first few times you made love in a relationship, but since then it's got more and more overloaded.

S: Right, yes, exactly, overloaded with all sorts of expectations and so on, being used to satisfy, to supply, all sorts of other needs and deficiencies which in a sense it wasn't meant to, to use sort of teleological language. After all it's only basically meant to reproduce the species (Chuckles) here are you trying to run your life on the basis of it, or even to attain Nirvana with it! (Laughter) This is ridiculous.

So less sex, please, and more pleasure, if you see what I mean. And spread the net wider as it were or spread your little filaments, your antennae wider and enjoy nature as a whole more.

Some people say that you, that is especially the male, should regard the whole of nature as the female and enjoy nature in that sort of way and in that sort of spirit, almost in an erotic sort of way. The feel of the water on your skin, or the air on your skin, and breathing the scents of the early morning, as though it wasn't just old Mother Earth, but young Sweetheart Earth, if you see what I mean. Adopt that sort of attitude more.

Then there's less emphasis on the human member of the opposite sex. And also in the sexual situation, especially when you are concerned with the opposite sex it's very difficult really to regard them as human or as individuals, because you are right down to biological brass tacks, as it were, on a purely instinctual level, so very often in the sexual situation you as it were sink, at least for the time being, to a non or even sub-individual level. So that doesn't help either the relationship itself on the human level or your own process of individual development.

Manjuvajra: If you can, if you do maintain a sort of playful sensual, sexual -

S: Sensuous, shall we say sensuous rather than sensual?

Manjuvajra: Yes, sensuous sexual relationship with someone, and as long as it keeps clean in that way, would you say that was reasonably healthy?

S: Well, I'd say it's quite healthy, I wouldn't say reasonably healthy, it's quite healthy. All that you have to be sure of that, yes, it is clean, as it were. Though I think the word 'maintain' is a little suspect. If it doesn't represent just a natural on-going thing, if it suggests an effort to keep it in existence, well, perhaps that is a little suspect.

Manjuvajra: I was thinking actually if an effort to break it, to keep yourself out of those sort of situations when you feel that ...

S: Well, I think those healthy possibilities do exist. I'd be very reluctant to take such a pessimistic view of human possibilities as to say that those sort of possibilities just weren't on - no, I wouldn't say that. I think there are some people who can - again I hope I'm not providing people who need it or in a way don't need it, with a convenient rationalisation - but that there are some people who can handle this sort of situation without it getting in the way of their individual development, there's no doubt about that. Fortunately there is a healthy minority of people. But be a bit careful before you assume that you yourself are a member of that minority, in our corner of western civilisation.

Nagabodhi: It raises a bit the idea of promiscuity versus the relationship. What we've been saying suggests perhaps promiscuity is a - in that a relationship does usually imply some pressure to maintain - in a way if your enjoyment of sex is healthy and your emotional attitude is healthy, you should never actually experience that ... unless you are planning to have children, say.

S: I think I would tend to agree with this, from the man's point of view. I'm not sure whether you can treat female psychology in the same way, and I reserve, as it were judgement on that. But it is as though if you have a completely healthy and pleasurable sexual experience your first thought, when it is, as it were over, should not be about next time or the possibility of repetition. If it is, you already are slightly on the wrong path. You should be able happily to accept the fact of its being, well, just this time, which doesn't exclude - it's not a deliberate exclusion of a possible, not repetition - not repetition, but another, as it were, once and for all experience, as it were, with the same person. But not promiscuity in the sense of collecting sexual experiences with different people, which some men do. Again this seems to be more a male vice than a female one. You see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: I was thinking of promiscuity whereby you are simply open to the possibility of enjoying sex occasionally, but you don't look at one person to make plans, you just ...

S: Right. I think this is quite compatible with an overall healthy attitude and the possibility of individual development. I also don't exclude totally the 'regular', inverted commas, relationship, that is to say a series of sexual experiences with one and the same person amounting to a sexual relationship, provided there is genuine healthiness on either side, and there is genuinely no clinging and no effort to hold on to the relationship. I think there is a possibility of that at least for say short periods. But again one just has to be very careful.

Padmaraja: Are you implying then it's a question of temperament, maybe some people are naturally promiscuous for want of a better word, or naturally monogamous; naturally celibate?

S: I'm not quite sure about the naturally promiscuous. I think, well again I won't speak about women, I think broadly speaking the male human animal is naturally promiscuous for sound biological reasons. Nature, as it were, wants him to impregnate as many females of his species as possible. so that the species may survive. Women would seem to have a greater tendency towards monogamy in the sense that, in the state of nature, it seems that once she had conceived she becomes more preoccupied with the fact that she is pregnant, and becomes less and less interested in the male of her species, and is eventually absorbed by the duties of motherhood until the next time round, so to speak. That would seem to be the more natural pattern for the female. But the male can go on happily scattering his seed indefinitely. There seems to be no biological reason for him to be monogamous. Though there is a cultural reason to some extent, when there is a situation in which the female and her offspring needs to be looked after and protected and so on. Usually the whole tribe is responsible for that, rather than the individual human male responsible for the actual impregnation. Very often it isn't known who he is anyway.

Padmaraja: Instinct apart, certainly from the point of view of love, there's no reason why you shouldn't love more than one person at the same time?

S: In a way it's self-contradictory if you can love only one person. The love that you can feel only for one is probably not love at all, not in the sense of metta. Metta is essentially extendable or extensible. Exclusiveness is such a terrible thing, emotional exclusiveness. It's a really useless thing also.

Nagabodhi: You could almost make that rule about sexual desire, the sexual desire that you can only feel for one person isn't sexual desire at all, it's more likely to be an emotional projection.

S: More likely, of course allowing for the fact that if you are healthy, you will not be equally attracted to all females regardless of age and appearance, there must be that proviso too.

Nagabodhi: I took that for granted. (Laughter)

Padmaraja: I'm quite interested in the Greeks and the term *Greek Love*, its been bandied about quite a bit in the Movement, and I know it's too big a subject to go into now, but I see a lot of things that were quite ideal and quite useful in that situation, and I know they did lay quite a bit of stress on the importance of esteem, and also on monogamy.

S: Right, indeed. Yes. But say a little more, I mean your remarks may not be clear to those who haven't seen or read or heard about that particular book.

Padmaraja: Ah well, where to begin! We were talking about the natural tendencies in men, at least, to promiscuity, and that that needn't necessarily be an unhealthy thing. Yet it does somehow seem to contradict the idea of esteem, I'm not quite sure how ...

S: Well, I think it boils down to this, that all these different patterns of sexual activity, objectively considered, the promiscuous, the monogamous and so on, have a sort of healthy side and a non-healthy side. It isn't that one pattern is healthy and another pattern is unhealthy. So you can have a promiscuity for neurotic reasons as well as a promiscuity for healthy reasons. You can have a monogamy for neurotic reasons and a monogamy for healthy reasons. One can't reduce the health or the neurosis, as the case may be, to a specific invariable pattern. I wouldn't like to say that a man who is promiscuous, is ipso facto healthy psychologically, or that a man who is strictly monogamous is ipso facto neurotic, no, certainly not.

Devaraja: I feel to some extent that this thing of man being say more naturally promiscuous and woman being more naturally monogamous - I feel that in a discussion that we had some time ago about the way that women should in a way marry the group in order to feel this security which obviously a lot of women do require ... it's a security which at present they seem to get only out of a monogamous sexual relationship which I think in itself is not a satisfactory situation.

S: Perhaps it is basically I think that security that women seem to require - well, do require, it's a plain biological fact, rather than actual monogamy, and monogamy perhaps is looked upon as a means of obtaining the security. And also when a woman is pregnant she tends to lose interest in sex, so to that extent is less promiscuous than the male. I think probably the security that comes from the group, and the feeling may be that a woman has, especially a pregnant woman or a woman with small children, that the group is behind her, or the group is all round her and is supporting her, gives much more security than the security that a woman can get just by having one man attached to her, a man that she may, masculine unreliability being what it is, she might lose any minute. Or she might feel that she had lost him, because of a certain not quite healthy way of thinking, when in fact she hadn't. She'd feel that she had lost him when he ceased to be exclusively hers, whereas that might not be the case at all. I think one should be very careful of exclusive relationships of any kind, even though acknowledging that, yes, you have more intensive relationships of one kind or another with some people than with others, this is inevitable. But deliberate, cultivated, systematic exclusiveness I think should be regarded with suspicion. Or exclusiveness raised to an ideal should be regarded with suspicion.

Manjuvajra: It's a real spectre in that sense, something kind of evilly enforced on ...

S: I have said that as regards sex there are three possible lifestyles for people - did we talk about lifestyles in this group? Well, we talked about them in the other group and said some quite important things, so this statement has to be read along with that, so to speak. In respect of lifestyles, there are three possibilities, monogamy, celibacy and promiscuity. One can see each of them as having a positive and a negative side emotionally, not that one is positive and others are not so positive, and the suitability of one or another depends to a great extent on temperament and circumstances. You see what I mean?

You can take them one by one. For instance, start with monogamy. You could contract a monogamous relationship with somebody because you had decided, you both had decided you wanted to have children and you believed that the best way in which you could provide them with a stable and warm emotional environment would be if you were to concentrate on that situation, well, not exclusively but intensively, and were not to engage in any sexual

relationships outside. You might come to that agreement because you felt that that arrangement would provide the best situation for the children that you were hoping to have and to bring up. That would be quite healthy. If on the other hand your monogamy was based on the fact you couldn't possibly live without each other, you just had to be together all the time under the same roof, well, that would be unhealthy.

All right, then take promiscuity. If your promiscuity was the expression of a freedom from neurotic attachments, an openness to the present situation, and the ability to experience pleasure, well, that would be positive. If your promiscuity was based upon a desperate search for a satisfactory experience to fill some sort of aching void, or if it was competitive, based upon a wish to notch up a larger number of victims than the next man, that would be definitely neurotic.

Then again with celibacy, if your celibacy was due to your fear of pleasure, your inability to relate either to the opposite sex or to the same sex, a general sort of sterility and self-preoccupation and narcissism, it would be negative. If your celibacy was due to the fact that your natural biological urge wasn't particularly strong, and you had no emotional need of the opposite sex or a sexual relationship because you were relatively complete in yourself, and in any case, dwelt much of the time in higher dhyanic levels of consciousness, then your celibacy would be quite positive and healthy.

So you can see that you can look at these three possibilities as constituting three possible lifestyles each with a healthy aspect, and each with an unhealthy one, or not aspect, but each being able to be either subjectively positive and healthy, or negative and unhealthy. Do you see what I mean?

So just decide which category you fall into, or want to fall into. You can of course change from time to time. You might start off promiscuous, healthily promiscuous, then be healthily monogamous and then healthily celibate, that's possible. Or you might be healthily celibate and then you might be healthily promiscuous, though I think that is a bit doubtful. I think if you were really healthily celibate you'd probably go on being that way, unless circumstances just changed, and it was too much of a bother to be celibate, as it were, it was less trouble not to be, than to be, if you see what I mean. Some of you may see what I mean.

So it doesn't mean that you are just committed to one possibility, one, as it were, sexual lifestyle, for ever. You may need one or another even at different times, one has to be open to that possibility too. But does this make things a little clearer generally?

The thing is, you just have to decide which category you want to be in, and be in it honestly and openly. But even so for the majority of people, I think, their sex experience is so mixed up with neurotic emotional elements of various kinds that they should be quite cautious about entering upon or into any sex experience, or much less still sexual relationship, until they really know and understand themselves better. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: There is another element that has to be brought in a way, that is women's psychological - the sexuality of women.

[End of side one side two]

You've said that promiscuity, for example, seems to be OK for men, fits in with man's psychology, but I wouldn't think that it would fit in with women's psychology very well.

S: I would think that in most cases it would not fit in very well, this is what I would tend to think, without being too positive or too dogmatic about it.

Padmaraja: So we're saying out of esteem for the woman, you would become monogamous, even though you may well be healthily promiscuous.

S: Well, this brings us to something which perhaps should have been touched on, esteem in relationships. I don't think you necessarily dis-esteem somebody because you have sex with them only once, or wish to have it with them only once. I think one must be careful not to think that. There is this sort of popular semi-romantic view that you show your respect for a woman by not having sex with her until you are safely married. I don't think this has got any very real basis. You can have esteem for people whether you relate to them sexually by way of promiscuity, or by way of monogamy, or by way of celibacy for that matter.

Manjuvajra: I really prefer to keep the whole kind of emotional side of it, esteem and affection and human warmth quite separate from sex.

S: I think it would be very good if one could do that, and I think the trouble is largely that that isn't done. Quite a lot of men almost seem to think that unless you have sex with a woman, well, you have just nothing to do with her, you see what I mean? That unless you're having sex with her, she doesn't count, and for the same reason they think friendships with men don't count because after all you are not having sex with men, in most cases, in the ordinary world, so that relationship isn't important because it doesn't include sex. I think this is one of our great modern micchaditthis, that only those relationships are important in which sex is included. So this means, one, that your relations with men usually are not of any significance because they don't include sex, and your relationships with women are just sex relationships, not even sexual but just sex relationships, and you don't even think of friendship and humanity in connection with your relations with women, which I think is very unfortunate.

Biologically speaking, yes, the female is simply for sex and reproduction, but not when you rise to the human level, or the level of the individual. There it is either momentary or just one particular aspect of things, or it isn't there at all, but you still have quite a satisfactory human warm relationship with that particular person of the opposite sex.

Padmaraja: If there's no individuality there, what's that based on? That friendship, for instance with a woman, I mean, in some women there's very little more than just that ...

S: Well, if they are just female animals you can't have a human relationship with them. You may find some women who are just little more than female animals, you can't have a human relationship with them.

Padmaraja: But how many women do you come across that you consider to be human? Even potentially human? (Laughter) Does that seem a bit strong?

S: It does, but I think I know what you mean. But I think if one wants, in one's present experience one or two or even three women friends, that is to say women who are not just animals of the human species, who are genuinely human, I think one can find them. One doesn't need hundreds or there don't have to be hundreds. You only need a few. You can only have a few friends anyway. I think one can find them, but maybe you have a point. It's debatable. Some people would consider that not only strong but sweeping. But I know what you mean. But the possibility nonetheless exists. One does, I must admit, get that impression as one moves about the world, that the average woman is very often quite close to animality, one gets that impression in India for instance. The human element is not very prominent.

Mangala: More so than in men, do you think?

S: It would seem so, but one must be very careful about sweeping generalisations, also take cultural factors into consideration.

Mangala: It's because they've got a stronger biological tendency I suppose?

S: Well, this is what is sometimes said. It may be so. Some people think it is due more to cultural factors. It's very difficult to say.

But, anyway, does this bring us to any sort of conclusion? We've covered quite a wide area relating to quite a different topic. Is anybody any the wiser or clearer?

Manjuvajra: I feel much clearer.

S: In what respect or about what?

Manjuvajra: Well, I liked the way you were talking about the styles and the two possibilities of both styles.

S: Right. I haven't actually talked systematically about that before, not on seminars, though with one or two individuals.

Manjuvajra: Also, we talked generally about the thing that I've felt quite important, the distinction between what I called sensuous sexuality, which you've now called an enjoyment of the senses and sensual, sense sexuality.

S: Yes, though I've warned of course that the pure sense pleasure experience very rarely extends into or continues in the sexual experience or relationship, and therefore one should be quite on one's guard. And what else?

Manjuvajra: Some of the comments that you made about hetero and homosexuality I thought were quite illuminating.

S: What, deflection?

Manjuvajra: Deflection, yeah, I think that's an excellent word, because it doesn't carry any kind of emotional connotation, moralistic connotations, and that seems quite clear.

S: And there was something else, I thought, or would have thought, what was that?

_____ : Happiness and pleasure?

S: Happiness and pleasure, also, yes. And also the need for a wider extension of the range of sense pleasure, especially as regards nature as a whole.

Devaraja: Regarding the whole of nature as the female, not just as old mother earth but the young sweetheart.

A love you can feel only for one can't be ...

S: Ah, right.

Manjuvajra: The idea of nature as a young goddess rather than a mother - that appeals to me. (Laughter)

S: Well, it's time in a way, why should you think only of old mother nature as it were. All right, in autumn yes, it is old mother nature, but what about spring? It's not old mother nature then.

Devaraja: The thing that occurred to me, there's almost like an automatic biasing of the argument about say monogamy versus promiscuity almost from a woman's point of view. I mean one tends to look at promiscuity almost as an imposition on women, but you could equally argue that monogamy is an imposition on men, and that it's really hard on men that they should be expected to be monogamous.

Manjuvajra: When we were talking about that I was thinking that there would be a kind of, what you could call a promiscuous monogamy. What I mean by that is you could recognise that you have sexual feelings towards a wide range of women, but, in certain cases, you just don't follow them up. You don't put yourself in situations where you could follow them up. However with one particular woman, or maybe two, or whatever, you do allow yourself to go into situations where those feelings can be followed through. That then gives the woman the kind of monogamous framework which I feel might be psychologically more suitable, but I don't feel that it limits the man. He's still recognising his broad based sort of sexual responsiveness.

S: I think some men would find that a bit almost sophisticated, some men feel such a strong urge, or need to follow through their interest in a number of different women, even to the extent of, having two or three or four or five or seven or eight affairs, so to speak, going simultaneously. Some men seem able to keep this up quite naturally, as it were, without any particular effort. I would also say that when I say monogamy I also include polygamy in that. Yes? I mean a definite limited sexual framework. If a certain man found that there were two or three women, and that all of them could just agree in a sort of joint menage, I see that the question of morality or immorality just doesn't come into it. It's a neutral framework and it could be negative, it could be positive, depending on the attitudes of the individuals involved.

Buddhism, traditional historical Buddhism, certainly does not uphold monogamy as opposed to polygamy.

Manjuvajra: You have to limit yourself in some way, anyway.

S: Yes, of course, there is at least a practical limit, even if there is no theoretical limit. But the promiscuous person is one who doesn't fix a definite stated number. The sky is the limit, so to speak.

I think people have to honestly ask themselves what is their natural tendency, are they naturally monogamous, or are they naturally polygamous, or naturally promiscuous, or naturally celibate? Usually, some may not be quite sure or may sort of oscillate, but I think most men certainly could say which they were, whether healthily or unhealthily.

Nagabodhi: Again you've got to distinguish between sex and emotion. You may be naturally sexually promiscuous but emotionally want security from one person.

S: Right, yes, so your sex is dragged along with the emotions, there are those sort of possibilities of conflict. You may be naturally monogamous, but you might find no one willing to settle down with you, so you just have to satisfy your sexual needs with a series of people, which may not really basically suit you.

Anyway, there's all sorts of other aspects that we could have gone into but we haven't,

perhaps on some other occasion, or some other retreat even we might. You touched on one or two that we haven't followed up at all.

Padmaraja: I'm just wondering whether to pursue it further.

S: Oh dear, it's gone one o'clock. (Chuckles)

Manjuvajra: Could you mention the topics?

Padmaraja: Basically I'd like a more fuller discussion of Greek love.

S: All right, see what happens tomorrow! We were supposedly going to get through numbers 9 and 10 so quickly that (Drowned by laughter) but all right, we're going to continue with these precepts on the next retreat, I knew we wouldn't be getting through all of them. So it's OK. And if we don't get around to Greek love on this retreat you can prime maybe one of your people to bring up the topic ...

Padmaraja: Oh, but I want to be there.

S: At least listen to the discussion on the tape afterwards. Let's see if it comes up on this retreat.

[End of session End of day eight]

S: To get back to section 4, the ten things to be avoided, and we were dealing with precept 9 'Avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health'. You may remember we were going to spend, we thought, just a few minutes over it, but actually we spent the whole of the session over it, and I believe there was a feeling at the end even so in some quarters that we hadn't even finished with that precept even so. Maybe we have, maybe we haven't, let's see. But is there anything in fact to continue on?

Padmaraja: Yes, I want to continue. We were talking mainly in the last session about sex and the relation between sex and emotion.

S: and emotion ... sex and pleasure.

Padmaraja: Right. I wanted to discuss the area of what is termed Greek love, which is ...

S: Are you sort of jumping, or is there a definite connection which you want to follow through?

Padmaraja: We were talking mainly about sex, and sex mainly in relation between men and women, and we seemed to isolate, or you isolate, I know, the element of emotion. You don't necessarily identify that with the sex instinct.

S: No, I see them as distinct, even though they usually are, one might even say, confused, in the sense that the two are together and indistinguishable, whereas actually they can be separated out. Certainly, if by emotion one means a more strongly, more personally intense kind of emotion.

Padmaraja: And it seemed to transpire that in the course of the discussion that very often people try to satisfy one need by invoking the other, by using the other. For instance, you may have an emotional need, but instead of trying to satisfy it on its own level, so to speak, it somehow gets mixed up with the sex instinct, and you have recourse to that and try to satisfy

the emotional need.

S: Though you don't actually think that that is what you are doing, for you they are all sort of jumbled up together, you don't know yourself, don't understand yourself sufficiently well perhaps, to realise that it is an emotional need that you are basically trying to satisfy, using the word 'need' for the moment at least in a non-neurotic sense. But you sort of think that that can be satisfied by sexual experience because you confuse the two, whereas actually you find in the end that it cannot be, and so you remain disappointed. This is the sort of thing you mean, presumably.

Padmaraja: Yes. And it strikes me that there are some needs that just can't be met in relation to a woman, which are the things more akin to friendship, the meeting of equals, and love. That these things, there seems to me much more room for satisfaction of these things with another man, and this got me to thinking about the Greek love affair, between an older and a younger man, which was very much based on esteem and friendship, but this very strong emotional link between the two, which could - may or may not - involve a sexual element.

S: But then, on the other hand, it would not be an equal relationship, whereas you previously objected to the relationship between man and woman on the grounds that it couldn't be an equal relationship.

Padmaraja: But it's never going to be, whereas there's room for that to happen in the context of a vertical relationship if one of the younger aspiring to something greater than himself, and thus developing through that friendship, to something, rather than just staying on one level.

S: So in other words, you see that kind of relationship as essentially educational as in fact the Greeks themselves did?

Padmaraja: Yes, yes.

S: So what you are saying is that it's a question of a sort of educational relationship between two persons of the same sex with an erotic element which may nor may not be connected with an actual biological sexual element, this is what you are talking about. So you simply want, as it were, to draw attention to that as a possibility, in the total range of possibilities, as it were, inasmuch as it is usually overlooked or neglected or discounted.

Padmaraja: Or even put down in this society. It just seems to me that it's a pity that it is.

S: All right, supposing that you sort of set that up as a possible type of relationship, to use that term. What are the advantages and what are the disadvantages? When we talked about the possible sexual lifestyles, we saw that they could have a healthy aspect and an unhealthy aspect. Do you think there's a possibility in this case also with regard to this particular pattern, that there could be a healthy aspect and also an unhealthy aspect? What would you say about that?

Padmaraja: Yes, I think so. The healthy aspect would be, as you say, an educative situation. Presumably for the younger person they would have a model, presumably a worthy model, somebody to base their lives on and to aspire towards. It wouldn't be just education in the sense that we regard it, just imparting of facts from one sort of alienated head to another, but a more fuller relationship, including education of and through the emotions, much fuller more rounded. And from the point of view of the older person, I can see the advantage being that inasmuch as we were talking about the necessity of having achieved humanity, having

become human, to then become more angelic. I think that's the term you use very much now, and how the younger person could well act in that kind of way, well, that's the function he would fulfil for the older person.

S: You mean act as a catalyst of the angelic quality, this is what you mean?

Padmaraja: Yes. And it would inspire him, and help him to work with that so-called projection in himself. I guess the negative aspect of the relationship is that it could be just like any other, it could be possessive.....

S: Or as we mentioned before, it could be pseudo-educational. It could be a sort of indoctrination instead of a sort of helping to grow up, a helping to mature. Or there could be even an obsessive sort of 'these are my pupils' as it were 'nobody else can lay a finger on them' sort of thing, a sort of over-protective, over-possessive attitude, which you do find in some teachers, I mean teachers in the ordinary sense.

Padmaraja: One sees looking at the Greeks the young student, so to speak, who would be considered to be in his bloom who in a sense would be analogous to an angel, he would have all the beauty of youth, and still be not yet formed as a male, he could possibly inspire the older person, put him in touch with that thing in himself, his own androgynous nature.

S: I'm glad you said 'analogous to an angel', because the 15 or 16 or 17 year old is often not so much a young angel as a little devil! Do you see what I mean? He's only analogous - there is certainly that appearance, but there may often not be the reality of that. It is a matter of appearance, say aesthetic appeal rather than of psychological reality, in most cases.

Padmaraja: It just strikes me it would be so good if that could be integrated in this society. You get kids of 16, 17, fall in love with the first sort of woman, some girl of about 18 or something, they get married, and that's it, they're sort of lumbered. There's no growth, there's no development there. I don't necessarily feel that this relationship should exclude that at a later stage, but it seems a very safe and practical introduction to love and to relating through the emotions.

Manjuvajra: Is that as uncommon as you suggest, actually? I mean if I think back into my own life, nearly always boys at school they picked on someone older in school, certainly not a much older man, quite often a teacher, you'd hang around a particular teacher, and then you'd become his favourite and you'd have quite a lot to do with him.

S: I'm sure this does happen quite a bit. I don't think the process is fully understood. Maybe it's regarded as a sort of amiable weakness on the teacher's part that he's got his little pet whom he allows to distribute the books and maybe to whom he gives certain little privileges. But no, the more genuinely educational aspect may not always be so well understood. It's more sort of personal favouritism, do you see what I mean? Though it may be also associated with a genuinely educational element, but perhaps that isn't made sufficiently explicit. And certainly the erotic element, if it was there, would tend to be disowned or discounted.

But it does seem important that there should be some means of access to this, what one could call, angelic quality. Nowadays in modern life this angelic quality is rather discounted. We think of the Victorians and the pictures of angels which they used to be quite fond of. I remember during the war I was evacuated to North Devon and I stayed for a month in the house of a church of England clergyman, well, he was the vicar and this was the vicarage. There was this elderly bachelor vicar and his very elderly, in fact old, aunt and uncle, and I remember in most of the bedrooms there were these very Victorian pictures, sometimes just black and white prints in little wooden frames, of angels and some of them were very, very

insipid indeed. And this is almost the nearest that we get to that sort of thing, that sort of ideal, and we see it in this sort of Victorian form, very anaemic and almost negative. So it isn't really taken seriously. Even if you say of a young person that he or even she is a little angel or even like an angel it's not exactly regarded as a compliment.

Also there's an overemphasis nowadays on experience, on the very young having the experiences of maturity even as quickly as possible. And a discounting of any sort of innocence and seeing inexperience as completely negative and undesirable and something to be put right as quickly as possible. So in this way people don't seem to value or to have any contact with, or even knowledge of, this quality that one calls the angelic. It's as though there's a whole area of experience and even values that we've become completely oblivious to, and which can be quite inspiring. This is the point mainly Padmaraja was making, the inspiring nature of this particular quality, which under certain circumstances one may, as it were, see reflected objectively in a certain type of personality. There are some people who retain this angelic quality until they are quite old, others who don't have it even when they are young, they are just little urchins (Chuckles) and never little angels.

Manjuvajra: When I was teaching at a school in Cornwall, and I was discussing once with the history master there the girls between about 16 and 17, and there was a particular quality about them that we both found quite stimulating, it wasn't sexual as such. I didn't really like talking about this feeling particularly but I did mention it to him one day and he said he'd noticed it as well, and he noticed that when people left school and came back, even after six months or so they'd lost it. He called it a kind of innocence, the sort of innocent psyche, if you like, in a full grown adult human body. Is that something of the sort of quality that you mean, that sort of innocence and yet physically mature?

S: No, I don't think it is necessarily associated with physical maturity, in fact, I think Padmaraja meant almost the opposite. Because I mean the male human being in any case isn't physically mature till he's about 25. The female matures earlier, she's often mature when she's 18 or 19. But I've noticed this too in the case of girls. I remember I went to several girls' schools in London, especially I remember the *Parliament Hill Fields Girls High School* I think it was, and I gave a talk and answered questions, it was either the fourth form or the fifth form, one of the two, but they were extraordinarily bright and lively and friendly, one got that impression and there didn't seem to be anything of an aura of sexuality or anything like that, they were just very bright and very positive and very fresh. But it is as though in the case of girls, or young women as they were virtually, as soon as what one might call the nesting instinct starts developing, they really lose that and they lose it very quickly, as you said, almost in six months and that in a way seemed a pity. But that, it seems, is what happens in their case. And it's as though you have to wait, you have to allow them to go through that whole cycle of building their nest and mating and reproducing and bringing up the young, and then as it were, catch them when they emerge at the other end in their early forties when perhaps they can begin to take a serious interest in individual development. Maybe in the case of some they won't need to go through that cycle, but the majority, if one is thinking in terms of dealing with everybody, the majority it seems do need to go through that, and you catch them as I put it at the other end.

So in that way it seems it's not quite as easy for a man to adapt that educative attitude towards the young woman because she's not going to grow up to be like you, as it were, but she's going to grow up and quite quickly and quite soon start giving her major attention to the finding of a mate and the raising of a family. It's as though that would be the central thing for her, not her individual development even though in the long run, perhaps, even going through that cycle will contribute to her individual development but it's a long term matter.

I think there's also something that you haven't mentioned or an aspect that you haven't

mentioned that I think needs to be emphasised - maybe it isn't sufficiently. In the case of any teaching whether it's secular or spiritual it's really important that the teacher enjoys teaching. So under what circumstances or under what conditions will a teacher enjoy teaching? I think this aspect comes in really very strongly. What will inspire the teacher to teach really well? Especially, as it were, the more secular teaching. If it's a question of spiritual teaching, yes, the spiritual ideal will inspire you. Supposing you are, let's say, a Mahayana Buddhist, the Bodhisattva ideal will inspire you. But supposing it isn't quite a question of teaching spiritually on the spiritual level, well what is going really to inspire you? What is going to inspire you most perhaps?

Manjuvajra: Responsiveness.

S: Responsiveness, yes. But in addition to that?

Manjuvajra: Success.

S: No, no, not thinking along those lines at all.

Padmaraja: Beauty.

S: Beauty is going to inspire you also. That is also quite important.

Manjuvajra: What, beauty in the pupil?

S: Yes, in whoever it is that you are teaching. It's as though that can sort of hold your attention or can attract you or fascinate you, so that the task or the work of teaching as it very often can be, is considerably lightened and I think this is very important especially where the teaching is not quite on the spiritual level, as it were.

Mangala: It probably also makes the pupil more receptive to the teaching as well. If the teacher looks at the person and sees that they are really beautiful, then there's going to be some sort of response to that on the part of the pupil and he's going to sense that, he's going to be more responsive, more open.

S: Yes. Also, of course, one must point out, it's not only, though it can also be a physical beauty, or facial beauty; there is such a thing as beauty of nature, beauty of character, beauty of temperament, to which one can be equally sensitive, if not more so. And you might just feel like a sort of gardener - here is this plant, and here is this little bud, and you'd really like to set it open properly, and the petals unfold so to speak, and there can be a great delight in doing this. In a way, yes, you can also have this experience with an aged ugly person, physically old and physically ugly, but it isn't quite so easy to see that happening under these sort of circumstances, but on a purely spiritual plane, yes, a person might be in their seventies and eighties, and not in the least bit physically attractive, but nonetheless you see the beauty of that person's character and you can still watch it unfolding.

So how much more so when that inner process is reflected in outer beauty and in actual physical growing up as well. On a spiritual level, certainly, you should be able to feel it towards all the people that you are in contact with, in a teaching capacity, you should see or feel the beauty of all in different ways, even those who are not physically beautiful or physically attractive, and have the same sort of attitude. But no doubt it is much easier, especially when the context is less spiritual, if there is some actual, even physical, attractive quality in the person to whom you are relating in that particular way.

Padmaraja: I think I read somewhere that Socrates wouldn't take a student unless he felt

that love, that inspiration of love.

S: Well, this is true no doubt. But that doesn't just mean picking out pupils with blue eyes and yellow curly hair, if you see what I mean.

Padmaraja: The Greeks didn't distinguish did they between physical beauty and moral beauty? Didn't they have the same word for both?

S: They did. The Greeks found it quite difficult to believe that someone who was physically beautiful could be morally unbeautiful. Actually of course that was their mistake, they were a little naive. There was, for instance, the famous case of Alcibiades who was a bit of a scoundrel actually but he was so good looking he could talk the Greeks around any day and they forgave him again and again though he did some terrible things and he really led them into disaster more than once but he could always talk them round, because he was so tall, so good looking, so impressive, such an eloquent speaker, he got away with it every time. So the Greeks tended sometimes to make too naive an identification of physical beauty with moral beauty, but they did have, yes, the same word for both, and perhaps had they looked a little more closely at Alcibiades, even physically, they might have noticed that he wasn't even physically, at least as regards expression perhaps, quite so beautiful as they had thought.

On the other hand, one knows it quite well, you can sometimes find a person who isn't say handsome or isn't beautiful, and this applies to both men and women, in the conventional sense, but there is a definite beauty of expression and intelligence which, is in a way more attractive though it may be more subtle and much more difficult to discern. On the other hand you can have a person with very regular beautifully chiselled features but they can be quite cold and their expression can be quite unpleasant and you wouldn't say that they were completely beautiful. So it isn't even just a question of beauty in the more formal conventional sense.

Devaraja: Do you think there's a greater chance in a way of making that mistake from an older person directed towards a younger person? I think the younger person attracted to the older person tends to be more attracted towards their qualities of moral beauty.

S: I think that is right. I think the younger person will tend to be more attracted towards the mental qualities of the older person, and possibly the older person, at least initially, more attracted towards the physical qualities of the younger person.

Devaraja: I remember reading somewhere, I don't know if it's in *The Symposium*, that apparently Socrates was quite an ugly looking old man, but a beautiful young man could feel almost like an irresistible attraction towards him, in spite of his quite physically unattractive.....

S: Young Greeks at that time were beginning to be very intellectually alert and inquisitive and Socrates really used to mystify them with his questions and his discussions and dialogues, and they were really drawn by this and they didn't care that he was elderly and ugly and snub nosed and pot bellied and all the rest of it. They just weren't interested in that side of things at all. It was just his mind that fascinated them. So sometimes one does find that sort of thing. Or sometimes the younger person may be attracted by the older person's greater experience and self-confidence and the fact that he knows his way around and all that sort of thing.

Mangala: Do you think physical good looks is a purely fortuitous, arbitrary, hereditary sort of thing?

S: Well, it's hereditary to some extent. One does sometimes see a certain kind of good looks runs in a certain family. Sometimes you can see the same kind of good looks running through two, three, four, generations. I noticed this, for instance, in Kalimpong, in the case of my Nepalese friends, because the Nepalese marry very young, they reproduce very quickly, so you can see several generations comparatively fast. I noticed that the same features, whether good or not so good, were definitely handed down from father to son and to grandson, so no doubt there is a hereditary element. On the other hand no, it isn't always like that, and according to traditional Buddhist teaching good looks are the result of good karma, in the case of both men and women. If you are handsome or beautiful in this life, it means, so it is said, that you've had a good temper in your previous life. It is anger tends to distort the features, it is said. So if you are good looking now it means you had a very calm, sweet, equable temper in your previous life. If your features are all ugly and twisted and misshapen and angular, and scored with deep lines, and all the rest of it, well you probably constantly used to get angry. Anyway that is the traditional explanation. Whether we take it literally or not, it's difficult to say.

Anyway, a sweet and pleasant disposition, a sweet and pleasant smile can transfigure even the ugliest features, so there's hope for us all! (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: Do you find that people get more attractive as they get into the spiritual life?

Voices: Yes.

S: Well, this illustrates the same point exactly because when you get into the spiritual life what do you get more into? Positive states of mind, at least, more emotionally positive states of mind, and that will mean some expression of that through your features, and therefore you will look better, whatever your previous advantages or disadvantages may have been. You look better looking. Your features will not have changed but the expression will be much more pleasing, because it expresses positive emotions, either of love, metta, friendliness, gentleness, sensitivity, awareness, intelligence, can express all those things. So you'll tend to make a much more favourable impression on people after you have had some experience of the spiritual life.

[End of Tape 17 Tape 18]

Mangala: I suppose some sort of conventionally beautiful people actually don't really benefit...

S: Yes.

Mangala: I think some of the more conventional maybe Hollywood...

S: Thirties film stars.

Devaraja: Roger Moore. [Laughter]

Nagabodhi: Something that still I don't feel clear about is there seems to be a lot going for Greek love, at least so far as friendship, but once the sexual element enters that I don't see... I can imagine how obviously as the young man grows up, he loses perhaps that which made him attractive so the chances of permanent attachment are much smaller. But I would have thought there is still going to be the danger of this kind of cross-circuiting between emotion, sex, pleasure and so on, just equally. Yet I do feel the suggestion that it's OK within the Movement people have often made a vow not to get involved with a woman but nevertheless to be open to getting into sex with men. As if that's OK, that's safe. Once you've put women

out of mind you don't have to worry any more about you and sex. Would you say it is much safer ground?

S: I think it probably is to the extent that there's much less likelihood of building your nest together. Do you see what I mean? But apart from that, yes no doubt, as I said yesterday, to the extent that sex and emotion, especially say negative, neurotic, possessive emotion, can be mixed up together, one must be quite careful about keeping these two things separate, and that no doubt would apply to this sort of relationship as much probably as to any other.

Nagabodhi: This thing of the admiration of the admiration of the young man becoming a catalyst for integrating your own angelic qualities, it would be if you integrate them, if you just simply fall in love with this young man and.....

S: Yes exactly. It would be just projective.

Padmaraja: So such a relationship then implies that one of them, the elder one, is quite firmly rooted in the Dharma, quite emotionally mature, as you said fully human, and.....

S: And in any case the relationship is supposed to be an educational one which suggests that he should be able to be an educator, which he could not be unless he was a quite integrated person himself.

So what you are talking about is a much more specialised form of that sort of relationship, not simply a relationship between an older and a younger person, an older and a younger man, but a relationship between a man who is not only older but spiritually mature and able to be an educator.

Padmaraja: Yes right, the whole orientation of the relationship towards growth and development within a tradition. It just seems that - just speculating here but - in a way maybe it would be good, it would be quite convenient and quite constructive to introduce that into the movement, inasmuch as you do get young people coming along, it's touch and go because part of them obviously quite wants to evolve but there's this whole other part which maybe can't get satisfied in the Sangha, in that sort of way, the whole sexual side, and so they have to go outside and very often they're taken away. It would be good to be able to include that as well and work with it.

S: It's quite a revolutionary thought in a way. But there is the question of whether one can introduce, well in a sense can one introduce anything - things in a way develop on account of people's needs and the way that they see things within the overall pattern.

Mangala: Is it like this anyway, that the sexual needs can't be fulfilled within the movement?

Padmaraja: Well very often not, inasmuch as there aren't many people probably even capable of having that kind of relationship.

Mangala: Perhaps not having a Greek Love relationship but maybe that's not what the person wants. He might just want ordinary sex with somebody, you know!

Padmaraja: Well maybe if they also had the other kind that would help keep them on the rails. Again with the Greeks you'd have a wife, you'd have a mistress, you'd have a young lover. If you had a mature adult with whom you had a really close, emotional intimate relationship with, then I feel that would stop you from just going off at a tangent. You could have a relationship with maybe somebody outside but that would keep you grounded.

Mangala: I think the point here is just if - if you have this relationship. I mean it's not something you can just say well look there's a mature man just over there if you go over and introduce yourself you can have this wonderful relationship! [Loud laughter]

Padmaraja: But in Ancient Greece I think it was these things that were almost arranged, they were very formally.... There was just this whole link to the father kind of approving of the relationship, courtship, the esteem developing, the basis of friendship before it becomes sexual of any kind.

S: That's true but it did take several hundred years to evolve that, and the original context was of course that of war, and the comradeship between people who were fighting side by side.

Padmaraja: Well in a sense that's the situation we're in anyway.

S: True, but then it did take several hundred years for that to evolve. It might be possible to speed that up, and this is why I said you can't just sort of decide to have an institution as it were. It just has to be something that evolves naturally as you actually feel the need of it and see the sense of it.

Padmaraja: I certainly wasn't suggesting that we just introduce it.

S: Not like Dateline or.....

Padmaraja: Maybe introduce the possibility, so people can become aware of an alternative, of a whole way of evolving.

S: The important thing is just to air the idea, so that at least it is there as a possibility for those who are interested in following it any further.

Mangala: I think it has been aired for the last six months or a year.

S: A little bit.

Mangala: It's been in the air anyway.

Nagabodhi: I'd say about the last two or three years.

Padmaraja: I would say and really quite strongly. I would say it was almost an element of the FWBO.

S: Oh! I can't say that I've yet been present at a discussion when it was given any proper airing at all as distinct from just being mentioned in passing, even that not very often, but perhaps it has been talked about more than I have known.

_____ : I'm talking about just private conversations really, not.....

S: Not official discussion as it were, not minuted discussions.

_____ : Or even possibly at an Order meeting.

Derek: One problem I would foresee would be jealousy. In the normal kalyana mitra - mitra relationship, that kind of side, it wouldn't come in, whereas it could if there was that kind of

emphasis.

S: Yes. In connection with sexuality as we usually experience it, jealousy is quite an important component. Well not in the sexuality as such but in the emotions that usually go along with the sexuality, so to the extent that sex came in there would be the possibility of those sort of emotions coming in which usually are associated with sexuality in our actual experience. Possessiveness, jealousy and so on, that would certainly be a thing to watch.

Mangala: I think what's good is that the whole sort of idea, the whole sort of possibility of there being say an attraction for an older man say of a younger person and vice-versa, and the possibility of that being something positive in the development of both of these people, I think just the recognition of that is almost as much as you can do in a way, and bring it out that that exists potentially and if it exists it can be a good thing.

S: Well it's in a way analogous to the recognition of say the possibility of family-type spiritual communities. This is sort of recognised and I've even sort of suggested quite strongly to some people that it would be a good idea to have family based spiritual communities, but it's up to them to take it up or not. Though I've stressed this quite strongly with certain people, including some married people, that that is a possibility, no one in recent years has shown any inclination to take it up. Well fair enough, you just indicate the possibility and you make it clear that that possibility has a place if there are people who want to follow it up, but it's up to them to see whether it suits the needs of their particular temperament and stage of development and so on. So one can in fact do no more than that - to recognise the possibility so that those who do feel themselves adapted to that sort of possibility will know that, yes that has its place. But you can't really do anything about it. As I found with the family based communities, they just didn't come off and I had several heart to heart talks with various people, various couples. But yes, they were quite interested at one stage and even had some tentative plans but in the end it all came to nothing. So one can only put ideas around, discuss them, perhaps amongst themselves,

Mangala: It does feel like - well it indicates a kind of lack of the fact the I suppose in normal society where most people have been, let's say brought up or educated, there's no sort of place has been made for the possibility of this type of relationship.

S: Not officially anyway.

Mangala: Certainly not as being a healthy thing anyway you know, and I think just to open up that this possibility exists and that it can be a healthy one.

S: Well in the case of an ordinary school usually if anything like that happened it would be considered grounds for asking for the teacher's resignation. So even the fact that one can look at in a positive way and refer to it as that, in itself is quite a big thing. Even if nothing further than that does happen.

Padmaraja: Could the relationship between a younger and an older male in a sense be regarded as a step up from just a straightforward attraction between a man and a woman. If the male is projecting outside onto a woman what he needs to integrate in a sense, having integrated that to quite a large extent, it would seem, having become that to some extent, the next step up would be to become more seraphic, and the natural progression would then be to find an object which was more androgenous, more subtle, but could take this subtler projection.

Mangala: I almost feel you're almost trying to defend something which I don't think anybody's actually attacking. I feel you're almost trying to defend the right to feel this sort of

attraction.....

Padmaraja: I don't make any bones of the fact that that's me. But I'm very interested and maybe I'm talking quite emotionally because I'm trying to find the words and I'm finding it quite difficult to communicate something which I feel to be quite subtle inside myself.

S: Also something for which no vocabulary really exists in a way.

Devaraja: Would you say that if one evolves from a male-female relationship, that one integrates that, would you say that, would you say that's the likes of a horizontal integration so that the evolution onto an erotic relationship between a younger man and an older man would be a vertical integration of something to take place.

S: One can put that in other terms. I think actually this is already predicted by Plato - that there is an attraction between opposites and there is also an attraction between similars. Especially similars in different stages of development. So an attraction between opposites is more projective and more intensely polarised by virtue of the very fact that it is an attraction between opposites. According to Plato, as far as I recollect, the attraction between the sexes, that is to say male and female, is of this nature. It is more of an attraction between opposites, therefore more projective, therefore more polarised, in a certain way more intense. But then the attraction between persons of the same sex who resemble each other more, is less polarised, therefore less projective, or projective in a more refined way, and with less, in a sense intensity, but with less tension. And also any difference is more a difference of degree, not a difference of kind. Do you see what I mean?

Mangala: Given that that's actually the case are you in fact saying that one indicates a higher sort of level of development?

S: Well if one defines it or looks at it in this way, then yes virtually it is that which one is saying.

Mangala: And in saying that are you therefore saying that people should be trying to develop an attraction for people of their own sex?

S: I don't think it's anything you can try to do, because it depends exactly where you are at any stage of moment and what your actual needs are. You have to keep close to your actual needs rather than to try to go according to a preconceived scheme or ideology.

Mangala: Could you therefore then say that let's say call it homosexual love or Greek love or whatever, that the people involved in that are on a higher plane of spiritual development?

S: No I wouldn't like to make that statement as a general rule - no. Because after all there are different kinds of, to use the expression homosexual love or attraction, some of which frankly just don't seem very healthy at all. I wouldn't like to include those in the same way.

Mangala: You mean in an emotional.....

S: I mean outside the immediately spiritual, educative context.

Mangala: In that the emotional and sexual elements might be confused and completely neurotic.

S: Well yes. Bad imitations of even bad heterosexual relationships, sometimes really bad, and also other sort of - what shall I say? - I don't like to use the word 'perverted' but at least

sort of psychologically perverted, not morally perverted, when you get for instance, without wanting to be condemnatory, things like transvestitism and when you get young men dressing up in women's silk stockings and things like that and parading themselves like women, you can't feel that this is very healthy in any way! Do you see what I mean? So one has to be a bit careful here. I'm hope I'm not just exhibiting some prejudice. I have nothing against such people but I really can't feel that it constitutes any kind of development for anyone.

So one can't really generalise about intra-sex relationships as distinct for inter-sex relationships. So I think one has to be very careful what one is actually talking about.

Mangala: So do you think what you said then about attraction or what Plato said about attraction between similars being less projective and less polarised.....

S: This applies to normal healthy people of the same sex. It wouldn't apply necessarily to people of the same sex who are not particularly healthy and not particularly normal, if you see what I mean. One does sometimes see relations between say two men, with or without sex, can be very polarised and very projective. They aren't automatically put in a spiritual bracket just because it's two men who are involved.

Mangala: I suppose ideally too you could say a heterosexual relationship where it's not so polarised and not so projective.....

S: One could say to the extent that it was less polarised, to that extent it would be more - I won't say spiritual, that would be going too far - more integrated. One does sometimes find between say men and women relationships which are comparatively less polarised. Either because the individuals concerned are more mature, or because they're not either extremely masculine or extremely feminine. They're both maybe a little bit androgenous, and to that extent there's less polarisation. One does find sometimes like that. But if it's an intensely masculine man and an intensely feminine woman whose lives are in fact emotionally very healthy well it's sure to be a highly polarised relationship.

Mangala: In the case of say the Greek love thing, could you not say that there's quite a polarisation there and a lack of integrity there as well?

S: Well if it is the kind of educational relationship that Padmaraja is envisaging, yes there is a degree of polarisation but it is more a vertical than a horizontal polarisation. Not a polarisation of two different kinds, but a polarisation of two different degrees of development of the same thing. Two different degrees of physical development, hence the age difference, and two different degrees of maybe individual development let's say, or even spiritual development, hence the spiritual difference, and the possibility of the educative relationship. So that is certainly less polarised and to that extent closer to integration, and therefore less liable to one-sided or neurotic or unhealthy development. But this isn't just say a homosexual relationship in the general sense. There are many many pattern of homosexual relationship which are from outside this possibility altogether, and far below it.

Mangala: Just being on a purely horizontal level, as it were.

S: Yes, at best.

Padmaraja: I've heard the term 'Seraphic instinct'. Do you know that term?

S: Ah, no I don't.

Padmaraja: I think Wilson Laing uses it in connection with I think with Wilde in his

relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas and also I think Shakespeare and the person at Southampton, the guy who dedicated () to. I mean some people believe he did.

S: I'm not so sure that Oscar Wilde was particularly seraphic but anyway that's by the way.

Padmaraja: No but he was seeing Alfred Douglas in that kind of way.

S: Ah yes fair enough but again it was that particular relationship that was a very messy one. Certainly one could say that Oscar Wilde wasn't a very pure example, a chemically pure example of seraphic love by any means!

Padmaraja: But the instinct was there basically.

S: Yes, perhaps he just hadn't any guidance or anything to go by.

Padmaraja: He was an incredibly indulgent person anyway, that's the impression I get. Maybe he should have had a teacher other than Socrates. I know he read the Greeks. He was a classical scholar but he was also very brilliant and individualistic, probably to keep him on the rails. A very talented person. It seems such a pity that he ended up the way he did.

S: Well you could say that perhaps at that time there was no one around really to keep anybody on the rails spiritually, virtually, at least in that sort of area.

Manjuvajra: I'm not sure how to phrase the question - it might take me a while. One often finds the connection between a valuation of the Greek way of life with what I would regard as more oppressive social political regimes. And that correspondence prejudices me I think against the Greeks.

S: Or it makes you think.

Manjuvajra: It makes me think, yes.

S: Well what is the connection? Is there a logical connection or is it fortuitous or is there always that connection in fact?

Manjuvajra: It does seem to happen. I haven't made a very accurate study of it but one usually finds that kind of connection. Let's say that generally people who prize and value the Greeks, the whole Greek way of life, are frequently let's say politically to the Right, or they were Monarchists.

S: Or militarists.

Manjuvajra: Or they were militarists. The architecture that was built, it's all very impressive, big, dominating, oppressive even.

S: That's not true of the Greeks.

Manjuvajra: No but it's certainly true of.....

S: quite small scale.

Manjuvajra: But the cultures that followed the Greeks and tried to copy their architecture had a lot of oppressive qualities.

S: This is true but had it anything to do with this particular aspect of life. For instance the Roman architecture is very oppressive but the Romans didn't follow the Greeks particularly in this aspect of life, did they?

Manjuvajra: It was there.

S: It was there, it was there throughout the ancient world, but it wasn't idealised in the way that it was among the Greeks, but the Greeks certainly didn't have this sort of oppressive aspect in their architecture. This is one of the things that strikes you when you go there, how small everything is actually, how human scale it is and this was quite deliberate. Even the Parthenon is not all that big. There were lots of dinky little temples. In modern Greece they go in for dinky little churches hardly bigger than dolls' houses.

Padmaraja: All of Greek architecture I believe is based on ().

Manjuvajra: I'm not going to get caught up in Greek architecture, but I was in Berlin last year and I saw some of the examples in East Berlin of mock Greek architecture.

Padmaraja: Look at Gothic architecture. It's () madness, it's something more akin to the German nature and ideal than the Greeks.

S: I take your point but I think the explanation is quite simple. After all historically, if you go back where are the origins of what, for want of a better term, where are the origins of homosexuality, where does it tend to spring up? What sort of situation?

_____ : In the arts.

S: Well more broadly than that.

[Various suggestions to which Bhante says No, no, no, no, no no!]

_____ : Single sex situations.

S: Single sex situations - yes. So in ancient times which were the two great single sex situations?

_____ : The army.

S: The army. When you went away to fight and you were far away from your womenfolk and didn't take them with you because after all you didn't expect women to fight, and what was the other situation?

_____ : The church.

S: The church, the monastery. So you've got two kinds of contexts within which this particular phenomenon develops - the militaristic and the cultural cum spiritual. So it's associated with these two possibilities. It certainly is associated with militarism or can be for that simple fact. So it has got a twofold historical origin as far as one can see. So one can either utilise it for the one purpose or for the other. It has that sort of ambivalent nature. It isn't essentially either the one or the other. It can bind you together when you go off to fight the enemy, it can bind you together in pursuit of a spiritual ideal.

_____ : You don't think there's anything inherent in let's say the broader Greek view that gives rise to this later?

S: Well the Greeks were very hostile to tyrants of every sort. They believed that you could quite ethically assassinate them.

_____ : But there was a tyrannical element even in their own social structure in that.... I mean we talk about the Greeks as though we're talking about the whole society but in fact we're not - we're just talking about the very small society of systems.....

S: Well usually we talk about Athens, we don't really refer to Sparta, we don't refer to Macedonia and several other states. We usually when we say The Greeks we think of Athens in the Golden Age of Pericles which lasted about forty years! That's what we usually mean when we speak of the Greeks isn't it!

_____ : But even at that time in Athens the fact that these people could engage in their sort of enquiries was because there was a broad base through the slaves.

S: This is true, but that leads one onto things like well what was slavery like among the Greeks, etc., etc., and what else was one to do when there was no technology, when there were no labour saving devices. You see if you look at the Victorian Age why were all the Victorian writers so productive? Well they were practically all born to the Middle Classes and they had a small army of servants in their houses. Their wives and mothers and sisters were completely relieved of domestic labour, and they devoted themselves to making the great man's life easy so that he could produce! You read the biographies of some of the great Victorians, they were surrounded by concerned female relations, copying their manuscripts, keeping everything quiet for them, seeing that they go their meals at the proper times, organising the servants. I'm sure this is why the Victorians produced so much! If you're a writer nowadays you have a little flat and you have to do your own shopping and you have to wash your own clothes or even go to the launderette yourself. You haven't got all those facilities and you could say well the fact that the household skivvy made possible the productivity of the Victorian writers invalidates that in a way or that it is essentially bound up with that, but that would be an oversimplification no doubt.

So I think it's much the same with the Greeks and slavery. Certainly it's regrettable that there was slavery among the Greeks as it would be among any people, but I don't think that in view of the technological limitations of time you can say that there was an essential connection between slavery and any of the more positive features of Greek life. In the sense that you couldn't have that more positive feature without say having slavery or having militarism, you see.

We could have any positive feature of Greek life nowadays without slavery because you don't need slaves. So it is not essentially connected with slavery, and so it may be that the homosexuality of the Greeks was bound up with militarism - grant it for the sake of argument - it doesn't mean that it would necessarily be bound up with militarism at any other time or with any other people.

You might say that you find homosexuality associated with monasticism - it doesn't mean that wherever you find homosexuality there's a tendency to monasticism! It certainly doesn't follow.

Nagabodhi: There seem to be several other things. A lot of militaristic set ups, dictatorships, don't subscribe to Christian values. The Greeks didn't subscribe to Christian values and people tried to make an equation of the Greeks had an ideal of the kind of human nobility and a lot of dictators will appeal to some ideal of human dignity to benefit their world. The Nazis used Nietzsche.

S: The Nazis also incidentally were very much against homosexuality. There were some well known Nazis who practised it but actually they penalised homosexuals with very severe laws.

_____ : There was a curious kind of hypocrisy about it.

S: Hypocrisy. Hitler I believe was personally very much against homosexuality. He wanted people to breed. He presumably felt that homosexuality would not encourage the production of a greater number of German citizens and he wanted as many German citizens and soldiers as possible so that the German state could expand.

Mangala: Where do you think the general public feeling against homosexuality started. Is it because it seems anti-natural?

S: In the West it's definitely Christianity.

Mangala: Why does Christianity condemn it? Because it didn't reproduce the species or....

S: Well that goes back to the Jews of course. The Jews were very much against it. But then that's rather odd because the Greeks weren't and they were as much concerned about reproduction of the species. But the Jews were definitely against it and the Christians inherited that prejudice, and as soon as Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, then there were so many things which formerly were permitted which were then prohibited and there were severe penalties and this was one. And that has remained the position in Europe right down until the present day practically.

Dharmamati: I think the idea was that the sexual act without reproduction was lustful and that there would be no other reason for doing it.

S: This again was the attitude of the Jews, that the purpose of sex was procreation and any other use of it was sinful- which is still the position of the Catholic church.

Padmaraja: Do you think that with the Jews - this is a bit of a tangent - that with the kind of nomadic life they were leading and things, that that was more a question of hygiene?

S: Well it was very important for all primitive peoples to multiply, and therefore there tended to be an emphasis on multiplication and having children and clearly that was good for the group, that was good for the tribe, and what was good for the group, good for the tribe, came to be regarded as right and then as morally good in the more absolute sort of way. There was no adaptation to changing circumstances. It has been suggested that with the expanding population that the world has now, that non-reproduction should be accounted a virtue and therefore those qualities and those practices which tend to conduce to non-reproduction of the species and therefore solution of the population problem to some extent, should be regarded or even are beginning to be regarded as moral and as good.

Mangala: Do you think that's actually happening?

S: It has been suggested that this is what is happening. I'm not so sure, but the suggestion has been made.

Devaraja: What's the attitude in traditional Indian society and also in Buddhist society towards homosexuality.

S: Well the Hindu attitude, which the Buddhists inherited originally was that sex was definitely for procreation and the more procreation the more reproduction the better. The Indians in some ways were more extreme than any other people. For instance it is said that the father, especially the Brahmin father is guilty of as many murders as his unmarried daughter has months, has menses, because a menstruation means that the female has not conceived when she could have conceived, so in keeping her unmarried he is guilty of murder of all those potential children. So this is how extreme the Hindus were, and the modern Hindus inherit that. This is one of the reasons why there was this outcry against Mrs Gandhi, one of the big things that toppled her, as the result of which she lost the last General Election in India, because she really prosecuted vigorously the government mass sterilisation campaign. It went so much against Hindu feeling, she didn't prepare the ground sufficiently.

It's also significant that the ex-Untouchable Buddhists take much more kindly to family planning than do their Hindu neighbours, because they've, as it were, officially broken with Hinduism and with Hindu ideology and they're much more open to the idea of limiting their families and the more thoughtful of them have already started doing this, and several people whom I met, several couples whom I met in India - ex-Untouchable Buddhists - when I asked them how many children they had they said, two and we're not having any more, in a quite determined matter of fact sort of way. That represents a big change from the Indian, from the Hindu mentality, and in some cases they were quite young people, but they'd had two children, they were not going to have any more.

Nagabodhi: You can see that they may end up having the same problem as the nuclear family that we have in the West.

S: Yes, unless of course a number of brothers and their wives remain living under the parental roof. So this is the Indian attitude which was inherited to some extent by Buddhism, but with Buddhism in any case reproduction was invalidated by the stress placed relatively on celibacy. Orthodox Hinduism is very much against celibacy and is against monastic celibacy, even against monasticism to some extent. But in the case of Buddhism this value placed upon reproduction was undermined by the fact that importance was attached to brahmacharya, to chastity. [Pause]

[slight break in recording]

..... asked what he thought about homosexuality and he gave his famous reply that he thought that whatever was against nature was to be encouraged! [Laughter] You see what he meant?

_____ : I can see that as a really good principle, in that it just does make you reflect on so-called normality and whether it is limited to that or not. It sort of shakes you out of just automatically accepted mores and prejudices.

S: That is why I think it is important at least to consider, at least to recognise the possibility of the existence of various alternatives in different aspects of life. Otherwise one's thinking becomes very rigid and very confined. Some years ago if we mentioned to people, if I mentioned to people in lectures that they might consider the possibility of not working full time but working part time and devoting the free time that they thus gained to the study of the Dharma, this was quite revolutionary. They'd never thought of that before, and even to hear me say that and to then discuss it afterwards represented quite a shaking up in their thinking. None of them had dreamt of actually being able to put this into operation. I made that sort of suggestion even when I was at Hampstead but nothing happened there. It was only after the Friends got going, then I made the suggestion again and some people started, very cautiously and tentatively, taking it up, and actually changing from full-time to part-time work, and

using the rest of their time for the study of the Dharma, a bit of extra meditation, helping out with the running of the FWBO, which was of course very small then.

Mangala: Actually when you think about it like single sex communities are now quite (developed). It must have seemed really strange and really quite bizarre and revolutionary in a way for most people.

S: Well a French woman came to see me, a mitra I think actually she was, who was going back to France and she quite liked the Friends but she said it would be quite impossible, according to her, to introduce single sex communities into France. They would be automatically rejected, people would just laugh at the very idea. I wasn't so sure. I said well they might laugh to begin with but nonetheless eventually I think if a sufficient number of people were really sincere about their spiritual development, you would eventually get single sex communities emerging in France. But this is what she said, and yes she may be correct as far as the early days say of any movement in France was concerned.

But this is characteristic of spiritual life generally. You start off by feeling certain things are out of the question, unimaginable, you can do everything except that. You don't mind what you do to evolve but you're not going to give up your full time job. You don't care what you do to evolve but you're not going to leave England etc., etc. You might well end up by the sheer momentum of the spiritual life will result eventually in your doing just those very things.

So it is quite good to discuss these sort of things that Padmaraja's brought up at least as a sort of mind-stretching exercise, even if it isn't taken any further than that.

_____ : Heart-stretching as well.

S: Heart-stretching as well, yes, or even mind-blowing!

[End of side one side two]

Devaraja: community as a whole you would get a sort of phenomenon but actually it is almost like an institution, I think could have a very strengthening effect on the movement because I think it just doesn't apply..... if I could give something that would be analogous it would be the sort of degree of intensity in a training situation that one experiences in an apprenticeship, which one doesn't experience in the normal school education (process).

S: I think though one has to bear in mind one thing, that the sort of situation of sort of relationship that Padmaraja has outlined requires a very high degree of intense idealism, and I think the importance of that is in that sort of relationship, is evident, and that sort of intensity of idealism is not very common and it would be necessary to develop intensity of idealism in a general sort of way with regard to life itself, before I think that sort of possibility could be envisaged for more than a very limited number of people.

Padmaraja: Could you say what you mean by intensity of idealism?

S: Well a very intense very alive positive emotions directed towards a very definite spiritual goal. So what you've said, the sort of relationship you've described, implies that sort of intensity of idealism for its success, and it could not succeed in the absence, I think of some degree of that sort of idealism. Though one would also have to pay attention to the development of that kind of intense idealism in a more general way. I mean if it wasn't sort of pervading the movement or the society as a whole it could hardly be expected to pervade that particular area.

Devaraja: Would you say that that sort of pervading idealism, would you say make that synonymous with the Bodhicitta?

S: Well that would be at a highly metaphysical, not to say transcendental level. I'm not thinking of anything so lofty as that actually. I'm thinking of idealism in a much more general human, even humanistic sort of way, and the idealism is I think very much lacking, at least certainly institutionalised. Idealism is very lacking today in this country. I'm not using the word institutionalised in a negative way, but in a quite neutral way. I'm sure there is a lot of idealism around, especially among young people but it doesn't get channelled very well and easily becomes dissipated or wasted or misdirected, and the churches generally and the political parties generally have certainly not been channels for the expression of intense idealism.

Mangala: I suppose you have to be careful too maybe that the idealism doesn't become completely sort of pseudo material and pseudo refined, pseudo spiritual, to the extent whereby you can't acknowledge perhaps sexual feelings for someone or for something. You can't admit them into your life because you've got such a high ideal that that would seem incompatible.

S: Well that danger, if it is a danger is with regard to all aspects of spiritual life, or any kind of spiritual life.

Padmaraja: Another danger is the law of the land.

S: That's true.

Padmaraja: That could be quite a danger. If the establishment wanted to get at us and these sort of things were going on, that would be one way, as with the Christianity, the blasphemy thing.

S: Well all the more reason for developing one's intense idealism, if you see what I mean.

_____ : If you've got intense idealism presumably that protects you in a way from all the emotional difficulties that one might fall into as well.

S: I think I'd put it in this way - I regard intense idealism as I've called it, just on the spur of the moment, as involving very powerful refined emotions, emotions which are not weak because they are refined but which are powerful because they are refined. I think you can say that there is a tendency for powerful emotion to absorb sexuality to some extent and there's also a tendency for intense idealism to absorb powerful emotions to some extent. The lower as it were feeding the higher. Lower and Higher in sort of evolutionary terms, not in narrow moralistic terms. So I think if one has a powerfully and positively active emotional life, I think sex as such becomes less of a problem, and I think also if one has very definite ideals towards which one is very definitely committed, or to which one is very definitely committed, in a very intense sort of way, there are fewer emotional problems.

Nagabodhi: There's something I've been wanting to ask about. We talked yesterday about how pleasure gets usurped by the alienated emotions and so on, and what we were talking about was that it emerged that the senses in themselves and the experience of the senses was OK. I wondered whether in the same way you could then move another stage on to talk about emotion in the same way. Where emotion fits in. It was a bit like yesterday emotion, particularly when linked with the alienated consciousness was kind of the baddie of the peace. It was OK until the emotions got involved or pleasure was all right until the emotions

got involved.

S: Well the emotions are OK until the ego gets involved, you could say that.

Nagabodhi: And that means...?

S: Well the ego you could say is the alienated self-consciousness. There is more to it than that but it's difficult to go into it at the moment.

Nagabodhi: That's quite a good nutshell definition.

Derek: Could you say that it's the alienated self-consciousness which recharges negative emotions?

S: I think not only the alienated but the very alienated self-consciousness that is inseparably bound up with negative emotion. And especially neurotic negative emotion, most of all with neurotic negative emotion. We need to work out or to sort out our terminology more carefully. I shall have to do this by writing something - it's very difficult to do it just in the course of discussion. As I said I was thinking of writing something about evolution, progress and development, in the same way just a broad discussion of some of these other terms - the positive and negative are not very satisfactory terms. I was writing another letter a few days ago for *Shabda* and I used the expression 'the emotionally-positive' with a hyphen, because I wasn't satisfied with just saying 'positive' - it's too vague, so I used the expression, 'the emotionally-positive'. But even that requires further examination.

Manjuvajra: I'd like to equate this idea of intense idealism with what I'd thought of as passionate commitment, which....

S: Do you mean commitment in the Buddhistic sense or in the more as it were political sense?

Manjuvajra: Well as far as I'm concerned in the Buddhistic sense. So I would say that what I would like to see within individuals in the movement and in myself is a more passionate involvement.

S: Yes, well this view has been expressed by several people lately and I have said that I thought that the use of the word 'passionate' was in fact quite justified, was quite legitimate. I didn't think it would or could be misunderstood. It does suggest an aspect, or an element, of intense emotional investment and ardour and energy and it's just that which is required. Without passion you're not going to get very far in any direction. And people do seem too lukewarm. I'm talking about the sort of people that we usually meet or usually are in contact with. They do seem much too lukewarm, apathetic, unresponsive, stick in the mud, play safe, couldn't care less, seen it all before - that sort of attitude, rather than passionate.

Mangala: I've found when you look into Blake just a little bit the he seems to embody that sort of attitude especially in his aphorisms - *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* - so sort of positive and passionate. It's all very (unclear) . He says things like 'he who desires and acts not breeds pestilence', rather than negating our passions and it's more like really get into them or really sort of...

S: Although not get into them in an indulgent sort of way. I mean nowadays there is that danger very much with the encounter group ideology especially. It's really indulging your negative emotions again and again and again under the pretext of getting into them or exploring them. Blake would have called that 'Urizen exploring his dens'.

Anyway it's tea time. Is there any final comment before we wind up this part of the discussion perhaps and get on to the last of the ten precepts? Do you feel we've explored it enough, at least for the time being. It's been aired and ventilated sufficiently for the present?

Manjuvajra: I might be just putting a little cautionary note in. I get the feeling that we might go away from this and the word may spread that Bhante had said that Greek Love is a superior form of relationship and sort of therefore this is what we should be aiming for within the FWBO. And it becomes presented as everything that everybody should be moving towards.

S: Women included!

Manjuvajra: I haven't heard it that way but I think you're not saying that, you're saying that...

S: I'm saying that it's a possibility to be considered or a possibility to be borne in mind, and if any particular person feels inclined to pursue that possibility there's no reason why anybody else should say that he shouldn't be free to do so. I think the general sort of result of the discussion so far is no more than that. I wish people would sound that sort of note of caution at the end of every discussion! If you see what I mean.

Nagabodhi: Maybe this is not really the place to follow it through - I'm not sure how interested I am really in following it through - but a similar principle does apply for women, that a lesbian relationship can offer them what Greek Love.....

S: Sappho seems to have thought so. She had a sort of school for young girls didn't she on the Island of Lesbos, yes. But some people, some scholars say that Sappho herself was not lesbian in the modern sense, that she had been in fact quite misunderstood, and that she was a respectable married woman, and in any case she was known to have had a daughter and to have been in love with a young man and drowned herself when her love was not returned.

Nagabodhi: Is that all you're going to say on the subject! [Laughter]

S: Well I cannot be expected to know very much about love between women, if you see what I mean. Yes I know a certain amount about it, but no I will say a little bit. I will satisfy your curiosity. I refer you back to what I wrote in a letter to *Shabda* about my discussion with my Dutch friend in Sydney apropos of single sex communities. I'll just summarise that for the benefit of those who aren't Order members and therefore will not have read that letter. I have this very good old friend of mine in Sydney, a Dutch woman, a Theosophist with very strong leanings towards Buddhism whom I've known for many many years, but I hadn't met her for quite a while, nor her Swedish husband who is also a good friend of mine. I stayed with them in Sydney, and in her younger days as a Theosophist she had stayed in communities - I think before she married - and we were talking about communities because she's been getting the *FWBO Newsletter* and she was very interested in our communities and single sex communities, and she said to me one day that she thought the single sex communities were not a good idea for women. I asked her why, so she said that in her experience women tended to get emotionally attached and even hung up to a far greater extent than men, and she said that in her experience that if there wasn't a man around to become attached to, a woman would become attached to another woman, and she thought this an extremely unhealthy situation, owing to the intensity of their mutual attachment.

She say it really frankly as an almost negative kind of thing. So that if you got two women each with a very strong tendency to attachment and they came and attached themselves to

each other, you'd have a really quite dreadful situation. So she felt that this inevitably developed between women and therefore that they should not live together in single sex communities, they should live if at all in communities in mixed communities. But she thought that men had not this tendency and that for them single sex communities were in fact the best situation.

So if it is true, as she says, that women do have this tendency to strong emotional attachment and it does seem borne out by quite a bit of our experience with women in women's communities within the movement, it would seem rather difficult for an ordinary younger woman to develop a sort of educational relationship of the kind envisaged, even more difficult for them it would seem than for two men, an older man and a younger woman. I have heard a woman on the radio discussing the question of whether two lesbian women living together should be allowed to adopt a child, saying that in her opinion it was absolutely undesirable because usually the emotional climate between lesbian women was so intense and torrid and almost horrific that it was not a fitting atmosphere for a child to grow up in, and she thought it would be much more desirable if two men with a similar relationship were to bring up a child, rather than two women. She gave it as her opinion based on her experience of quite a number of lesbian relationships. She herself not being a lesbian.

So it may well be it doesn't work out quite the same for women. I've seen myself that women do seem to get into very heavy relationships and this is within the movement, in ways that I have not seen ever within the movement any men getting into, at least not so far. It's really heavy and 'torrid' is the word for it. You sometimes see it developing between mother and daughter. Mothers and daughters who live together, especially when the daughter doesn't get married, develop into such close relationships, so unhealthily close, in a way that I think father and son just never do. It would be unthinkable I think for father and son to get into that really claustrophobic relationship that mother and daughter, especially mother and unmarried or widowed daughter can get into, and I've seen these, several of them.

So there isn't quite an equivalent I think as between the male and the female relationships here. I offer this not with complete certainty but the indications seem to point to these sort of conclusions. Have you noticed anything of that sort? Ah!

Manjuvajra: I also notice that women in women's communities tend to form a much stronger group identity and they make more demands on the members of their communities to conform to the group community of that individual community than men's communities.

S: Do you think though that within the Friends though, within the FWBO, there are sufficient women's communities for us to be able to generalise as much as that?

Manjuvajra: I'm basing mine on just one actually.

S: You feel that is the case or has been the case with that one community, that they do demand a higher degree of conformity than do the men's communities? You don't think it's got anything to do with the fact that women's communities are newer within the Friends than the men's communities and they're still finding their way and that when they've done that and women's communities are much more an established fact of life, as it were, and there are more of them, they could become less demanding in that particular way. In other words I'm saying are women's communities necessarily like that. Or is it because they feel we've only got this one women's community and it is very important and therefore they make an extra effort to hold it together. That might involve making more demands of that particular kind.

Manjuvajra: Yes. I was basing it on one community which wasn't *Amaravati* because I've had no contact with *Amaravati*.

Mangala: I feel that almost the idea of women living alone isn't really healthy somehow actually, in communities.

S: Not in the way that men are living alone. My Dutch friend definitely seems to feel that.

Mangala: It is a bit contrived or something. It's a bit like they're trying in an artificial sort of way to be independent or to assert themselves or to prove something, to prove that they're as good as men or something like that.

S: Well some women are perhaps! There are women and women. Some women might get along quite well in a women's community and it might be the best thing for them, but not obviously for those women who are mainly thinking of getting married and wanting to settle down in their own particular nest.

In many primitive communities and many primitive societies you have the men's log house as it were but I don't think you usually get a women's log house. They tend to remain at home until married with their parents, with their families.

Anyway we're getting into new ground, maybe slightly controversial ground, so perhaps we'll have a cup of tea.

Tea Break

Anyway we really are getting back to precept ten now. Let's finish this section because tomorrow we'll be dealing with the *Ten Things Not to be Avoided* which are really quite different. I suggest tomorrow we try if we possibly can to get through all those ten, but anyway let's see. Let's not prejudice the issue but if we can it would be good because they are of a different nature and very positive. But anyway just for now let's try to finish off precept ten which seems a pretty innocuous little precept. Would someone like to read it?

(10) Avoid such attachments that are inspired by avarice.

S: What do you think an attachment inspired by avarice is? Doesn't this seem a bit redundant?

Mangala: What does avarice actually mean?

S: Miserliness. One would have thought it would have been the other way round - avarice inspired by attachment.

Devaraja: Is it looking at attachment as having two possible associations? Attachment to the good and the beneficial and attachment.....

S: One could perhaps look at it like that. Avarice or miserliness is in any case a rather reprehensible quality, certainly not a positive quality. A tendency to hoard and accumulate and keep to oneself and not allow others to use even though one can't use oneself. The dog in the manger attitude. One doesn't see so much of avarice now as, or at least not hear as much of it as one apparently did in former times. Misers are characters in Victorian fiction. Do you get misers now?

Derek: Maybe it's a more subtle form now. Invest in shares.

S: Not so much sovereigns under the mattress sort of thing.

Nagabodhi: Isn't it simply that you can be a miser without people actually knowing about it. People don't know the status of your bank account, your investments.

Derek: Another thing is with inflation there's more of a tendency to go towards actual wealth than just monetary.

S: Well works of art are bought as investments. [Pause]

Avarice seems to be a particularly ignoble vice doesn't it. Nothing splendid about it at all.

Nagabodhi: It's a kind of dull, slothful insecurity. It's not even a kind of active insecurity.

S: It's usually associated with the old isn't it, perhaps unjustly. You think of a miser as an old man or an old woman, not as a young man.

_____ : Energiless, impotent.

S: Sitting up late at night in his dressing gown and nightcap, by the light of a single candle counting his gold coins, gloating over them.

Devaraja: It feels like it's directed towards the past as well.

Manjuvajra: It doesn't only have to be money does it?

S: No.

Manjuvajra: Your other possessions, like gifts you've got. Your things which you keep under lock and key.

S: Yes, you don't like others to have the use of them or enjoy them. Like the selfish giant in Oscar Wilde's story, since Oscar Wilde was referred to - he refused to allow the children into his beautiful garden. He wouldn't let them play there because he was a very selfish giant. So you could say that it was the same sort of attitude, the same sort of instinct as that of avarice, to keep it all to himself and to hoard it up as it were for himself and to gloat over and just enjoy it himself, or not even enjoy it for himself, just prevent others from enjoying it.

Dharmamati: So it's stopping the free flow of energy isn't it. [Pause]

Padmaraja: I once thought that to be the only, for want of a better term, the only sin. Anything else is easy to forgive except tightness. It's something that I really.....

S: Because also you could say that it's the exact opposite, the diametrical opposite of dana or generosity which is the first of the paramitas, so if you have any tendency in the direction of avarice you're just not cut out for a bodhisattva are you?

But meanness is used not only in the sense of avarice or avariciousness but in the sense of small-mindedness isn't it. Whereas the Bodhisattva far from being small-minded is big hearted. The miser is mean, pinching, narrow isn't he, small-minded, greedy, selfish, grasping. The complete antithesis of the bodhisattva who is heroic, generous, open-handed, broad, hearty, kind, affectionate, unselfish, benevolent and all the rest of it.

Nagabodhi: I remember when I left my job I had a talk with Mangala about how I was going to eke my savings out so that I could last as long as possible without having to get

more work. This was before co-ops, and I can't remember what I said I was going to try and live on, but he said if you do that, if you try and live that carefully there's a danger that you can develop a kind of small-mindedness which will start affecting other things. And I mean I have sometimes found that the case. Whether it's personally or in terms of Publications or worrying about money all the time, can have quite a cramping effect on your initiative, on your attitude to things. In the co-ops we are paying ourselves a very small amount of pocket money and so on and we are working quite constantly against financial shortage, and that is something I think that we have to be quite on our guard against - developing a kind of almost avaricious mentality.

Padmaraja: But surely you always find further that in my experience anyway people without any are much more generous than people with money. The working classes are usually much more generous and outward going than middle classes. I know that's a generalisation but that's my experience from my childhood. We didn't have very much but what was there was for anybody.

S: One mustn't sort of feel that one's style is cramped necessarily if one is not in the position to be a big spender. I mean some people attach psychological importance - I think it applies to men rather than to women - attach psychological importance to the ability to be a big spender and make a bit of a splash. When you go into a pub to be able to call for drinks all round and just fork out and all that sort of thing. So if you haven't got quite a bit of money or if you're having to be tight with money it does prevent you from behaving in that sort of way, but does it prevent you from being really generous? Because generosity is surely measured in terms of what you have, practical generosity, and if you don't have much to give, well there's no reflection upon your willingness to give or your spirit of giving.

So I'm not quite sure what actually Mangala was saying or whether perhaps you took what Mangala said in quite the way that he meant it perhaps. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: I took it to mean that if you are worried about the pennies all the time somehow you're going to develop a slightly blinkered approach. If your first question in relation to almost `anything is how much does it cost, can I afford it, it comes between you and the experience, between you and whatever it is. That's how I took it and that's how I

S: I certainly have known and still know people with a very limited amount of money to spend, but it doesn't seem to cramp them because they've maybe only got just enough money for tonight's cinema so they want to go and see the cinema tonight, want to see that film, they don't care whether it's their last two pounds, they just go and they spend the two pounds and they don't sort of think oh if I do that I won't be able to do something else tomorrow or the day after or next week or next month - no, they just don't think like that. It doesn't make them calculating. I think that depends more upon the temperament that you have already regardless of the amount of money at your disposal.

Padmaraja: Poverty mentality.

S: Poverty mentality, yes.

Manjuvajra: I think you can either have a lot of money or very little money. It's the poor range in between where you've got more than you need actually but not enough to not have to worry about it. That seems to be where that kind of attitude creeps in.

S: Or where you've got certain expectations of yourself as it were to live up to in the way of spending. Or you are too careful about the future as regards yourself at least, in a quite negative way. You don't live perhaps sufficiently in the present, whereas someone who does

live more in the present doesn't bother if he spends all he's got today, he's got enough self confidence or confidence in life just not to think what's going to happen tomorrow. If he belongs to a co-op he knows he's going to eat and drink tomorrow so even if he does fancy another film.

Nagabodhi: Then he spends all the co-op's money. [Laughter]

S: Well in that case he needs to worry about money, doesn't he!

_____ : I feel there's a danger if you've got too much money sometimes that you can give your money instead of giving yourself on occasions, i.e. parent buying their children's love.

S: True, yes. Well it's extraordinary how expensive some children's toys have become. It seems incredible that parents will just spend that amount of money simply on a toy. Not that toys aren't important but that children, so one is told, don't value the toy so much on account of what it costs but the fun they get out of it, and sometimes parents are quite annoyed that the child goes on playing with the broken old doll which isn't worth sixpence after they've bought it a really nice brand new expensive toy, expensive doll, that the child doesn't give a second look at. The parents think that the child logically will drop the broken old doll and at once take up with the brand new one. It doesn't do that. So a child's way of looking at things is quite different. You could give it a solid gold jointed doll, it wouldn't mean anything more to the child than if you were to give it a wooden one! So in the child's terms you wouldn't be showing your affection any the more by giving a golden doll. That would mean nothing to a child as an expression of affection. 'Oh look how much mummy loves you, she's bought you a real golden doll' - it doesn't mean anything to the child really. It could be much more happy with the old broken wooden one.

So instead of spending more time with the child or caring more for the child or speaking more with the child or communicating more with the child, the parents spend a lot of money on an expensive toy. But this is not an expression of affection because the expression doesn't reach the child. The parents are simply satisfying their sense of what is right and proper, their idea of what makes a good parent, i.e. a good parent spends a lot of money on his children or her children.

So yes it does become important not to give just the money and things which you've bought with money instead of in a way yourself, your own time, your own energy, your own care, your own thoughtfulness.

Dharmamati: Is this precept really questioning your needs and your wants, insofar as seeing the attachments around you or the possession that you've gathered around you and wondering whether they're really necessary. They've been sitting there for years!

S: Right, yes. It's as though underneath the attachments or underneath what looks like just straightforward attachment there's something deeper, there's a deep rooted avarice. An inability to let anything go. I think I've mentioned before the case of a friend of mine who, when two of his elderly aunts died found that over a period of thirty or forty years they had saved every paper bag and every piece of string that they'd ever received [Laughter] and the loft and several rooms were full of cardboard boxes, hundreds and hundreds of cardboard boxes containing neatly folded paper bags and little pieces of string just neatly rolled and twisted.

Nagabodhi: I bought some eggs from a farmer down the road the other day for dinner and just happened to see into his living room - he was an old man of about 86, a very cluttered

little living room absolutely stuffed with newspapers, stacks of *Daily Expresses*. He'd obviously got years of them there.

Padmaraja: Does avarice only apply to objects - things - or could you be avaricious and hang on to ideas or maybe resentments.

S: Usually of course avarice is a term applied solely in relation to material possessions, no doubt it could be extended metaphorically, but it isn't so far as I know. But perhaps avarice strictly speaking is of such a nature as to be intelligible or meaningful only in relation to material things. A really avaricious person only cares for material things because they are solid and concrete and you can really lay hold of them and keep them under your control. You can't be avaricious with regard to people really because they have a mind or a will of their own and they can move away. You can't really sort of lock them all up safely in a chest.

So avarice seems to be a term applied only in connection with material things, material possessions, in a very tangible sort of way. You wouldn't call a person avaricious even perhaps if he went on steadily accumulating his bank balance. Avarice is as though he's actually literally counting over the coins and gloating over them by candlelight. Avarice suggests that sort of attitude. He is actually sitting there in the middle of the room surrounded by all the things within reach, just like this old man surrounded by his newspapers presumably. It all has to be very tangible, very graspable, and you seem to have to be able to surround yourself quite literally with all these things, hoard them and heap them up all around you.

Nagabodhi: Kids with marbles.

S: Yes.

Mangala: It's all a matter of degree isn't it. There are degrees of that. I think what you just were saying was a very extreme sort of case, but I think you can see manifestations of it in all sorts of ways.

S: But I said as far as I know the standard English usage is to restrict avarice to material things.

_____ : You could say it's an almost neurotic craving.

S: Well it clearly is neurotic, yes. It is clearly a form of craving.

Mangala: It's probably just based on fear and insecurity isn't it.

S: Presumably. We say these sort of things quite easily - presumably it is, but perhaps it needs looking into more deeply than that. Perhaps in the old days sometimes there was genuine insecurity. There were no banks, there was no such thing as credit, no possible way of investment especially in times of danger and great upheaval and social disturbance. Perhaps you just needed to have pieces of gold. If you were old who was going to work for you, who was going to look after you? Maybe it was a necessity.

So avarice in the sense of neurotic accumulation would appear to be such only when there is no objective need for it. And actually, yes in this sort of way in this sense we do find that there is less avarice nowadays I presume. Because there is not the objective need for it. People don't have that fear of utter destitution that they used to have, even 40, 50, 60 years ago. That sort of destitution in this country it seems is no longer really a social possibility. People in the old days used to be really concerned about leaving enough money behind them

for a decent burial so that their body wasn't just thrown in the ditch as it were. It was a real concern of very poor working class people to leave ten or twelve pounds behind them for a decent burial. As though it was the ultimate disgrace if they couldn't do that.

[End of tape 18 tape 19]

If they'd done that well they could die content. Their life had achieved its object. It was almost as though the main object of your life was to leave behind you enough money for a decent burial. Sometimes you'd say well I want to die respectable, and that's what they meant. And if you could have a clean shirt put by for your shroud well so much the better. But we can hardly imagine that sort of state of affairs or that sort of mentality nowadays can we?

_____ : My grandmother died three years ago and she'd left the money for her burial with my mother.

S: It is that sort of generation, probably the last generation of that kind. The generation that must have seen the depression of the thirties.

Manjувajra: There is around a certain kind of avarice connected with time. Like wanting to closely guard your private time. Saturday is your day off so you closely guard that and.....

S: Even if there's nothing you particularly want to do on Saturday, yes, this is true. It's as though you've nothing to do that you could do with that time but you don't want to use it for anybody else, so in a way yes it is really avaricious. It's my time. Even if I have nothing to do with it I'm not going to let you use it. In other words I'm not going to do anything for you with or in that time. That is my time. This is quite strong. I think it even affects some people working in co-ops, or living in communities. Not that there is anything that they would like to do. It's not even a sort of desire for sense of space or freedom, it is a sort of avariciousness in some cases.

Manjувajra: I think its existence is also connected with something else which is unskilful, and that is the feeling that the rest of your time is not your time. It's as though the rest of your time has been taken over by something else. So you want to hold onto those little bits that you've got.

S: It's an ungenerous attitude, it's a mean attitude. It seems to be the attitude of many workers in this country nowadays, on the shop floor unfortunately. If you manage to sort of diddle the employer out of a bit of time it's almost a sort of noble achievement. Five minute's longer tea break and all that sort of thing. It seems really pitiable doesn't it.

Nagabodhi: I'm not sure but I suspect from things that I've read that there is a kind of breed of office avarice which is where you kind of somehow cheat stores out of rubbers and drawing pins, and fiddling little expenses. It doesn't in any way constitute the bulk of your work, but it's like a kind of miniature representation of a private fortune which you've stored up against the corporate entity that employs you, and I think there is quite a problem in industry because it spreads throughout.....

S: In some quarters I'm given to understand, it's even regarded as legitimate perks.

_____ : Your right.

Padmaraja: () Whenever you go into a cafe or restaurant he always gets a handful of sugar cubes! [Laughter] Always. At home we've got cupboards full of them! [Laughter] British Rail, BBC. I'd be talking to him and suddenly a hand goes out and.....

S: Perhaps you should transcribe this section of the discussion for his benefit! I'm sure that there are other things that people accumulate in this sort of way if one could but think of them. Also some people have the inability to throw anything away, even though it's not needed. They say oh it might come in handy some day.

Nagabodhi: I think following directly from that, social contacts. I think some people cultivate contacts in that way, socially and professionally. I definitely used to feel that around the BBC. An avaricious kind of attitude towards people. People who were on their way up. You never knew who'd come in handy when.

S: Perhaps that was ambition rather than avarice.

Nagabodhi: It had the same kind of greedy, even lethargic, element, where you simply kept something ticking over. It had not gusto to it. The kind of smile, the kind of effortless buying them the cup of coffee, just keeping something ticking over because you didn't know when it might come in useful. You must have experienced that in the film world.

Devaraja: I haven't really but I've seen it happening more in other departments other than design, the art the department.

S: The art department is more creative.

Devaraja: It's usually sort of production things.

Manjuvajra: There's an avarice of kind of jobs and responsibilities. Like if you've been given a certain area to fulfil, you may not actually be doing it properly. Somebody else comes along and want to take over from you.....

S: It's unwillingness to delegate also. I think this is connected up with this much bigger and more important general question of the private space. We've touched upon this from time to time, not in this seminar - outside, but we've never really gone into it. Not sufficient space in the sense of the space that you need for your own natural development. It's a private area in rather another sense. What do you think that is?

Mangala: It's a bit that you kind of think you hold in reserve where you can kind of cut off and just in a sense turn the energy back in on yourself, not necessarily in an enjoyable, creative way, but you determine, you just need to have something for yourself somehow.

S: Also perhaps something that is exempt from criticism and scrutiny. People say well that's my private life. So what do they mean? No one has any right to say anything about that.

Manjuvajra: It's the manifestation of those areas of yourself you don't want to develop.

S: Or you don't want others to see and you're not prepared to do anything about them. You feel that others will disapprove and you don't want their disapproval, but you don't want to give up those things or the things you do within those areas so you keep them as essentially private and then you invent a right to privacy almost, which is quite distinct from natural, needful growing space.

Mangala: It's just not being open in anything.

S: What about this whole sort of concept of the private life? It seems to me that this has been sort of touched upon in a way say within the context of the spiritual life and the spiritual

community. It's as though the whole feeling that one should have and has a right to a private life and a private space is incompatible with the idea of spiritual community. Not that one shouldn't have space in a spiritual community, not that one shouldn't have room to grow and not feel pressed upon by others from all sides, but that the idea, the concept of the right to a private life is different from that objective need for growing space. It's an unwillingness to allow certain areas or certain things that one does to be examined or looked at or evaluated by other people.

Manjuvajra: I was talking to someone a little while ago about this and we came up with two ideas. There was the private space which is non-kosher, and then there's personal space. There are some things that you just do by yourself, but you're open about it so it's not private, but it's still personal.

S: The private is often the secret. Of course it must be admitted that in the life of the group sometimes private life has been compelled to develop just because society, quite unreasonably refused to recognise the legitimacy of certain things that were needful for the individual quite genuinely. So that is what might be called defensive private life. But unfortunately that become sort of generalised and made into a sort of absolute right, even when the situation doesn't require it. I think this whole concept of private life arose much more during the Victorian period, especially in connection with sex. Some people had a very private life. For instance Dickens had a private life. In public he was the upholder of morality and the sanctity of the family life and the marriage bond, but actually, as an elderly man he was having an affair with an actress who became his regular mistress. But that had to be kept secret. He couldn't dare let his public, the Great British public, know that. So that all had to be kept as his private life.

For instance in the Middle Ages and even later, royalty habitually had no private life. Royalty did everything in public. It was a sort of spectacle as it were, quite ceremonial spectacle. The kings of say England and France, at least in certain centuries, even performed what we nowadays regard as their private functions - you see the expression - in public, at least in front of a group of courtiers. It was all part of the scene as it were. They felt no hesitation about that, and they ate publicly, even down to the Eighteenth Century. For instance at Versailles the king and the queen of France and the royal family could be eating at table and visitors and tourists, as we would call them now, were admitted through the door to look in at them, or even if they were of a very high rank, to be admitted into the dining room itself and to stand at a respectful distance and just see the royal family eat. The royal family didn't mind at all. They were quite accustomed to being a public spectacle. They didn't expect to have a very private life and didn't bother about the absence of it apparently. Much as you find it in India even. People don't have that sense of private life that people have in England. They do many more things publicly.

Dharmamati: There seems something exciting about secrecy. When I think back, when I was a youngster having a secret hideaway with other children somewhere which was.....

S: Well there was another aspect to that in the case of the developing individual, especially the young person. Privacy enables you to differentiate your individuality from that of other people. This is why it has been said it is a very significant discovery in the life of the child when he realises that he has the ability to tell a lie. Because it is said that the very young child thinks and believes that his parents know his thoughts, they know what he is thinking and that he cannot hide therefore anything from them. The young child apparently takes this for granted. But one day he discovers that actually mother or father did not know what he was thinking, and he discovers that because he has told a lie, and the fact that he believed that they can see or hear or understand everything that he is thinking, means that he doesn't differentiate his personality or his individuality from theirs. So he discovers one day that - say

mother asks him, 'what are you thinking? You were angry weren't you, you were thinking unkind thoughts about mummy weren't you?' 'Well no, no mummy I was thinking about buying you a lovely birthday present', and then he sees that mother believes this and then he thinks, 'she didn't know what I was thinking.' In other word she can't look right into my mind. We are not the same person, we are different people, and the discovery that he can tell a lie enhances the child's sense of individuality.

So in the case of the growing child and the adolescent, privacy is important because it helps to differentiate you from other individuals and not as it were merge with them in a sub-individual group type of way. This is why the adolescent I think, certainly in the West, tends to attach quite a bit of importance to privacy. The child doesn't. The very young child doesn't care about eating with other children, playing with other children, studying with other children, sleeping with other children, but often we find that the adolescent wants to have a private space; and I think - I've not really thought about this before, this occurs on the spur of the moment - I think that the adolescent feels the need of that private space because the adolescent is in process of becoming an individual. Is beginning to be in process of becoming an individual in the ordinary human sense, and needs to differentiate himself or herself from others.

For instance sometimes the adolescent will demand a separate bedroom. Maybe for quite a few years they've been sleeping in the parent's bedroom or along with a brother or sister, but they start demanding a bedroom of their own, a private room, a private place of their own where they can shut themselves up and where others cannot see them. It seems to be connected with this in the case of the adolescent in our western culture. In the East of course, in India say, it isn't a physical possibility so the question doesn't arise and maybe individuality is less sharply differentiated there in certain cases.

So this sort of need for privacy is sort of healthy. This is more like personal space to help you to become conscious of your own, in a way, separateness as an individual. Not alienation but just separateness, distinctness from other individuals and it's only then that you can develop something of self awareness and self consciousness. It's not a question of secretiveness or a desire to conceal anything.

Manjuvajra: Supposing a person was moving away from the domination of the group, be it the family or even a larger group, they might have to go away to some private area to experience something that would be rejected by the group....

S: Indeed yes.

Manjuvajra: .. in order to feel their own acceptance and confidence. Now in those cases with say someone living in a spiritual community, if they felt themselves to be under a group pressure within that spiritual community.....

S: Well if they did to that extent it wouldn't be a spiritual community.

Padmaraja: Well then they'd feel themselves to be under a pressure but they may not be any.....

S: Exactly yes, they might feel that other members of the spiritual community would disapprove when in fact they might be quite happy about it, and they wouldn't need any private space even though they felt the need for that. But certainly within the group that situation could arise, that you did need to demarcate that space within which you could be an individual, because the group did not allow you to be an individual.

_____ : When we go on solitary retreat, does that tie up do you think?

S: Well I'm sure it does, and this is one of the reasons why I think the solitary retreat is such a positive and valuable institution.

Nagabodhi: It's almost a spiritual adolescence.

S: Right, that's quite a good expression, one could say, yes. Spiritual adolescence.

Devaraja: Do you think that it can be related also to.... this looking for your own space as an adolescent ... well I suppose inevitably it must tie up with an area in sexuality as well.

S: Yes, because in our own culture adolescent sexuality is regarded rather ambiguously, so that could be an aspect of whole thing. Well for instance say in connection with masturbation it's generally felt well that is disapproved of. If you want to indulge in that you need a very private space of your own and no possibility of being found out. But in a society which didn't disapprove of masturbation or regarded it as quite normal and didn't even discourage it, the adolescent wouldn't be so bothered to find a private space for that particular purpose.

Derek: Are there such societies?

S: Apparently there are. Mainly quite primitive and backward. [Laughter]

Nagabodhi: No one ever went off by themselves so no one ever became an individual! [Laughter]

S: There is that to it as well. There is that aspect as well. Sometimes it's not a bad thing to be disowned by the group or there should be certain things that the group doesn't like you to do, because then if your need to do them is sufficiently strong or your urge to do them is sufficiently strong, you have to go off on your own and do them, separate yourself from the group at least temporarily and risk the group's disapproval, and be prepared to do that and that does help you to develop as an individual. So in a way the group by its very insistence of group norms helps to generate individuals! But of course if the group is too heavy handed well it will crush latent individuality or distort it. But perhaps there should be just enough of social control and potential disapproval just to almost require the individual to go off on his own so that he can be more of an individual.

Padmaraja: If he doesn't do that that just breeds the private life syndrome, doesn't it? Hypocrisy. You never leave the group, you stay in the group.

S: If the pressure is too great, if the pressure of the group is so great and you dare not risk alienation from the group, yes it breeds hypocrisy. We had of course a lot of that during the Victorian period. It is also said by foreigners to be the besetting sin of the British. Abroad the British are famous and notorious for their superb hypocrisy.

Nagabodhi: Within the spiritual community the level of communication and openness should allow.... I can see how you need time alone but in a way the communication you have within the spiritual community should or could actually be a catalyst for speeding up that differentiation. It needn't be something you need to get away from. If it's really working well then it's almost.....

S: I think within the spiritual community as such as a spiritual community, you would not differentiate yourself as an individual from other individuals. By getting away from the group there wouldn't be a group. You would differentiate yourself as an individual and intensify

your sense of individuality by communicating with other individuals. It's only when the people around you aren't individuals that you will feel the need of getting away from them and their group pressure in order to nurture the rather delicate plant of your own individuality and save it from the trappings of their big, ugly, heavy feet. But if you are all mutually trying to cultivate your little tender shoots of individuality, if you're all doing that for one another, there's no need to go away. You help one another.

Nagabodhi: In those circumstances you take on solitary retreats mainly because of the freedom it would give to () your practice.

S: Yes it's more than getting away from individuals as such.

Nagabodhi: (Unclear) [Transcriber's Note: Seminar being obscured by a very hippy-inspired version of the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" played on sitar, presumably on the tapes the seminars was recorded over!! - well it was the early 1970's! - *Silabhadra*]

S: Right yes. I think within a purely spiritual community you would very rarely feel an absolute need to get away from other people at least to enhance your sense of individuality because it was being enhanced all the time by your contact and communication with them.
[Pause]

[Short break in recording]

S: avoid such attachments as are inspired by avarice - Well quite a bit has come out of that. Maybe not quite so much as came out of the previous precept but quite a bit nonetheless.

Nagabodhi: This private life thing. I think it ties up with what we talked about the other day when you were talking about confession. There being some part of yourself that maybe you're not even aware of as being something you need to confess. It's almost as if this whole thing of private space, private time and so on links up. It's almost like whether you know why or not if you want room for manoeuvre, you want to keep your options open, there's a part of you that's not integrated, and it's almost a symbolic thing, you offer the sacrifice of some time or some space for it without actually knowing what you're doing. You never know when you might need it.

S: That's right, yes. Like that little piece of string which you won't throw away.

I felt this with one or two of the women who were thinking about moving into women's communities, especially in the case of *Amaravati* where they don't allow men. In one or two cases I could see, actually literally see, the woman's mental processes as she reflected upon moving in. It was as though she would not then have any sort of private space for private life of a particular kind and this didn't actually come out in the open. It was never actually discussed but I knew quite well that that was there and was an important factor.

Nagabodhi: And that's what would hold people back?

S: Oh yes. Both the fact itself, and also the fact that it could not be openly expressed and discussed. It would mean there would be a sort of rationalisation to sort of cover up the reluctance or the difficulty that was felt in making that change and taking that step.

Mangala: It's a kind of fear of really committing oneself isn't it in a way?

S: Well fear of cutting off a certain kind of contact or excluding a certain kind of possibility which you were unwilling to exclude but you didn't want to frankly talk about it or ask for it

to be taken into consideration. Not even acknowledge to yourself that that was a factor perhaps. This is also what I felt.

Devaraja: Presumably that would be the relationship. Is that what you mean?

S: Yes, or a certain aspect of the relationship. [Pause]

Anyway any further point or shall we leave it there?

OK that's it.

END OF SESSION NEXT SESSION

S: ... This morning to *The Ten Things Not To Be Avoided*, so could we start with number one please.

(1) Ideas, being the radiance of the mind, are not to be avoided.

S: So clearly here there are two things to be understood. What is meant by mind and what is meant by ideas. Judging by what follows in the second precept I think both terms can be taken in a fairly ordinary sense, and not in any highly metaphysical sense say or highly spiritual sense.

So what do you think, just taking the precept at its face value, what do you think is meant by saying that ideas, being the radiance of the mind, are not to be avoided?

Mangala: the mind kind of expresses itself in a way. It's almost like the playfulness of the mind, the activity. It's like it's not content just to sort of see things as they are in a way. I don't mean like in their truest nature, but I just mean not in a very passive dull, animal like way but to kind of play around with ideas and things and so on.

S: In a way it suggests the phrase 'bright ideas'. You sometimes get bright ideas. They don't amount to flashes of insight, they're nothing like that, but they have a certain brightness and even playfulness and they are signs of the activity of the mind. They are manifestations of the activity of the mind. They show that the mind isn't just dull and passive and inert. Not just taking things in.

_____ : Creativity.

S: Creativity, yes. So how does this show itself more specifically? In what sort of situations does it arise? And also why should anyone even think of avoiding ideas? In what sort of situation might that misunderstanding arise?

_____ : In meditation.

S: In meditation, yes, but you usually do avoid ideas in meditation don't you? Well in what sense do you avoid ideas?

_____ : You avoid discursive thought.

S: You avoid discursive thought. Discursive thought is a distraction in terms of meditation. But do you think that ideas here suggests discursive thoughts or something else?

Kamalasila: No. Bright ideas just sort of arise don't they, like a vision almost, and then you

start to think about them.

S: So you're suggesting say that in the meditational context bright ideas could well arise, could be permitted to arise, should not be avoided, but if you started making or trying to make those bright ideas the starting points of a series of discursive thoughts, then the discursive thoughts would amount to distractions. You should just as it were allow the bright ideas to come. They are sort of like flashes of insight, though not amounting to insight in the ordinary sense, but just leave it there.

Mangala: It's almost like a kind of aesthetic appreciation isn't it. You're not thinking how can I make use of this, what can I do with it and trying to cling onto it and direct it.

S: What about outside the meditational context? In what sort of other situations could ideas arise?

Padmaraja: I thought when you were saying ideas in the ordinary, accepted conventional sense of the word and I thought there you meant concepts, not necessarily spontaneous arisings but maybe.....

S: Well they are conceptual in form, aren't they. Idea is in this sense more or less synonymous with concept. The word idea itself in English is somewhat ambiguous. Originally idea meant the reproduction of a sense impression in the mind. This is called an idea of sense. But then idea assumed the meaning more of a concept. Something not necessarily of sense origin. In this sense it then develops into something which cannot be actually perceived through the senses. For instance an abstract concept. Say truth is a concept, you can't actually perceive truth by means of the senses. So the word 'idea' is rather ambiguous in English but as is generally used it corresponds roughly to concept.

Manjuvajra: Couldn't it also be as it were a sentence. Don't you sometimes say that you have the idea of setting up a certain sort of business, and there it's a conglomerate of concepts. It's more a.....

S: Well here idea is taking on a slightly different meaning. Here idea of a thing is more like the essence of a thing. This is a bit like Plato's ideas in the sense of an archetypal model in accordance with which actual things or concrete things are constructed. So you have the idea of say setting up this or setting up that, you see the sort of blueprint of it as it were. You have a sort of vision of the archetype of it and that is the idea for that particular thing. You see it more like a sort of picture. One meaning clearly merges into another. But it's instantaneous. It may take a lot of detailed working out, but the idea, the flash of insight, or even inspiration is instantaneous. An idea seem to be more of that sort, whereas discursive thinking is definitely serial and a bit painstaking, a bit elaborate.

Padmaraja: That also isn't really to be avoided either is it?

S: Well within the context of meditation it is to be avoided, if one is trying to concentrate. And also discursive thinking can also just be compulsive or it can be as it were directed. When for instance a scientist is trying to solve a problem his discursive thinking is very directed, but sometimes people think discursively in a very distracted sort of way for no particular reason. They're not using discursive thinking, they're just being used by it. But discursive thinking as such is certainly not to be depreciated. One of the precepts later on in this same section says, 'Reason', which is discursive thinking, 'being in every action the best friend, is not to be avoided.'

Mangala: With ideas here it could possibly..... I was going to say almost degenerate into a

sort of flightiness. I think that's quite a danger.

S: We have talked about advertising, I have been told that in the advertising industry bright ideas are very highly prized, and that there are some highly creative individuals who are employed by advertising agencies who don't actually do any work in a sense, in the more humdrum painstaking way, their function is to dream up bright ideas, just ideas, and they've got an office and desk and everything and sometimes someone is quite well known for the bright advertising ideas that is, that he's able to think up or dream up, they usually say, and that's all he does, and others work out the details or put them into actual operation.

So this is perhaps a perverted use of bright ideas, but you see the sort of thing that is meant, and it suggests a certain view of the mind, the mind as creative and productive in a spontaneous, even haphazard, even spasmodic sort of way, but that sort of activity of the mind, that radiance of the mind in the form of ideas, is not to be avoided. It simply says not to be avoided. You're to elect, certainly at least on certain occasions, to allow the mind to have its free play in that sort of way. In that sort of way you can get useful hints. Visions that can be helpful to you. Even blueprints of new things to be done. These ideas are sort of glimpses of new possibilities. You may on reflection reject some of them either as impractical or not appropriate or else because it's not quite the right time, but it's useful to have these ideas to consider. They mean that you get a bit beyond the usual routine and the usual perspective, the usual horizon.

So, ideas being the radiance of the mind are not to be avoided.

Padmaraja: In the connection would you say something about the imagination.

S: That's quite difficult. I mean imagination being again a very vague word, not properly defined. The imagination is the image making faculty, this is the literal meaning. And it's as though the image in a very broad sense, stands between sense experience and truth in a more abstract, or perhaps I should say more ultimate sense. And it's the image with which the arts, certainly the representational arts, certainly poetry is concerned very much with the image, painting is concerned very much with the image. So the imagination is that faculty if you like to use that term, which is capable of producing or creating images. Perhaps it's difficult to say much more than that. It requires a really thorough treatment. I don't think can be given in this sort of way with just an off the cuff statement. Coleridge has in England been the one who has started a more serious consideration of what imagination is, especially in the *Biographia Literaria* where he goes into it, and one of his great contributions was to distinguish imagination from fancy. He says imagination is not simply the same thing as fancy as people generally thought in his day. Fancy merely recombined things in a rather whimsical arbitrary sort of way. For instance supposing you know there is such a thing as a horse and you there is such a thing as a man, well you can combine the head and trunk of a man with the body of a horse, in that way you get a centaur - according to him this is just fancy at work. It is not imagination. Imagination is you could say a sort of faculty of reflecting truth in images, creating images in such a way that they are able to reflect a higher truth. And he goes into this in a famous chapter in the *Biographia Literaria* on the imagination.

So for the Romantic poets in general the imagination is a sort of higher faculty which functions in terms of images but images which are able to reflect a higher truth, a truth higher than discursive reason is able to attain, according to the Romantics usually. Blake had this sort of idea of the imagination. According to him imagination was the whole man. It's the sort of total faculty. It is not this or that faculty or this or that aspect of the human being. It's the faculty of the whole man. The whole man naturally sees things in terms of images, not in terms of abstract concepts devoid of content. Blake was very much against what we would call abstract ideas, therefore he was a poet and an artist, not a thinker in the abstract, as it

were scientific, sense, like Berkeley or like Hume or like Kant or Locke. And also he was against science for this reason or at least the scientific way of thinking.

Mangala: Can you say something of what.....

[End of side one side two]

.... a romantic is.

S: Oh this is really getting quite off the track. No. I've got a little booklet I can lend you! No, I think that would take us too far astray.

Padmaraja: What book is that Bhante?

S: It's one I got down in London. I bought it recently. It's in a series. It's just called 'Romanticism'. I looked at it very quickly. It just gives one a history of the use of this term and what it really means in a very condensed way. It's again a very loosely used term. There have been hundreds of writers using it in almost hundreds of different ways. But anyway I think we've sufficiently made our point about 'ideas, being the radiance of the mind are not to be avoided'. It's as though don't be afraid of your own creativity. It's almost as though the precept is saying that. It might be that the precept has been formulated because it is standard Buddhist teaching that in the course of meditation you may be tempted to indulge in discursive thinking which is a distraction and a hindrance, so this is certainly not to be encouraged, it is to be avoided. So perhaps the precept is formulated to make sure that people don't fall into the misunderstanding of thinking that ideas are to be inhibited in meditation itself and generally also. It's as though it's saying there's nothing wrong with ideas. That they are the radiance of the mind. The mind naturally produces ideas. The mind is naturally creative and even though in the context of meditation you do not encourage discursive thinking, this does not mean that ideas generally are to be inhibited or are to be discouraged or avoided.

Padmaraja: Bhante, you say not to be afraid of your own creativity, is it likely that one would be afraid of one's own creativity? I'm interested why you put it that way.

S: The context is spiritual, so to speak. It could be that you might be afraid of your own creativity in the sense of thinking that creativity was a sort of temptation. You might have a narrow conception of the spiritual life. You might sort of concentrate on meditation in such a narrow and one-sided way that you would just try to eliminate all thinking whatsoever and you would be afraid of any manifestation of thinking even in the form of ideas in this sense. But in a way that sentence just sort of slipped out. But it is as though some people are afraid of their creativity in much the same way that some people are afraid of their own energy or their own strength. They don't allow it the free play that perhaps they should. Creativity is not necessarily artistic creativity, if you see what I mean. It's as though some people don't just allow themselves to function very freely and spontaneously. They're sort of afraid to do so as if to say if they feel that if they take off the tight controls well anything might happen and we just can't have that! You see what I mean? And if what is wanting to express itself, so to speak, is quite positive, it isn't some sort of savage impulse which is waiting to leap out, it is just your own natural creativity, then you could be said to be afraid of your own creativity.

Derek: Ideas. Paying attention to them, being aware of them even and cultivating them, would that help in the long run for future attaining of actual insight?

S: It might. Because it's as though ideas are a sort of minor insight, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? A sort of low grade insight, even, you could say.

Mangala: Ideas also seem very much tied up with the positive emotions, don't they?

S: Yes, especially the phrase 'bright ideas' suggests a very positive emotional content.

Padmaraja: One thing I've noticed with one or two mitras, Bhante. I've noticed with these mitras one thing they have in common is an academic background, and there's a reluctance to think, even a refusal, and I just wondered what that might be based on, whether it's just rebelling against a one-sidedly academic training.

S: It could be...

Padmaraja: or not valuing that thing and valuing much more - feeling.

S: Well I think you have a one-sided reaction against thinking, a reaction to feeling, if the thinking has been very alienated thinking. Because actually though we've distinguished thinking and feeling, they are really very close in the healthy person, so that your thinking has always a positive emotional flavour and your feeling has a certain clarity, it can give a sort of rational account of itself. I was talking with somebody the other day about Shakespeare's sonnets and I pointed out that the movement of emotion in those sonnets was also the movement of thought. The sonnets were often highly intellectual, not to say argumentative, but that the emotional component was no less strong for that, and that the two were fused together.

So this is what happens in the case of a healthy person, and it happens above all in the case of the greatest poets. We tend often to think of poetry simply as the expression of emotion but it is as much the expression of thought, and in the very greatest poets there is thought at a very high level of intensity and emotion at a very high level of intensity fused so that they are the same thing. You can't really separate out the thought and the feeling or the thought and the emotion, but you can have thought which is quite remote from emotion and emotion and emotion which is quite remote from thought. Thought which has got no emotional content and feeling which has got no as it were intellectual clarity, or emotion which has got no intellectual clarity.

So I think the normal healthy person tends to - I won't say combine because this suggests two separate things - but to fuse these two, and if your education is compelling you to think in a one-sidedly conceptual, I won't say intellectual, but one-sidedly conceptual way, even one-sidedly rational way, it means that you yourself are being compelled to function in a one-sided way. It's not just your thinking, it's you! You are being compelled to function in a one-sided way. So there will be sooner or later a reaction to an equally one-sided way of functioning before hopefully you come back to the middle or mean position and function in a more balanced sort of way, bringing thinking and emotion back together again as they should be brought, and fusing them. But I think that so much of our modern culture, to use that term, civilisation, because it is so scientifically and technologically based has tended to encourage a sort of one-sidedness in the direction of thinking, so there's an equally one-sided reaction in the opposite direction and people just don't want to have anything to do with thought. They fall back upon emotion and feeling in a very one-sidedly subjective way and they refuse to think, which is as disastrous as refusing to feel.

Mangala: I think it indicates maybe in some cases a sort of abnegation of responsibility, like you can just not think. It's a bit like you become sort of dull and a bit animal-like.

S: Yes, because if you don't think you are as it were objectively not accountable for. Rationality is also objective, just as feeling is subjective. You can say feeling is private whereas rationality is public. Do you see what I mean? If you give a reason for something,

you are as it were attempting to enter into communication. If you refuse to give a reason, in a way you're refusing to enter into communication. So this is why I've been saying quite strongly recently - I'm not sure if this topic came up in this group or the other one - that we should never substitute or seek to substitute feelings for thoughts, thoughts in the sense of reasons. You cannot have a discussion with anybody or an exchange with anyone simply on the basis of your feelings about things. And sometimes people shirk discussion and shirk argument by putting forward a feeling rather than putting forward their thought, even when they have a thought, because a feeling is irrefutable, so they can win every argument so to speak by putting forward not thoughts, not ideas, not arguments but just their feelings. Supposing you say well I feel that that person is a thief, well if you simply say I feel, well obviously no one can argue with a feeling, you've conveyed the idea that that person is a thief so far as you are concerned but you haven't said I think he's a thief because then you could be asked well why, on what grounds, what is your evidence, etc., etc. But if you simply say I feel he's a thief well you get away with it, you can't be challenged. I've seen people or heard people doing this quite a lot, even within the context of the Friends - putting forward feelings when they should be advancing reasons which can then be discussed.

Mangala: Can't just feelings have some validity? Couldn't you just say well I really feel there's something really nasty about him or something like that say.....

S: Well that may be valid....

Mangala: you won't be able to actually say why or give a lot of reasons.....

S: Well that may be valid but you have to be very careful. You may be doing someone a great injustice. Supposing there is something nasty about that person, well what are you actually saying? Are you saying that he has done some nasty action, because that would belong to the objective world, the world of public reality and if you're making that sort of statement you should have some information about it and be able to back it up. If it is just a sort of private feeling, which may be justified, you are not really justified in bringing it forward into the sphere of public reality, so to speak, because it doesn't belong there. He may be quite a nasty person but he may not have done anything nasty, if you see what I mean.

But usually people would like to say that he has done nasty things as it were, but they can't bring forward any proof so they say in a very vague sort of way, a very general way, well I feel he's a nasty sort of person, because that can't be discussed.

Mangala: But I mean presumably for you to feel that somebody's a nasty person means that in a way he must have done something nasty.....

S: Not necessarily.

Mangala: He may not have actually hit you with a hammer or something.....

S: He may just have had nasty thoughts which you might have picked up. I'm not invalidating feelings but I'm saying that feelings should not be treated as though they were reasons or arguments. The fact that you feel that someone is a nasty person is not reason whatever for anybody else regarding it as a fact that he is a nasty person. It does not amount to proof that he is a nasty person, the fact that you feel. If someone knows you very well and if he knows from long experience that your feelings are very reliable then he may be inclined to give some credence to your feelings. But you feeling by itself simply as stated does not amount to any sort of argument or evidence. When you tell other people that you feel that someone is nasty, you are expecting it, your feeling, to be treated as representing a fact about that person, but a fact is something, as it were, rational, belonging to thought,

especially when you produce it for other people, not just a feeling belonging to you.

Mangala: Presumably it's all right to like express your feeling about someone else to someone but make it quite clear that's just your feeling and that....

S: In which case there would seem in many contexts to be no reason for expressing it. Because when you say that I really feel he's a nasty person, what you're really saying is well he is a nasty person and I'm asking you all to treat him as a nasty person, to regard him as a nasty person. In other words you are asking for your subjective feeling to be given the status, as it were, of - well to be given evidential value - to be given the status of evidence. So this is why I'm very concerned to keep out of as it were objective discussion this factor of private feeling when it doesn't really come in. If you say well I really like that person, well that is a purely subjective statement, but it has its validity because it is a fact that you like that person and it is not making any statement about that person. You're not even saying he's a nice person, you're merely saying that you like him.

I think we often sort of smuggle in a subjective feeling and try to get it accepted as representing some kind of objective assessment, and expecting others to accept that from us.

Manjuvajra: Supposing a friend of your was about to engage in a business contract with someone and you met that other person and you really felt distrust for them, wouldn't you then be right to say to your friend, look I feel that guy's not trustworthy?

S: Well yes but then what would the situation be? Supposing the friend to whom you said that knew from long experience that your hunches usually turned out to have something in them, well then he would be justified in being cautious, but merely because person A says to person B that he, person A, feels that person C is untrustworthy, therefore person B has immediately got to treat person C as untrustworthy, that is not reasonable. But this is actually what you find people doing. They expect their purely subjective feelings about matters of fact to be given evidential value as though they amounted to proofs of that thing. I find within the FWBO there's a lot of this sort of thing and I think it has to be looked at quite carefully. It usually applies to people - I feel that he is this or I feel that she is that. Very often as a way of shirking a really sort of thorough thinking about the subject and shirking any sort of challenge to your views by presenting them as subjective feelings and expecting them to be accepted. In other words you, by presenting your thoughts as feelings, you manage to get them accepted as thoughts, but because you present them as feelings you avoid having them examined or criticised or challenged.

Padmaraja: You haven't got the courage of your convictions.

S: You haven't got the courage of your convictions. You present your convictions as feelings in the hope that your feelings will be - because of the general confusion of thought - will be accepted as thoughts. In the guise of feelings they will do the work of thoughts. They will be wolves in sheep's clothing. Do you see what I mean? Actually you're not expecting your feelings to be treated as feelings, except to the extent that they're not to be challenged. You're expecting them to be treated as thoughts because you're expecting them to be accepted and given credence as though they were not only thoughts but thoughts, the truth of which had been abundantly demonstrated.

_____ : Do you think there's a case that could arise where if you suppress both thoughts and feelings in an attempt to almost avoid responsibility for their own lives. I was thinking in particular the service mind, what they call the service mind, extreme group thinking.

S: I would say that that would be pathological. It hardly bears contemplating. Well you can hardly imagine anybody doing it - suppressing all their thinking and all their feeling - well, what would you have left, just a robot, just an automaton.

Mangala: In a way Bhante something like saying 'I feel he's a bit nasty', in a way that might be a cop out from what perhaps they really think which might be like 'I really don't like him' or 'I really hate him' or something, which would be a real acknowledgment of a more genuine state of where they actually stand, instead of something like saying 'I feel he's a bit nasty' or something, which is a way of avoiding your own subjective response as it were.

S: Yes, you're giving a subjective feeling a pseudo-objective expression by saying he is this instead of I feel such and such towards him. I think he's bad, not that I feel hatred towards him.

Mangala: In a sense you're projecting your own negative emotion onto them.

S: There is that element too, yes. I certainly am not saying that one can have feelings about people and about situations which may well be completely valid, but I think you have no right to expect anybody else to give your subjective feelings about a certain person or certain situations the sort of status of fact, unless they really know you very well and know from experience that your feelings are reliable and trustworthy. Otherwise it is better to discuss the matter and reason it out, i won't say argue it out but certainly reason it out and try to come to a more objective, rational assessment of the situation; rather than trying to strike a balance between different people's hunches.

People seem to shirk giving reasons for their attitudes. It's almost as though they will not allow their subjective reactions, or their even unconscious reactions, to come to the level of awareness.

Nagabodhi: It could come from a false sense of superiority. You may say 'he's very resentful, that person' or 'I feel he's very resentful' when in a way what you're actually saying is I feel, maybe, hurt by the way he treats me.

S: Yes right.

Nagabodhi: But it's because you don't really want to admit that, so you leave it in that woolly way and unless you actually make the link with your own experience of the person then you've got no basis to think from, because he's just a concept. To be able to think about someone you've got to be able to examine your own responses. If you're too proud to accept your responses...

S: It's possible to go to the extreme of objectivity in an alienated sort of way. I remember the suggestion - I've mentioned this I think before - the suggestion was once made that if anybody requested ordination they should be asked to fill in a very elaborate questionnaire and that this questionnaire should then be fed into a sort of computer and if the results came out positively that they should then be ordained. [Laughter] If they scored a sufficiently high number of marks. You see what I mean? That's the opposite extreme. But this extreme we've been talking about is - it would have been in this particular case say discussing someone's readiness for ordination - just returning purely subjective feelings. So it's as though you've got to strike that happy medium. Yes of course you'll have feelings about people in this as in other situations, but you must be able to give cogent, rational expression to those feelings or to your general attitude, and arrive at something genuinely objective, though not in an alienated, pseudo-scientific sort of way. It's not enough to say well I feel he's got a bad

temper. Someone might say well you've met him over a number of years well what evidence have you for that statement that he has a bad temper? Say 'have you ever seen him lose his temper?', 'well no.' 'Well have you ever heard that he's lost his temper?', 'well no.' Has he ever told you that he was in the habit of losing his temper?' 'Well no I just feel he's got a bad temper!' This is the sort of thing one is up against only too often. You cross examine people a bit like that and their feelings just are shown as completely baseless, completely subjective, possibly having nothing to do with that person at all. Perhaps being purely projective.

But unless you cross examine people in that way someone says. 'oh I feel he's got a really bad temper' and everyone says 'ah yeah, I guess he must have a really bad temper' and proceed to treat him on that basis! You give the dog a bad name and then you proceed to hang him! So if someone says well I feel that so and so is such and such, you are really entitled to cross examine that person and ask him for proof and evidence and so on.

Nagabodhi: Where does intuition come in, because that seems to be something that straddles the two - feeling and thought? What is intuition?

S: Well you tell me! Wise men have been trying to find the answer for quite a long time! I think actually intuition is probably not very much more than a speeded up rational process. Some people's minds work really very quickly and make connections, especially in the light of previous experience and jump to conclusions very rapidly and sometimes with great validity. I think it's more like the speeding up of processes which normally take much longer to go through. You see something quite quickly, quite suddenly. But in the same way as you can't accept people's emotional hunches uncritically you can't accept their intuitions either. They have to have the backing up of something more solid so to speak. It should be possible to articulate them rationally. I mean a mathematician has intuitions. Some famous mathematical discoveries have been made in this way, but then they have given you the rational demonstrations afterwards so that those who haven't got the intuitions can work it out or see the truth of it the other way. That's quite a good illustration in a way isn't it, the mathematical one.

Mangala: Or perhaps it can be seen as maybe something that builds up over a period of time like a concentrated sort of energy which suddenly in a flash just sort of bursts through something.

S: Right yes.

Mangala: This is what they say in Zen isn't it?

S: Yes, suddenly sees all the interconnections. But then you can explain those interconnections more slowly and laboriously afterwards to someone who hasn't burst through in that sort of way. But I really feel and this is one of the things I feel quite strongly about, I really feel in the FWBO there's far too much of the inarticulate feeling and expecting other people to take your feelings as proof of fact. If you say I feel this picture is beautiful, well you're expressing a subjective taste, you're not expected to verify that or to give proof of that, though perhaps some people would expect you to, but if you express a feeling about a person which amounts to a pseudo factual statement well you really should be taken up on that. You should be able to give a rational account of your attitudes.

Padmaraja: To go back to your example even towards why you like the picture.

S: Yes, you would be able to give a rational account of why you like the picture even though other people may not find that completely convincing in all cases. It might be a picture of a pretty baby and you might say 'I really like that picture, I really love babies, I really dig

babies!' Whereas somebody else might not like babies but he understands your liking for the picture, even if he couldn't share it.

Mangala: I think in connection with what you said about inarticulate feeling it might be that there's not enough directness in relating the feeling but there's too much kind of approaching people on a sort of well, 'I sort of feel this about you and think it may be this thing or that thing' instead of just 'I hate you' or 'I really like you' or something.

S: Right, yes. A lack of self confidence among other things.

Anyway is that enough on that precept? 'Ideas, being the radiance of the mind are not to be avoided'?

Manjuvajra: I've got two quick things. The quick one first is would the ideas be vitakka and the thought vicara?

S: Yes, vitakka vicara or vitarka vicara in Sanskrit refer to what we would call discursive thinking.

Manjuvajra: Does it?

S: Well, maybe I should explain a little more though it is actually explained in the *Survey* - vitakka is more like the apprehension of an object, a thinking of something, and vicara is more like thinking about something. The illustration given is it's just like when say with one hand you seize hold of a dirty pot, with the other hand you scour it all around to clean it. So the grasping of the pot is like that vitakka and the scouring of the pot all round is like the vicara. So it's more like the apprehension of an object in the first place and then the engaging in various reflections about the object on the other.

Manjuvajra: So would vitakka be like the ideas. We talked about these bright ideas?

S: I would say that the bright ideas represented something much more speeded up, something much more immediate, even almost intuitive, whereas vitakka vicara referred more to the usual discursive rational process. I'm taking ideas here more in the sense of bright ideas which suddenly hit you without your appearing to go through any sort of process, though you may reduce them to a process afterwards.

So what's the second point?

Manjuvajra: That was about how would you tell the difference between a very bright idea and Insight?

S: Well I think it's more with regard to its object. Insight in the strict sense as vipassana relates to, or is of the nature of, ultimate Reality, whereas a bright idea might refer to almost any aspect of existence, and in fact usually does. You could clearly have borderline cases, but I think that's the broad basis of the distinction.

All right onto two then which is not dissimilar from number one.

(2) *Thought forms, being the revelry of Reality, are not to be avoided.*

S: So thought forms, and notice also that Reality has a capital 'R' here. Thought forms. What do you think is meant by these thought forms? Perhaps it would be helpful to refer to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* because the expression 'thought forms' is used there, at least in the

translation. Doesn't the lama say to the deceased person or the consciousness of the deceased person, 'These are thine own thought forms', and what is he referring to?

Kamalasila: The wrathful deities and the peaceful deities, the visions in the bardo.

S: The visions, yes. So 'thought forms, being the revelry of Reality, are not to be avoided'. So one could translate that or paraphrase that as visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, peaceful and wrathful and so on, being the revelry of Reality, are not to be avoided. So what sort of meaning does that convey? In what sense are they the revelry of Reality, because that is the reason it seems - being the revelry of Reality are not to be avoided, what does that suggest, that phrase, the revelry of Reality?

Devaraja: It's almost like Reality being an active thing.....

S: Ah! Yes....

Devaraja: which can create its own thought forms rather like ideas are created by the mind.

S: Yes, right, yes. It's as though the precept is saying don't have a purely conceptual notion of Reality. Reality is not just something empty, it's not just an empty concept, not just something abstract. It is concrete, it is living. There is a sort of creative play and the thought forms, the visions, as it were the images, of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on, they are that revelry, they are that play, they give content to Reality. Reality is not just abstract. It's a bit like what came up when we were talking about the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on in the other study group in connection with the same Tibetan Book of the Dead. We were discussing how the Buddha families arise, and the point was made that originally there was just one historical Shakyamuni Buddha. So you've got Reality as it were in the form of, or embodied in, a single Enlightened human being. So then the Buddhas of the different Buddha families and their Bodhisattvas, present as it were so many different aspects of that one original single Buddha figure, and they do that so as to bring out more and more fully, more and more richly, the inherent content of that Enlightenment experience. So I made a comparison - I said when you've got one Buddha, just The Buddha, it's like having a sphere, a perfect sphere of polished crystal, or you could say a diamond, a diamond shaped like a perfect sphere. But you know that a sphere does not shine and twinkle or sparkle very much, so what do you do if you've got a precious stone? Supposing it is spherical well you'd cut facets, because if there are facets they catch the light and you get all sorts of colours. So it's as though you take this perfect sphere of the one Buddha and you cut first five facets and then each of those facets is cut to give you many many more, and in this way the whole thing becomes a jewel, a faceted jewel which reflects all sorts of rainbow colours and which because of that you're able to appreciate the beauty and the value of the jewel much more than if it was just a plain polished sphere. So this revelry in the form of the thought forms is like that. It brings out the content, or at least it enables you to experience and appreciate the content of Reality more than if Reality was just conceived of as something blank and abstract and inert so to speak. You see what I mean?

So thought forms, being the revelry of reality are not to be avoided.

Mangala: Would it not be more accurate to say that the thought forms are Reality itself?

S: You could say that.

Mangala: Because in a way it seems to imply that there's a reality, almost like a () which manifests itself through different sort of beings.

S: Again one could say there is something over and above or which remains unmanifest. You could say that too. Not that Reality is simply the sum total of these manifestations. But there is a limitation of language. One says revelry of Reality, well language compels you to distinguish in that sort of way.

Mangala: Presumably for let's say ordinary folk, what's the word puthujjana or something, the thought forms wouldn't take the form of visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would they? I mean would you say that the revelry of Reality necessarily involves seeing visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?

S: It would seem like that, though it is also said that the Enlightened person sees all phenomena as the revelry of Reality so to speak, sees everything as the Dharmakaya. Again one has to be a little bit careful about, what shall I say, rather naive pantheism. It is more expressing your experience or vision in that sort of way rather than making a sort of philosophical statement in a logical manner. But you get the general idea. That is more important. That because you are using abstract thought to think about Reality, you shouldn't sort of identify Reality simply with a highly generalised concept or think of Reality too much in that sort of way. It's more like bringing into consideration the aesthetic aspect of Reality in a manner of speaking.

Manjuvajra: Is it doing more than calling them just images or symbols?

S: We just devalue the word 'symbol'. If you see what I mean. A symbol is not just a mark or sign, it is much more than that. A symbol, a real symbol, doesn't symbolise anything - it is something. It doesn't simply point to something beyond itself. And of course these thought forms can be linked up with the images that we were talking about earlier. They are much the same sort of thing in a way. The thought form within the more directly spiritual context and the image within the more artistic context. The artist creates thought forms. They're not just arbitrary creations as it were, but they reflect Reality. In a way they are Reality. Shelley says 'and from these create he can', these meaning the natural objects which he perceives, 'and from these create he can, forms more real than living man'. Do you see what I mean? It's as though the artist recreates nature and produces forms which are even more real than the natural reality, so to speak, of nature herself. He has raised the forms of nature to a higher degree of Reality. It's from 'Prometheus Unbound' so you can look up the whole passage.

Mangala: Do you mean that these (forms) the artist produces they manifest more clearly perhaps Reality than....

S: Oh yes you could say that. It's as though the artist takes the forms presented by nature and he simplifies them, he strips away the inessential so that through that particular image, reality is manifested in a manner of speaking, more clearly, than in that particular form as it occurs in nature.

Manjuvajra: Would you say that the visions in meditation are more Real because they're less alienated from consciousness? They're more kind of obviously a manifestation of consciousness rather than sensual objects.

S: One could say that. On the other hand it occurs to me that one must make a distinction between purely eidetic images or say images which you produce just as a sort of part of concentration exercise, and images, especially say those of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which have for you a profoundly emotive and deeply spiritual meaning. For instance there's quite a difference between just visualising say quite successfully say a yellow disk, and then visualising the image of the Buddha. You shouldn't visualise the image of the Buddha in the

same way that you visualise the yellow disk. It isn't like just visualising a coloured picture towards which you've got no particular feeling and doesn't particularly mean anything to you.

[End of tape 19 tape 20]

S: You could visualise the figure of the Buddha without having any sort of feeling or without it having any sort of meaning for you, then it would not be a thought-form in this sense. You could visualise the figure of the Buddha without having any sort of feeling or without it having any sort of meaning for you, then it would not be a thought-form in this sense. If you were to experience the Buddha figure as a thought-form in this sense, you would be profoundly stirred emotionally by it, it would have tremendous spiritual significance. Whereas someone who was just good at visualising could reproduce a picture of the Buddha mentally, an eidetic image, but it would not be a thought-form; it's the strongly emotional flavour and the spiritually significant content which makes it a thought-form in this sense.

Manjuvajra: They have a life of their own.

S: They have a life of their own. This is one of the reasons why I'm not too keen on, say, new people in the Friends just doing visualisations of Buddhas etc., just as a concentration exercise. You see, if one isn't sufficiently involved emotionally to be able to do that properly, one should just stick to abstract visualisations if one just wants to improve one's technical concentration. One shouldn't use Buddha figures just to do that, because it is perhaps, blunting one's feelings in a way, just treating the Buddha figure in that sort of manner. Do you see what I am getting at?

Devaraja: It's rather like not being able to develop the esteem.

S: Mm, you just hold, maybe, the reflex image of the Buddha picture there and you perhaps are just looking at it almost like any other picture. You might just as well have visualised a picture of an advertisement for beer, it would serve just as well as a means of concentration. You probably would have had more feeling towards that! (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: I get the impression that Trungpa's people, in Boulder, hurl themselves into business and so on very much with the excuse that money, business, everything is a thought-form that can be seen on this level. For them maybe, I don't think it's some kind of pantheism, but they seem to regard it as a training principle - not to be afraid of thought-forms, to hurl themselves into any aspect of life and see it as ...

S: All right, even accepting that, you shouldn't be afraid of thought-forms, but neither should you experience craving for them. I mean maybe they go into that opposite extreme. I mean usually ordinary people are not afraid of thought-forms in that sort of way. That sounds a bit like a rationalisation or at least unskilful teaching to me, frankly. It would be better perhaps to say don't be afraid of life, don't be afraid of your own experiences, rather than give people the impression that by going into all these things, in the way that the average American does anyway, has some sort of connection with the Tantra, i.e. with the most highly developed and esoteric phase of Buddhism. Again, it is just flattering people to tell them that sort of thing. It's causing them to think that when, in fact, they are simply indulging in their ordinary desires, they are in fact leading highly spiritual lives; which is the last thing that they need to be told.

Mangala: So it's just a sort of dressing up or a rationalising of their more worldly ambitions and so on.

S: Judging from Nagabodhi's description it sounds exactly like that to me.

Padmaraja: Is Trungpa saying that everything is reality so you can do whatever you want.

Nagabodhi: I don't know what Trungpa says, but certainly some of these people I have spoken to make out that is the teaching, the climate of teaching within which they operate their businesses and their families and everything else they do. That you don't back away from money, you don't back away from business, in fact if anything you should really get into it, and be better at it.

S: But why those sort of things? Because why not poverty? Because poverty is just as much a thought-form as riches surely! Why is it especially the thought-form of riches that you don't back away from?

Mangala: In a way Bhante there might be something in that for us too because I think we were saying the other day that people in the Friends still see money as a bit dirty and riches as not quite spiritual. So, I think some of us to some extent still back away from that, and consider poverty and frugality as being spiritually desirable.

Padmaraja: So you think that's what Trungpa may be doing, just discouraging that attitude that spirituality is somehow synonymous with lack of success in the world?

Mangala: I'm just saying that that could be a possibility.

S: I think Americans - I think one can make this generalisation - I think Americans are only too prone to accept the old Jewish, Old Testament notion that material success was a sign of approval of God. I think, therefore, that Americans require, if anything a strong dose of genuine asceticism. And I think they'd probably be much better off following the example of Milarepa, or taking Milarepa as their ideal. I mean Milarepa certainly didn't avoid thought-forms, but look at his way of life.

Padmaraja: But in America with the young especially there is this tendency, almost this myth, of dropping out, isn't there? Dropping out of society and ...

S: But that phase seems to have passed largely.

Padmaraja: But maybe that's what Trungpa's aiming at, that particular mentality. I should imagine that they're the sort of people that he's dealing with mainly.

S: I'm not sure of that. He seems to be dealing with quite affluent, middle-class professional people. Perhaps he doesn't want them to drop out but I'm not saying even that dropping out is wrong as a phase or stage of one's development. If you want to use that phraseology, it's not only a question of dropping out, but also of tuning in, and ... what's the rest of it? There's another ...

_____ : Turning on.

S: And turning on, (Laughter) if you see what I mean. And, yes surely it sounds, just from what Nagabodhi says, far too much like a rationalisation. It seems to preclude any going forth.

Padmaraja: Maybe that does constitute going forth, to really engage in life.

S: But you can't engage in everything. So actually it means choosing. So if you choose to engage in riches rather than poverty, and sex rather than celibacy etc., etc., well you seem to

be having a highly selective attitude towards these thought-forms, which suggest you are not really seeing them as thought-forms at all. They are just for you ordinary temptations so to speak.

Mangala: But in a way we don't really know what we are talking about here, do we, because these people may be highly ...

S: Well, this is all hypothetical. I'm saying, going by what Nagabodhi says, I'm taking that as accurate or as a responsible statement with regard to certain people. And he did say judging by what certain people that he had met had said. So in that case those people about whom he's talking seem to be, I would say, rationalising. But we just don't know how many people there are like that. But I would suspect that in America there could well be quite a lot of them. They just require a rationalisation for their ordinary American way of life. A bit of exotic oriental glamour added on to it; and this very comfortable complacent superior feeling - because I've also seen something of this - that you are also spiritually superior at the same time; and, looking down upon those very naive people who think that the spiritual way of life involves anything like giving up anything, or any discipline or regular practice etc., etc.

I've even seen it among Tibetans. The Tibetans themselves in a way fall victim to this very largely. Mr. Chen used to say that they neglect the Hinayana discipline, neglect the Mahayana Bodhicitta, and think that they can go straight into the Vajrayana. He used to criticise the Tibetan Buddhists very much for that, not laying a proper foundation. So, it's as though in America many of those who get into Tibetan Buddhism are doing exactly this, and to a far more extreme extent. But anyway this is a bit hypothetical so perhaps we shouldn't dwell on it too much.

Mangala: To get back to the precept Bhante. Could you say that reality reveals, shall we say, in any way besides thought-forms? I'm still not clear what thought-forms actually ... I mean does it include something like music or

S: No, I think maybe you're taking it a bit too literally. What is being said is that one shouldn't have a purely conceptual approach to reality. You are trying to supplement here your sort of purely conceptual approach which might result in your having an abstract notion of reality - trying to supplement that with an aesthetic approach, so that your abstract notion of reality is given a more living content. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise you end up saying Reality is Truth with a capital 'T'; is Oneness with a capital 'O'; is Voidness with a capital 'V'. Well that may well be so, but that is a purely abstract conceptual approach that doesn't give you, as it were, the feeling of reality. So it is as though the thought forms fill up the empty space, not to say empty gap, and exhibit the different aspects of reality so that you can grasp its sort of richness and beauty, and not just be left with something rather abstract and in a sense vague so far as your total being is concerned.

Mangala: You don't think ideas could be the revelry of reality?

S: Well, it's a question of terminology. Ideas are the radiance of the mind. If ideas are the radiance of the mind with a small 'm', well thought-forms must be the revelry of Reality with a capital 'R'. Do you see what I mean? You could put it another way and say that thought-forms being the radiance of the mind and ideas being the revel of reality. I mean choose whichever term you like, but there is a distinction. (Pause)

Right, go on to number 3 now.

(3) Obscuring passions being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom (which giveth deliverance from them) are not to be avoided (if rightly used to enable one to taste life to the

full and thereby reach disillusionment).

S: I think the Americans must really love this precept! Anyway, let's forget about them. Also bear in mind the words within square brackets are the translator-editor's addition. I think they are to be viewed with extreme suspicion. "Obscuring passions", klesas, "being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom, are not to be avoided." I don't think it's a question of them enabling one to taste life to the full, this seems a completely un-Buddhistic idea, this idea of tasting life to the full. What is full anyway? I think it is more a question of the passions not being avoided in the sense of being faced up to squarely. They do contain energy and you don't want to alienate yourself from that energy. You want to capture it, recapture it, reclaim it.

So, if in you there is present the klesa of anger, don't avoid the fact. It doesn't mean you are to indulge the klesa of anger, or taste it, to taste life to the full etc., etc. No, face up to the fact that there is the klesa of anger, and you've got to do something about it; and recognise the fact that anger can be regarded as raw material of the spiritual life and use it in that sort of way. I think this is much closer to the meaning of the precept.

Padmaraja: So the precept's about transformation rather than avoidance of repression?

S: Well, avoidance, not avoiding is to be taken as indicating the need for transmutation, not as suggesting the possibility of indulgence.

Mangala: It's very confusing this precept. It's like the idea that people have about tantric Buddhism generally - a hot bed of sexual activity and so on.

S: Well, why do people go for these yab-yum posters? Or, they used to. How do they take them? Well, couples hang them up, so I'm told, above their beds. It suggests that there's a misunderstanding. Tibetans probably would have been profoundly shocked. Tibetans don't see anything sexual in these yab-yum figures and images, as I've seen myself. Strange as it may seem to us, they are not sexually suggestive to Tibetans brought up exclusively within Tibetan culture. They find the reactions of westerners who go to Tibetan temples and see these things and snigger slightly, really incomprehensible - they just can't understand it.

Padmaraja: The average Tibetan ... would that be in much the same way as say the average westerner no longer associates nudity in painting say with nakedness?

S: It could be. Though I'm afraid the attitude of many westerners towards nude paintings is far from being artistic, if you see what I mean. There is many a westerner, going to an art gallery and seeing nude paintings, would react in the same sort of way as to nude bodies; in other words, not aesthetically. But I have never known a Tibetan - I think in fact this would have been impossible, I don't know how things are now - to see a yab-yum picture and react to it as though there was anything sexual about it. It is just disassociated from sex, that sort of symbolism, so far as he is concerned. If you were to ask him of course he would say yes it's the male and the female figure, and yes they are represented as having sexual intercourse, but there just is not that feeling associated with it for him.

Padmaraja: The implication being that they are not so sexually hung up as the westerners.

S: Not only not so sexually hung up, because the Tibetans do, by all accounts, have a very vigorous sex life indeed, that is the laity, but the influence of the spiritual tradition is so strong, and they are so strongly imbued with the idea that this is a divine manifestation; this is Prajna as personified by the female, in union with Upaya, compassion as personified by the male, so their predominant reaction, their only reaction really, is one of devotion.

Well, there might be a remote analogy. Supposing you might get say in the west, in a Catholic church say, a really beautiful painting, say of the Virgin Mary. It is conceivable that a very devout Catholic young man would go and light a candle and offer it at the foot of this image and genuinely not have any sexual response, not see the Virgin Mary as an attractive young woman and have a purely devotional response. This is conceivable. There are many instances where that would not be the case. With the Tibetans it is much like that. Except that to the best of my knowledge their reactions to the yab-yum pictures and images would never be of a sexual nature, would not suggest any sexual associations as far as they are concerned. (Pause)

So, anyway "Obscuring passions being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom" - What does it mean by reminding one? Reminding one of the possibility of transmutation and transformation. Because we are specifically told that the klesas are Bodhi. So if you are confronted by the obscuring passions, you are confronted by the possibility of obtaining or realising divine wisdom - Bodhi. Not by indulging that passion by which you are confronted but by working to transmute and transform it; so Evans-Wentz's addition "if rightly used to enable to taste life to the full and thereby reach disillusionment". Well, why necessarily look at the spiritual life in terms of tasting life and reaching disillusionment? No, that's not the attitude, certainly not of the Vajrayana, at all. Here you are confronted by the klesas, by the defilements, by the obscuring passions; you experience them. Here's your opportunity for realising Bodhi. You've got the raw material for Bodhi in your very hands. So there's not this having a little taste of it, just a little taste of it, and enjoying it and increasing your worldly experience so that later on you'd get disillusioned and then give up the whole thing and then that's your spiritual experience. No! It's a completely different approach. But it's also completely different from what I imagine is the sort of American way of looking at it. The hedonistic way of looking at it which has got nothing to do with the Vajrayana. So even on the part of someone like Evans-Wentz, what a misunderstanding!

Mangala: Is this not something of the traditional Hindu approach as well? You kind of taste life to the full as it were, and have sex etc., etc., and then you kind of give it up later and go on to something else ...

S: You start thinking about spiritual things when you're just not in the position to enjoy worldly things. This tends to be the Hindu approach; though modified later especially by Buddhist influences. The traditional Hindu view is more that you start thinking about God when you're old. But, the Buddhist view is that you start thinking about Enlightenment when you're young. Even if you admit that when you are young that is the time when the passions are strongest, the obscuring passions, all right, that means that is the time for that very reason to think more about spiritual life because the possibilities of transformation are greater. When you're a weak old man who can scarcely get up out of your chair, is that the time to think of transforming your energy? You haven't got any energy to transform!

So it's when you are young and vigorous and passionate that's the time to think about spiritual life. (Pause)

So all right "obscuring passions being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom are not to be avoided". Why then, we can well fill our own additions within those square brackets there.

Manjuvajra: I get this feeling with Evans-Wentz quite a lot actually that he's a bit scared of statements like that. So there's this really quite strong puritanical streak.

S: It could be, because the translation was done quite a few years ago, and it's very good that

we've got this translation. But still there are little sorts of influences of that sort in it. Especially, perhaps as he was a theosophist and theosophy has a strongly puritanical streak. Theosophy looks very askance at sex. Madame Blavatsky herself, seems to have looked very askance at sex. She claims to have had no sexual experience at all in her life. A claim which some people are a bit sceptical about, but this is actually what she claimed; as though had she had, that would have meant she was not fitted to be any kind of spiritual teacher. She even, at one stage of her career when attacked by her enemies, produced a certificate signed by a doctor some years before in Cairo attesting to her virginity. So that seemed to be taken all rather too seriously. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: She should have been Mademoiselle Blavatsky.

S: Well, she claimed that her marriage was never consummated. Anyway, I don't think we'll go on to 4 just for the moment. We'll stop and have our morning coffee.

Nagabodhi: This idea that it is an aspect of the spiritual life to go through the passions, to really live life to the full, I mean, it runs rampant through modern, western, fashionable ideas of spirituality. It's in just about everything.

S: I'm afraid it is. It's one of the major micchaditthis.

Nagabodhi: Partly though, could you not say this is sparked off to an extent by a healthy reaction to Christian puritanism?

S: Not necessarily because it's very, very strong among the Hindus from the very beginning. In opposition to any form of asceticism, this is one of the reasons why they are not very happy with Buddhism, and have never been very happy with it. It's not, certainly not, just a western phenomenon. There is a very strong reinforcement of it from Hindu sources.

Padmaraja: Isn't that also a Sufi idea? This idea of drinking life's cup to its full, just by completely fulfilling your potential in every possible aspect, in that way you get into ...

S: I don't think this is the traditional Sufi attitude which in many ways is very similar to the Buddhist one and certainly involves an element of what could be called asceticism.

Mangala: I think what you said actually sounded quite healthy in a way. I think where people go wrong is that they take it very hedonistically.

S: If you can say fulfil all your potential, but your potential is for enlightenment; which means that you are capable of transforming the obscuring passions into Bodhi. Whereas, this sort of attitude usually implies in practice that you just indulge the obscuring passions on their own level; instead of really setting to work to transform and transmute them, which may well involve an element of, for want of a better term, 'asceticism' which, after all, in the original Greek only means 'training'. 'Ascesis' originally meant the training undergone by an athlete to fit him for the race or whatever it was; it was not more than that. A healthy concentration of your energies on the task in hand; 'asceticism' just means that. It does not have any suggestion of self-torture, or self punishment or masochism.

Mangala: I think that there's two extremes isn't there? There's one where the spiritual life is seen as an entire negation of the senses and any kind of pleasure, a total self punishment almost; on the other hand there's complete indulgence in sensual activity.

S: On the other hand, Christian and western ideas are very ambiguous, because you get in say Protestantism - this was recently pointed out by an author I was reading - you get a

condemnation of asceticism. You get at the same time a condemnation of sex; at the same time you get an exhortation of marriage. So what an incompatible combination! This is the sort of position the Protestants have landed themselves in. With the Catholics you get a condemnation of sex except for purposes of procreation and an exhortation of celibacy. At least it's self-consistent. With Protestants you get the condemnation of celibacy and the monastic ideal, a condemnation of sex, but also a glorification of marriage including marriage for the clergy. So that is really an odd combination isn't it? It's almost a recipe for disaster. So it was pointed out that the average married clergyman was in the position, one, of believing that asceticism and celibacy was mistaken, that marriage was the ideal state, but that sex was sinful! (Laughter) No wonder they are rather lacking in conviction and are rather confused. The Catholics are at least, however mistaken, not lacking in conviction and not confused. (Pause)

OK then precept 4.

(4) Affluence, being the manure and water for spiritual growth, is not to be avoided.

S: Well, another let out for the Americans. So it is not to be avoided. It doesn't say it's therefore not to be sought after. But on the other hand, "being the manure and water for spiritual growth"? In what sense?

Mangala: It provides a context, well just a material basis if you like, which we need.

S: It does say affluence, and that word has a rather special meaning nowadays. I don't know, perhaps one shouldn't take it as necessarily a strict translation of the Tibetan term, because we do speak of the 'affluent society' don't we? So, certainly food and clothing and shelter and medicine are needed, even according to the earliest Buddhism, according to the Theravada. The monk, the Bhikkhu, is entitled to those four things. But that is rather different from affluence. I mean, as we currently use that term. So perhaps the word affluence is not really quite appropriate here. It's more like a material sufficiency.

_____ : Do you think it came out this way because at the time that Evans-Wentz translated it people who were able to engage in this kind of spiritual activity were those with private means who could afford it?

S: It could be that. You certainly do find with the Theosophists, that those who devoted themselves full time to Theosophy, people like Evans-Wentz, were people with private means. Evans-Wentz was an American and he was quite a wealthy person. But also perhaps one should bear in mind that this is a pre-Galbraith translation. I mean it was Galbraith wasn't it who wrote that book on the 'affluent society'? So I think since this book was published the word 'affluence' has developed, or been given, a rather more specialised meaning, so perhaps we shouldn't insist on this too much. It is, I think, really more a question of material sufficiency. When you are engaged in, devoted to, your own spiritual growth you don't want to have to worry too much about material things. Like when you go on a solitary retreat you don't want to have to worry about where your food is coming from or whether the roof is going to start leaking. If you could really not worry about those things and endure any privations without worrying and get on with your spiritual practice that would be fine, that would be ideal, really Milarepa-like. But not many people are able to do that, so you need to make a realistic provision for your food, clothing, shelter and medicine, say, on a period of solitary retreat or even at any other time; so that energy isn't wasted worrying about those things.

It's more a question of a modest affluence, let us say. And at the same time it shouldn't be so exact that you need to make very careful calculations all the time. There should be a little bit

of margin as it were. It's not a question of having just barely enough food so that you have to measure every grain of rice to make sure it's going to last the whole period of the solitary retreat; it shouldn't be like that, there should be a bit of leeway so that you don't have to bother to that extent.

So "affluence is not to be avoided" I mean material sufficiency is not to be avoided. No false asceticism. Don't deprive yourself of what you really do objectively need to provide yourself with the basis for the living of the spiritual life. No self-torture, no self-mortification. It probably doesn't mean anything more than that. I mean certainly not a justification, or not to be taken as a justification, for a go-getting way of life, a way of life based on acquisition. (Pause)

All right, let's go on to the next one then, five.

(5) Illness and tribulations, being teachers of piety are not to be avoided.

S: Well, what does this mean? Does it mean that you shouldn't have recourse to medical treatment?

Mangala: I think it means that maybe you have to accept illness and various trials and various sufferings. It's not that you have to go looking for them; but in a way you won't be able to avoid them anyway.

S: But maybe it's also that you shouldn't spend so much time and energy avoiding them that say the care of your health, in almost a neurotic way, becomes your primary concern; well, you would certainly not be able to devote yourself to the spiritual life then. Take reasonable precautions but don't be neurotic about it, and if unavoidably you do fall ill, or some tribulation befalls you, well just accept it, meet it head on as it were.

Manjuvajra: Would you say something like not going to India because you were frightened of getting ill?

S: That's true yes, if otherwise there were good reasons for going. You could, conceivably, have a person who wouldn't go to India on pilgrimage etc. because he was so afraid of falling ill there. It would be enough just to take proper precautions after arriving or even before you arrived. Or you might even be afraid of going on retreat because you might think "sleeping in a dormitory with all sorts of other unknown people, one of them might have a cold, and I might catch it, and I might fall really ill, and I wouldn't be able to do this and I wouldn't be able to do that". This would be a bit neurotic wouldn't it? Accept the fact that sometimes a certain amount of illness is unavoidable, if you are not to make the avoidance of illness your sole preoccupation and even then you couldn't be sure of avoiding it.

Nagabodhi: You do meet some people whose response to every situation is in some ways conditioned by fear of illness - of being in draughts - that's a big one, the kind of food they eat, the time they get to bed, their whole life is geared toward maintaining a ...

S: Well, I met, many years ago an American Buddhist bhikkhuni, a nun, in Saranath, who was appalled by the idea of drinking milk in India, actual fresh cow's milk. She never would take cow's milk. The idea of it, when I inadvertently suggested something about milk, oh, she threw up her hands in horror; she took only American imported powdered milk. The idea of actually taking milk produced in India from those filthy cows literally appalled her; and she behaved similarly with regard to other aspects of her diet.

Derek: Powdered milk's probably at least as bad.

Nagabodhi: There's also the tendency you could fall victim to of seeing illness as inevitably meaning a break from your practice; if you've got a cold, you don't meditate. It's almost like you forget that you could just do it, even though it might be very different.

S: Yes, it would be different certainly, but perhaps nonetheless valuable.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes more so I think.

S: Of course there is the other aspect of the question, one doesn't want to insist on it overmuch, but that sometimes illness and tribulation can, in fact, bring you closer to the spiritual life. The precept actually says "illness and tribulation being teachers of piety, are not to be avoided". I don't think this is to be taken as meaning you should deliberately bring on illness and tribulations, thinking that they would be teachers of piety for you; but, when they occur, you are not to think, as you said, that piety, the practice of the Dharma, thereby becomes impossible. You're not to avoid them under that impression, at least. Because even when you are ill, even when you are suffering in various ways, you can practice the Dharma; even if you are only just practising patience in that situation. That is a practice of the Dharma. Practice of the Dharma doesn't mean necessarily or solely, that you have to keep up the practice of certain things and if you are not doing those things you are not practising the Dharma. You mustn't be as rigid as that.

Mangala: I think in a way too, getting ill sometimes can have quite a sobering effect in a way. You do actually realise that you are going to die, and it makes you aware of your own existential position.

S: Yes, yes, right.

Manjuvajra: There's a question I'd quite like to ask, that I've wanted to ask, in a way, I've a friend who might have only a few years left to live -

S: Well, that applies to all of us, doesn't it?

Manjuvajra: Yes, but quite specifically, they will know in a few weeks' time. Do you think that there is anything that you can ... obviously if I was put in that position before I'd had as much contact with the FWBO as I have, I would have had to make a choice whether to really devote myself to my spiritual practice, or to just 'enjoy', in inverted commas, the rest of my life. Do you think it's worth approaching people with the possibility of devoting their last few years, say, to the spiritual life, or do you think once the point has been reached you can't really do that?

S: I think there are some people who would be open to the suggestion. I think we have one example of that don't we? Someone who is known to us who lost his wife and who afterwards had a heart attack, and who after that started thinking very seriously about the spiritual life, knowing that he might not have long to live, and that any day, in fact, he might have another heart attack and that might be his last day; and, his response has been to start taking, although he's a relatively elderly man, the spiritual life quite seriously. So, some people could respond in that way. Perhaps therefore, in a way, one has a sort of duty or responsibility at least to put that possibility in a very tactful way to someone in that sort of position, just in the hope that they might have it in them to respond to it in a positive manner. But certainly not in a heavy handed and clumsy way, which would cause them to see the spiritual life in a very negative and unattractive sort of light.

[End of side one side two]

But, if you do find them at all receptive, or if you are able really to communicate with them, at least put this suggestion, that there are, as it were, compensations.

Mangala: Something I read recently, I think it was in the last *Newsletter*, it really quite impressed me, was to do with the punyanumodana ceremony. One of the mitras died, and one of the things in that was that, I think, somebody said that, since you don't know when you are going to die, it would be awful to die and, like perhaps, you hadn't been speaking to somebody for a while, you had an enemy, how awful it would be to die without having sort of made ...

S: It would be awful if that person died, and you hadn't made it up with them, yes? Because you never would have the opportunity again. There is in fact a verse in the *Dhammapada*, which I believe in fact I quoted then, that we are all heading for death, thinking of this, wise men compose their quarrels.

Mangala: The way that was put really came home to me, like if someone did die, how bad you would feel if you hadn't actually ...

S: Yes, especially if normally you were good friends but then the relationship ended on that very negative note, and that was that, there was nothing you could do about it.

Mangala: And, you realise that could happen any time actually.

S: Yes, indeed yes. So that should be an incentive to clear up any passing misunderstandings.

Derek: I think it would also be important to make it clear to someone that the spiritual life wasn't about making a last minute kind of scurry for some sort of after death award, that it is mindfulness and should be rewarding in the living situation itself.

S: Yes, it's not just a hurried laying up of a treasure in heaven. It's using what time you have left, so to speak, in the best possible way; which would have been good for you anyway, but now you just see the urgency of that all the more clearly, or you see all the more clearly the worthlessness or uselessness of living in any other way. But in the case of a person who hasn't before considered any possibility of human or individual development, one would have to be very careful that one put the suggestion in a very tactful and positive way, that you weren't trying to encourage a sort of death-bed repentance or anything of that sort, as of course the church sometimes does, or seems to do. (Pause)

Padmaraja: What, in fact, is meant by the word "tribulations"?

S: More like "trials and sufferings".

Padmaraja: Far from avoiding them, you've said that one should actually seek them out?

S: No, I've said you shouldn't seek them out.

Padmaraja: But, in connection with Padmasambhava, you say that he deliberately seeks out the crucial situation and uses it to augment his practice.

S: Well, Padmasambhava's a highly advanced being, as it were. But perhaps we should say that you shouldn't pick and choose. There is also the point that I said that "illness and tribulations being teachers of piety are not to be avoided" you should not - what shall I say -

what was the point I made, I can't quite think of it now but I did make a point in this connection, what was that?

Manjuvajra: That you could continue your spiritual practice through difficult times.

S: Yes there was that, yes, but there was another point I made.

Nagabodhi: To meet things head on?

S: To meet things head on. But perhaps one could also say there is the point that teachers of this sort come when you don't manipulate the situation - do you see what I mean? Or you could say, you are going to fall ill sometime or other, you are going to suffer tribulations, so however fortunate you may be you don't need to seek them out! Sometimes people sort of pick and choose among misfortunes and say: "Well, I could have put up with anything except this, well, let it be some other misfortune I don't mind". But that's the point, this is the one you've got to face. So you can't really pick and choose, you can't really avoid, if it's chosen, it isn't really a teacher of piety in this sense, because you do get, by virtue of the fact that you chose it, some satisfaction out of it. It is the unexpected thing that is the real trial, the real tribulation.

Padmaraja: Yes, I take that, but over and above that say, in a community situation, even within the Order, at times things seem a bit too easy, a kind of complacency sets in, it's almost as though you've got to create a situation just to get things moving.

S: Well, I think if you create it for yourself, or try to create it for yourself, it's a bit artificial, it's still a bit self-indulgent or could be, because, as it were, unconsciously you'll tend to create the sort of situation that you think is crucial or you would like to think is crucial; but, I think the really crucial situation will tend to be created by other people, or just by circumstances and conditions.

Mangala: It's a bit like going on retreat saying: "OK nothing's happened, so let's do ten hours of meditation today just to force things a bit.

Derek: It would seem in that case that it wouldn't have to be something negative, like an illness or a real difficulty cropping up, because you could look to the positive, try harder, try something more difficult.

S: Make more of an effort. (Pause) I think you have to avoid the Christian attitude of 'illness and tribulations are good for you because they are sent from God and are probably a punishment for your sins, they help you expiate your sins, therefore you should gratefully and humbly accept them as really good for you and just, sort of, knuckle under, and just grovel and submit'. I think one should avoid that sort of attitude. Don't over-avoid, or unnecessarily avoid illness and tribulation. Yes, don't go seeking them out, as it were, don't do anything careless or foolish, but don't go to extreme lengths to avoid them; and, when they do occur, make the best and most positive possible use of them, and don't think that they mean that you can't continue your Dharma practice. They may be giving you an opportunity of practising the Dharma in a completely new way.

Padmaraja: But there is room - maybe I put it too strongly - for stretching things a bit. You know, you've got your centre going, everything's neat, all the businesses are ticking over, and there's a kind of feeling of complacency - you're OK, but maybe in that situation there's good reason to stretch ...

S: Well, start up another project. You don't have to behave in such a way as to invite illness,

or actually to invite any actual tribulation. You can just plan to do something more. That will probably meet the needs of the situation.

Padmaraja: But it may well - such a situation could well involve an extra effort, even harder.

S: Yes, I think the situation envisaged here, of something coming from outside, something unexpected, something that catches you off-guard, something you can't avoid, something you can't do anything about, something that you have to adjust to, a situation where your wishes have not been consulted - I think that creates a quite different situation. And that can be quite positive.

Manjuvajra: That's why it produces piety doesn't it? Because if you deal with those things in a real way, you have to recognise, you have to accept a certain humility and realise that there's things outside of yourself.

S: That's right. I think we shouldn't take this word "piety" in English too literally - it's more a kind of deeply felt Dharmic attitude, this is more what it is in Buddhistic terms.

Devaraja: There's an element of insight arising from it?

S: Yes, yes.

Manjuvajra: It emphasises that you can't have a self-centred view of your existence.

S: That's true, yes. There are these outside factors that you cannot take precautions against. (Pause)

Mangala: It seems Bhante, that some people's attitude toward life actually is one of extreme caution, and trying to maintain some kind of state of affairs as they are. That seems to be their primary concern, their primary concern is defence, building up walls of protection, rather than with an expansion and just going out and creative adventure, that sort of thing, it's a very closed sort of attitude.

S: This precept surely doesn't mean that you should go out of your way to seek illness and tribulation. It doesn't even seem to mean that you should not take reasonable precautions about them. But recognise that some illness and some tribulations will be inescapable, and those you should simply not even try to avoid, because recognise that you can't - accept that, as it were existential situation, and live up to it. Practice the Dharma under those conditions. Sometimes it's a very positive thing to have to deal with certain situations, or certain factors, which are not of your own choosing. You really are brought up against the fact that outside you there is a great big objective world that does not care for your petty little wishes, that is in a way quite indifferent to you, that you are not the be-all-and-end-all of existence, that you are not the complete master of your fate, and you cannot have things all your own way and some people who have led a smooth, comfortable easy life might have started thinking something like that.

Mangala: I think people who are running centres, I think we are still largely, in a way, very fortunate in that we don't really meet any opposition or anything to be spoken of, if you see what I mean; there's been a few difficulties here and there.

S: Yes, you don't meet any outright opposition or head-on opposition. Maybe a little grumbling or apathy, but not real challenging opposition, no.

Mangala: Not from the outside.

Padmaraja: Oh, we've had a bit. Christian sects have been ripping down our posters, and we caught them doing it, and they've been to the house, and we had quite a ... there's no getting beyond their blind dogmatic attitude.

S: Well, what did they say in extenuation of their offence, as it were?

Padmaraja: Well, mainly they rationalised it by saying that fly-posting is illegal, it's ugly, unaesthetic, therefore, in spite of the fact that everyone else is doing it, they're picking on our posters ...

S: They wouldn't tear down Christian posters, presumably. It's a bit like the Lord's Day Observance Society people who argue that they are trying to protect people's freedom to enjoy a holiday, and peace and quiet on the Sunday, it's got nothing to do with their Christian beliefs about the observance of the Sabbath, when actually that's a rationalisation.

Devaraja: What came further out of that?

Padmaraja: Well, when they argued, one of them, the big boss, - we'd caught some of these kids tearing them down, absolutely - not wishing to sound cruel - sub-human - really a bunch of weirdos, so we were just driving past in the car and we got hold of them. (Laughter) I got hold of one, I managed to get the address of their headquarters, and contact the head guy ...

S: That's really good.

Padmaraja: It was pointless arguing with them, just a bunch of idiots, totally irrational, so this guy came to the house, the boss guy, and it transpired that at rock bottom he felt that meditation was evil, that in meditating you were opening yourself up to evil influences, and so really he felt bound in sending these lads out to rip down the posters.

Mangala: Were you able to convince him otherwise or make any impression?

Padmaraja: Absolutely not. When we argued, me and Vessantara, very, very long, quite vigorous - but again, anything outside Christianity is evil, that's what it comes down to. And when argued, when taken to a certain point, well he knows, because he's in touch with God, and whatever we say, he knows and only he can know, because only he is in touch with God, and there's no going against that -

S: You are evil in fact.

Mangala: I think we had this trouble in Brighton as well, because always we would put up our posters, and a couple of days later they're either been taken down or just the address had been defaced, the rest of the poster's OK, the important bits scraped off.

S: I think they had a little bit of this in Auckland too.

Mangala: I'm not sure if it's various people actually almost campaigning against us, or whether it's just hooligans just destroying something they see, anything they see, I'm not really sure about that.

S: But this person clearly typifies this attitude of avoidance, in fact even more than that. For him it's a question of avoiding evil, as it were, one might say, well, why is he so concerned with avoiding evil in that sort of way? That's probably quite a big psychological question.

How old was he?

Padmaraja: The boss guy was about forties, late forties.

Devaraja: What were they, Jehovah's witnesses?

Padmaraja: They were some sect, I can't remember the name of it.

S: But, I have heard the suggestion that you have to be very careful, sometimes it's put quite mildly in that way, you have to be very careful when you are meditating not to open yourself to evil forces. I think to some extent this comes from the Bible and the idea of demoniacal possession, and the vague idea, maybe not quite clearly or consciously expressed, that if you are in contact with, or following religions other than Christianity, you are in contact with the devil almost. You are almost devil worshippers, and meditation means opening yourself to their influence. If innocent people go along and start meditating, well what is actually going to happen is they're going to be taken over by the devil and become devil worshippers. I think there's a lot of that almost medieval demonology still at work.

Mangala: Brainwashing.

S: Yes, right.

Devaraja: Unless the fly-posting was illegal I would have personally felt you should take it further and have an injunction passed.

Padmaraja: It is illegal.

Devaraja: Oh well, then you can't do much about it but if it happened and it was in a legal place then I think you should seek an injunction ...

S: Are there legal places?

Padmaraja: Yes, there are one or two.

S: Oh, well, I think that you should watch, that would be a quite good idea. You can't do anything to protect your illegal fly-posting, obviously, but if you find that your quite legal posters are being defaced, you should keep watch, and if you find certain people are doing it and you can track them down, yes, take it up quite seriously. Because Christians do have the belief that they have almost a God-given right to infringe other people's rights, at least civic rights, in accordance with their beliefs, the beliefs of the Christians. This has always been a conviction of Christians. Well, as the Catholics put it so neatly - 'error has no rights against Truth', with a capital T. This is what they say when maintaining that, in a Catholic country, manifestations of other teachings and religions must be suppressed, this is the argument that they use: that error has no rights against truth. Only truth has rights, and of course only they know what truth is.

Devaraja: Almost, find the nearest legal spot to their headquarters ...

S: Mm, that's a good idea.

Devaraja: Shove up half a dozen posters and then watch and wait.

Padmaraja: They're very persistent, then we are as well. We've got a 100 quids worth of posters, a really beautiful poster, Dhammarati designed it, very bright, very effective.

S: Well, put them up, especially in legal places, and keep watch.

Mangala: Are there any legal places to put up posters?

Padmaraja: Well, our own shop front, plus inside other shops, bookshops, they take them and put them up.

S: It would be difficult for them to deface them there. I was thinking there might be public notice boards where one is in fact permitted.

Padmaraja: We'd have to pay. If we paid we could have huge posters, maybe we'll consider that some time.

S: The attitude of Christians in this respect is really quite insufferable very often. They really think that you have no rights against them or against Christianity - that they have an absolute monopoly of rights; they really seem to believe this. But it's really an interesting question how they can become so convinced in this sort of way. It's almost as though religion in that sort of form has nothing to do with spiritual life. You could say - this is not religion, but there's so much of this appearing associated with the term religion you can't really even say that. It would be better to say this is religion, religion has got nothing to do with spiritual life, certainly not spiritual life in the sense of individual development, and therefore we have nothing to do with religion.

Padmaraja: It was quite a sobering experience meeting this guy: cold, dogmatic and blind. Sub-human, that's the only term.

S: Well, anyway it's interesting that he came and met you because a few years ago he might not even have done that. So, on what sort of note did the discussion end?

Padmaraja: That's it really, basically we showed him the door and he went. He came at the end of a beginners' class, the place was absolutely packed, there were about 60-odd people there and we asked how many people he had at his meetings. I can't remember, it was a very small figure, in some room over a shop in South Croydon. He could see what's happening there.

S: That could reinforce his attitude, and cause him to redouble his efforts, because he could see how powerful the forces of 'evil' were becoming; he'd see it like that, how widespread, how many people they were misleading, therefore all the more need to tear down those posters.

Manjuvajra: It's a lot easier to build up a movement on hatred than metta, as well.

S: Well, a mass movement, it would seem. Identify the enemy - the first principle of all propaganda. Anyway let's pass on to number six.

(6) Enemies and misfortune, being the means of inclining one to a religious career are not to be avoided.

S: Again, it's as though you are not to go out of your way to seek them, but don't avoid them, use them as reminders of the possibilities of spiritual development. Not that you should make enemies obviously, but if you have an enemy, if someone has taken a dislike to you, or regards you as an enemy, well, as in the case that Padmaraja was mentioning, due to no fault of yours, well, face up to the situation, and use it to intensify your consciousness of the need for spiritual development, not only on your own part, but on the part of the 'enemy' so to

Speak as well. [Pause]

Mangala: Perhaps you can see the 'enemy' in a more positive sense: like one's best enemy but that's probably not what's meant here.

S: Well, sometimes enemies are useful, Nietzsche says that, because they have a way of getting at your weak spots, which your friends might avoid, and then your own attention is drawn to those weak spots and then you might get round to something about them. An enemy, certainly an honest enemy, may help to keep you on your toes. (Pause)

Some people are not capable of being enemies, they are just capable of being a bit mean and that doesn't amount to being an enemy.

Mangala: You often find, maybe when explaining the metta people say: "Well I haven't got any enemies, there isn't anybody I hate" and you feel that they are just kind of rationalising ...

S: But enemy here is being used in two different senses. An enemy objectively is someone who is trying to harm you, an enemy in the sense of the metta bhavana practice is someone whom you hate, though of course you may hate him because he is trying to harm you, or because you think he is trying to harm you. But sometimes people do say there isn't anybody whom I hate. This is really saying I am not an enemy to anybody, there is not anybody I normally hate with or without reason. But this is a little suspect, I think. I think people like to think of themselves as not hating anybody. In some ways you should be capable of hating, but people like to think of themselves as incapable of hating, which means they like to think of themselves as rather anaemic, colourless, insipid people. In some ways, yes you should be capable of being somebody's enemy, really going all out to get them, for some reason or another, it may not even be something personal, it may be in a way quite impersonal. You shouldn't be afraid of this sort of aspect of life.

Manjuvajra: In academic circles where people write papers, you get two people presenting different opinions, there's a certain sort of viciousness about the people.

S: Oh yes, that is quite unpleasant, you find this even in so-called Buddhist scholarly circles. I think this is, yes, vicious.

Manjuvajra: But it's quite often taken in the spirit of sport. People will write some rude comment about somebody else that's actually quite clever or quite funny.

S: It can be. I think very often they don't know what is happening or what they are doing. I think sometimes it is more negative than they really care to recognise, and I think it is an expression of the fact that the academic is often alienated rationally, that is to say his reason is a very alienated reason, and therefore he's very much estranged from his emotions, emotions tend to go underground, tend to assume very negative forms, and he only is able to allow himself any emotional outlet in this sort of way. You see a lot of this rather sick, vicious, academic negativity.

Nagabodhi: You hear this sort of thing like "I must respectfully disagree" and then what he goes on to do is to totally undermine any respect that anyone might feel for the other person or his argument.

S: Yes. Well, Dr Conze sometimes represents a comparatively refined version of this sort of thing. I think even in his case it's far from positive. I think it's a great blemish on much of his writing. It doesn't affect his translations luckily, but it does tend to affect some of his other writing. He sometimes makes quite snide remarks. He recognises himself in his

memoirs as a malicious character, and this certainly does come across. But he seems to take a certain gleeful pride in it instead of being rather ashamed of it as he ought to be.

Manjuvajra: Why do you think he does take a pride in it, because he certainly does?

S: It's difficult to say. I don't really know him well enough to be able to say.

Padmaraja: I've noticed in arguments sometimes, that if you get a bit worked up, your emotions start coming into it, you start getting quite passionate about something, the other person's tending to dismiss you - "Ah, what are you getting angry about?" - almost using it to undermine what you are saying, as if that invalidates the content of what you are saying - the fact that you are angry, or you feel deeply about what you are saying.

S: Yes, well you see, it's as though rationality excludes emotion; and, I have mentioned the case where a publisher in Helsinki was considering publishing the Finnish translation of my "Three Jewels", he wanted to publish a book on Buddhism, but in the end he decided against it because he said he wanted an objective account of Buddhism, not one written by a Buddhist, so he published instead I think it was a book by Alan Watts - yes, a translation of a book by Alan Watts. So in the same way rationality means necessarily cold rationality. To the extent that emotion comes in, thought goes out, you cannot have thought and emotion together - this is the assumption, so that if you show emotion, it demonstrates that you are no longer thinking, not that you can think and feel, generally. The academic seems to think that feeling is extraneous to thought, so their feeling comes out in all sort of snide, indirect, subterranean, unacknowledged, illegitimate, sneaking sorts of ways, in irony and cynicism and sarcasm; not in straightforward opposition and hostility as it sometimes did in the old days, when they roundly denounced you. They won't do that now, they'll sort of be a bit snide and cynical and try to undermine you.

Or, as if to say they don't really believe in what they are arguing about, they may be arguing coolly and logically in favour of something, but that doesn't mean they really believe in it. It's just a sort of academic game. And you by getting excited and passionate are spoiling the game, you are making it serious, and they just don't want to treat it as serious; it's just a good exchange of opinions, and who really cares in the long run?

Academic A ends up living in the same way as Academic B, he's concerned just in the same way as Academic B is with promotions and emoluments and departmental politics - that's what really matters in their lives, so he knows that he shares the same ideals with his opponent so he doesn't mind having a bit of an intellectual sparring match with him sometimes. But when you start trying to treat that seriously, well you've broken the rules of the game by introducing real passion into the situation.

Mangala: Suppose that you wanted to read a book on Christianity? Would you argue that it's best to read one by a Roman Catholic priest or someone like

S: I really say if you want to read about Christianity, read a really full-blooded book about Christianity written by somebody who really believes in it and strongly disagrees say with Buddhism or Hinduism or whatever. You'll get a much better and clearer impression about Christianity, rather than if you read one written by some lukewarm sort of semi-liberal who's not really sure if he's a Christian or not (Laughter). I find books written by people who really believe in what they are writing about much more rewarding in every way, even if you disagree with them - it doesn't matter, you get a much better view of what they think and feel, a definite point of view, against which you can define your own point of view more satisfactorily. You read a book written by a real Christian, you become aware more clearly of why and how you are a Buddhist. But if it's written by some woolly minded semi-Christian,

you won't get that sort of awareness of your own position, that heightened awareness of your own position.

So I would say, yes, if you are going to read about Christianity at all read a book by someone who really believes in it and is really prepared to stand up and fight for his position, and go all out to convince the reader. Read that sort of book about Christianity, not some little meek apologetic for being Christian at all, which gives a watered down version of Christianity, I mean sometimes even some of the older books about Buddhism written by say Christian missionaries are quite worth reading because they make no bones about where they stand, and you can just discount that, you can just subtract it as it were. It's all out in the open, whereas the scholarly pretext of objectivity is really just dishonest, because they've got all sorts of unspoken assumptions that they are not admitting. (Pause)

You could even paraphrase this by saying enemies of Buddhism are not to be avoided because they help you to understand your own position all the more clearly by defining it in relation to their position. I'm sure after encountering Christians of the sort that Padmaraja has described you are profoundly thankful that you are a Buddhist and more aware of the very good reasons for which you are a Buddhist, more aware of them than ever. (Pause)

All right let's go on to precept 7.

(7) That which cometh of itself, being a divine gift, is not to be avoided.

S: Well, how can you avoid something that comes of itself, you don't even know that it's coming, what does this mean? Perhaps it's something that has come. Why should you wish to avoid it? Can you think of an example? Well suppose someone dies unexpectedly and leaves you a sum of money in their will, this comes of itself, you haven't done anything to bring it about, you could say it's a divine gift, in a manner of speaking. It's not to be avoided, so, you can accept the legacy, but what would be meant in this sort of situation by your avoiding the gift? You might for instance feel that you haven't deserved it. You might think - what have I done to deserve this? I never did anything for aunty so-and-so, I don't really deserve this money. So you are unable to accept something which comes as a divine gift, you sort of feel like avoiding it. So what sort of mentality, what sort of attitude does this suggest?

Mangala: Guilt.

S: Guilt, a feeling of unworthiness. You don't have to deserve everything that you get, everything that comes to you. Some people have got the attitude of not being able to accept freely something which they feel they don't deserve. It's as though they feel rather they should be punished, rather than as it were rewarded, and so they feel as though they are accepting something on false pretences, so they find it difficult to accept something which just comes freely.

Mangala: That's so true, I really feel that very much.

S: Some people feel uncomfortable if they get a present out of the blue as it were, they don't quite know how to react or respond. They say what have I done to deserve this? Why are you giving this to me? You say, well, I just felt like giving it. That's quite sort of understandable to them, you're not speaking their language. You only get things when you deserve them. They see things in terms of strict reward and punishment, so if they get something without having deserved it, it's as though the scheme of things has gone a bit awry, it's as though the laws of nature aren't working properly.

Nagabodhi: It also reminds you that something might get taken away just as arbitrarily.

S: It's that as well yes. You want to have everything safe and under control. You're a good boy and you get something; you are a bad boy and you don't get it. This sort of arbitrary happening just makes you feel uncomfortable. It means anything could happen, and you just don't want that.

Mangala: It's tied up with the same sort of thing as almost having to be constantly justifying yourself and your existence, as if the fact that you are isn't enough, that you have to somehow be proving it all the time.

S: Right, yes, and that which cometh of itself as a divine gift hasn't come as reward because you've been good, as it were, not just come. It also means that you feel that there has to be a definite reason for everything, you can't accept quite that sometimes things do happen without reason, in a sense.

Manjувajra: I sometimes play down things that I've enjoyed because I feel guilty about telling other people I've enjoyed them because they maybe will get jealous or envious or whatever. I remember I used to do that a lot as a kid.

S: Or the gods might overhear. Primitive people often have that idea. Don't let on that you've enjoyed something, the gods might overhear and feel jealous and take it away from you, (Pause) and sometimes people associate say gifts - since we are talking about gifts in this precept - with certain stated occasions. If it's their birthday they can understand you giving them something, or if it's Christmas there's a reason for it, but that you should give them something when it isn't your birthday and isn't Christmas time well they just can't understand this. Why have you done it? Why are you giving me this thing? As though your own impulse of generosity, your own feeling to give something is just not enough. It has to be for a definite reason like when it's your birthday or when it's Christmas as it were. In other words they can't just accept that giving should come out of spontaneous feeling, but only because it's the done thing on certain stated occasions. It's as though they can accept that sort of giving but not real giving. They can only accept giving when they think it isn't for real.

Because it's accepted, say in the family circle, that you exchange gifts and you send cards, and everybody knows that in most cases people aren't doing it because they feel like giving you anything but because they feel obliged to give because it's your birthday, or because it's Christmas day, or New Years Day or Mothers Day, or whatever it is. This is sort of understood. And the gift that is given out of real affection is sometimes difficult to take.

Padmaraja: So you're saying that people can't accept affection, they find it hard.

S: Yes, well, this doesn't quite apply to the precept, because it's as though the divine gift means not even something which comes from a person, more like just by chance, but yes, it is true nonetheless that the sort of thing I've been speaking about suggests that people can't accept open, honest, affection, or the gift as an expression of that. They can accept that you've given them something because it's Christmas, but not that you've given them something because you like them. They're happy with the situation of thinking "they've only given it to me because it's Christmas, they didn't really want to give it", They find it easier to accept that situation strange to say, it would seem, in many cases.

Devaraja: Isn't that rites and rituals? Being caught up in rites and rituals?

S: Yes, yes.

Padmaraja: I know it's quite a generalisation again, but people find it hard to accept praise,

or if you say something good about them, whereas if you criticise them, ah, you must be telling the truth, because it seems to reinforce their own negative view of themselves; whereas, if you say something really good - you're really this or that - and they don't believe you and they can't accept it.

S: That's true, they wonder why you're trying to get round them, as it were, they think it is a sort of flattery, some definite object in view on your part, you're trying to butter them up, or something like that, they think: "What's he after now? Who does he think he's fooling? (Laughter) I know how bad I am".

All right, let's press on, we're going to try to finish this section. We've got a couple we've really gone over in previous sections.

[End of tape 20 tape 21]

S: Would someone like to read eight?

(8) Reason being in every action the best friend is not to be avoided.

S: So reason. It's associated with action. Why is reason associated with action and why is it the best friend in every action.

Manjuvajra: It throws light on it and clarity.

S: Action suggests an objective situation. It's something bodily, as it were, so that brings you into the objective world where you're dealing with other people and objective situations and there reason, in the sense of an ability to see the relation between causes and effects, is the best friend that you can have. This is essentially what reason is; The ability to deduce effects from causes, the ability to draw logical conclusions. So you need this sort of thing in the objective world, the world where action takes place. So reason in that sense is your best friend and is not to be avoided. I mean you can't carry yourself through the affairs of the objective world just on impulse or just vague feeling - you need reason too so that you may calculate consequences and estimate consequences or even foresee consequences and provide for consequences. So mindfulness is suggested, responsibility is suggested.

Mangala: Does this only apply to the external world, to action as it were or...

S: Well here it seems to be applied only to that but one can no doubt apply it more broadly than that. It can be applied to anything which is seen objectively as it were.

Mangala: Would you say reason is intelligence?

S: Well it's a question of terminology. The term used here is reason which suggests....reasoning is either inductive or deductive. Either from the general to the particular or the particular to the general. In either case there is a rational process. There is a drawing of consequences from premises or conclusions from premises.

Padmaraja: So you could say then that reason is the basis for action, a basis of action.

S: Well it's as though reason needs to be taken into consideration in action. The basis of the action is you but your best friend in that situation is reason.

Derek: Could you say the reason is the consideration?

S: The reason is the consideration? Well it's more like the reason or the rationality is what

you have to consider.

But I mean perhaps this precept is formulated because only too often in the spiritual life reason is rather discounted. This is certainly not the case with Buddhism or even as you see in the Vajrayana. One mustn't be one-sided. The fact that emotion is included doesn't mean that reason is excluded. [Pause]

Padmaraja: Could you define what you mean by reasoning?

S: Well I've just said reasoning is the drawing of logical consequences from premises. I think that will cover it. Logical thought. Reason is logical thought.

I think in this connection actually the dictionary is of greater help than one might sometimes think. Do you see what I mean? There's quite a lot of words that we use rather generally and vaguely that are in fact quite clearly defined in a good dictionary. I'm not so much thinking of the pocket dictionary but of something like my four volume *Webster* or the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I think people should look up dictionaries much more than they actually do. Find out what the dictionary has said or does say, because people have thought about these things and a lot of quite intelligent people have devoted a lot of time to defining the meaning of words as of course we actually use them, and if we look things up in a dictionary in this way we at least have a much clearer and more precise sense of the sense in which these words are ordinarily, or can be, used. What they really mean in ordinary speech and writing. It's quite difficult to give sort of offhand a sort of dictionary definition of a word unless you've sort of memorised the dictionary. I think you just should consult the dictionary much more especially with regard to those terms we're really concerned about.

For instance the word 'idea' could well be looked up in the dictionary, the word 'reason' could be looked up, the word 'passion', the word 'affluence'. It's quite good to look these sort of words up in the dictionary because actually the dictionary will give you quite a lot of food for thought and often clarify things. Again not just the pocket dictionary.

Manjuvajra: How small can you go? Would *Concise Oxford* do?

S: No it wouldn't. No, you need a dictionary which lists the different meanings of words and discriminates finer shades, and sometimes gives you a history of the development of the word, that is to say of the usage of the word with illustrations, with examples. That is best.

I mean for instance when I'm preparing a lecture I nearly always look up the important words which I shall be using in the dictionary to see what is the way in which they have been used in the past and make quite sure that I am using them - either using them in the current sense correctly or if I'm using them in any special sense of my own, that I can then make that clear.

All right let's go on to nine then.

(9) Such devotional exercises of body and mind as one is capable of performing are not to be avoided.

S: We have in fact had something like this before haven't we? 'Adopt such devotional practices as will conduce to thy spiritual development.' - Number eight under the ten things to be done. Anything in particular to be said under this heading?

Derek: I can see that probably this number nine would be more relative to the West than the

one before.

S: Yes right. Not to be avoided. One might try to think well they can be avoided and you can live your spiritual life keeping well clear of pujas and things like that. It's as though the suggestion is - the point is- that you are capable of performing and not that you particularly want to. (Pause) We have discussed devotional exercises and the place of devotion in the spiritual life and people's difficulties with devotional exercises and things like that on quite a number of occasions before so since we in fact have already gone over time and want in any case to finish this section let's go straight onto the last precept. It does bring in a slightly new point of view.

(10) The thought of helping others, howsoever limited one's ability to help others may be, is not to be avoided.

S: So what do you think this is saying? It's as though the fact that one's ability to help others is limited is no reason, is no excuse, for not aspiring to help others. Do you see what I mean? Someone might say what's the use of my thinking in terms of the Bodhisattva Ideal or taking the helping of others as an ideal? What can I do? I'm not capable of helping others. So what sort of attitude does this really suggest?

Mangala: That you can't change or develop.

S: Yes. Also a certain lack of confidence, doesn't it? It could be an avoiding of course. It could be a rationalisation. But at the very least it indicates a lack of self-confidence.

Devaraja: It's almost like people sort of put down those quite small little actions that can be performed; Helping an old lady across the road and all that kind of thing, on the basis that they seem too mundane almost to do.

S: Yes, and sometimes of course people almost say go to the extreme in another way. They say give me something very big to do for the sake of the spiritual life or the Movement but don't give me some sort of piddling responsibility, I'm capable of better things than that. Well, perhaps you are but you need to do those things that lie to hand to do.

Nagabodhi: Subhuti on Order day was talking about how he'd been feeling more and more lately that it's not enough to feel metta, that you really do have to act whenever you have an impulse to...

S: There's an aphorism isn't there in '*Peace is a Fire*' to that effect. Yes. Yes. It isn't enough to feel metta, though that is excellent. It must also be lived, it must also be acted out; and I think that is quite important. If you feel metta, well act upon it. If you feel metta towards somebody, well do something for them, give them something. Live it. Act it out. Don't just let it remain a subjective feeling. I think I've said even words to the effect that metta is not just a feeling. Metta also implies action. It certainly isn't enough to confine one's work for others to developing metta towards them in the course of your meditation, however well you do that, without actually ever doing anything for them, anything actually to help make them happy.

Mangala: It's like in a way however limited you might be there's always something you can do or...

S: Yes indeed. I think the thought of helping others though translated in this sort of way, I suspect in the original really refers to the Bodhicitta, but you shouldn't aspire to, you shouldn't avoid aspiring to develop the Bodhicitta just because

one feels objectively that one's ability to help others is quite limited. If you really have the will, if you really have the aspiration to help others the chances are that you will also develop the capacity. And perhaps you do think of helping others in a rather grandiose sort of way - doing something very spectacular rather than just quite ordinary things in relation to other people as you encounter them from day to day.

Manjuvajra: This is one of the mistakes that the sort of mainly politically motivated person makes. He wants to change the whole of society yet he won't even be a friend to his colleagues.

S: Yes right. So this helping seems to be just an idea of helping in a quite alienated way and not be related to actual helping at all.

Manjuvajra: How about the idea of performing small kindnesses for people even though they may sometimes seem to be a bit indulgent...

S: What sort of things do you have in mind? Taking a box of chocolates to them?

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: Well let it not always be chocolates. Chocolates might not be good for them even though a gift does express your affection. Maybe in giving things you should exercise a little imagination and awareness, but yes, the little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love, as Wordsworth says. As I've said in the lecture in the *Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal* series what is also important is the way that you give, the spirit in which you give, even the manner in which you give. These things too should be taken into consideration.

But yes, it's not just a question of giving but, as you say, kind acts, little kind acts. They may not be literally the helping of old ladies across the road. You may not know any old ladies, you may not particularly like that (Laughter) as much as Devaraja! (Laughter)probably more likely to appreciate the disinterestedness of the intention (Laughter).

But yes I think it amounts to not taking our own friendliness or our friendship with other people too much for granted. Not allowing it to be as it were too much of a formality as though you're officially friends and therefore you don't need to do anything about it. It doesn't have to be actually demonstrated. Well you're friends, it's taken for granted. This sort of realisation is expressed in the well known phrase that you should keep your friendships in good repair, because they can deteriorate if they're not kept in good repair. They may be quite sound, well constructed friendships but if you don't keep them in good repair, just like a sound, well constructed house they'll start deteriorating. You'll drift apart. You'll start not feeling quite so positively or so strongly towards each other. So the friendship is kept alive by mutual acts of kindness among other things, as well as things like genuine communication. It isn't enough just to take it for granted that the other person is a friend and to even direct thoughts of metta towards the other person or even to have a good communication with them. Do things for them. Express your feeling for them in acts.

I think there isn't nearly enough of that actually. I'm speaking now within the context of the Movement. Friendship is sometimes taken so much for granted, metta is sometimes taken so much for granted, that people feel perfectly free to behave in a thoroughly selfish manner.

Mangala: I think it's very often because we see friendship as something to get something from or to take something from rather than to just sort of give something to.

S: Perhaps we do. I wouldn't have thought that even ordinary people usually thought like

that, at least they had some notion of friendship however imperfect. That sounds more like business acquaintances.

Mangala: I don't sort of mean it in an actual material sense. I just sort of meant like, there's my friend, what can I get from him or if I go and talk to him I'll get something from him, rather than more a feeling to give.

S: Even so I'm not convinced that people think like that or feel like that very consciously. I think they're more just neglectful and don't realise that friendships need to be kept up.

Manjuvajra: I think there's more of a concern actually for friendship outside the friends. I suppose in a way it's because people rely on it a lot more so there's a lot more concern for your friends and some of it's kind of keeping in with them, but there does seem to be generally much more of a concern for other people in much more mundane ways. If somebody is ill, at the place where I work for example, well everybody is always asking about them, how are they, how are they getting on, but you quite often feel that within the Friends that those...if somebody is ill you wish them well and you see them when they get better.

S: It's not your responsibility whereas in the world it's as though there is more of a definite responsibility. Relations think that they've got definite responsibilities. They might not have seen you for years but if they hear that you are seriously ill they will rally round because that is part of their notion of being a relation, but perhaps people don't think of friendship quite in that sort of way. Perhaps not spiritual friendship including those sort of things. The Buddha very clearly pointed it out when the monks neglected the sick monk - He said Oh monks you have no fathers and mothers, no - I don't know if he mentioned wives but he certainly said no relations, to look after you. You should look after one another.

Derek: Maybe some people look at the idea of kalyana mitra in spiritual friendship and sort of jump over the friendship and go straight to the spiritual friendship.

S: Well they think that the spiritual excludes the material sometimes. It's enough to be a good spiritual friend without backing it up in any sort of material way. I think in hippy circles formerly to be over concerned about material things or to give say material things, was not quite done. Maybe give a bit of dope but maybe that I think was the present, wasn't it, not much else as far as I recollect, hearing at least from friends! [Laughter]

_____ : I used to generate an ideal of giving away my favourite thing that I had. My article of clothing, whatever I aspire to the most. It's almost like a deliberate form of sublimation of possessions. I would give that thing away. I think there was some of that actually went on at the same time as well.

Manjuvajra: I think there was more of a giving actually. I remember buying and receiving mainly toys or flowers.

S: Well I won't say anything about that! I could say quite a lot!

Nagabodhi: Things that people can get into when they're stoned. Sparklers and that sort of thing.

S: Yes I remember hearing quite a lot of things about sparklers. It seems to have been the rage at one time. Sparklers.

Anyway we're straying from our subject and time is really more than up.

Any final point about the thought of helping others howsoever limited one's ability to help others may be. Do whatever you can. Do your best. Don't think so much in terms of a sort of stated quantity of help. Do whatever you can. Do everything that you can. Don't try to evaluate it quantitatively. Quantitative evaluations are out of place in the spiritual life. I could probably summarise it in that way.

There's no question therefore really of one person doing more than another or less than another if both have done everything that they can, if both have done everything of which they are capable.

Perhaps we should leave it there and hope that the cooks have done the best of which they are capable.

Everyone: Thank you Bhante.

S: Yes we seem to have covered quite a good bit of ground, don't we. Even though a little hurriedly towards the end. Some good points have arisen in the course of the last ten days, haven't they.

It doesn't seem quite the seminar to transcribe and edit **in full** as it were but no doubt there are some useful plums in the pie which editor Nagabodhi will pull out with his proverbial thumb.

END OF SEMINAR

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