

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

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions
Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture One: The Origins and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Devamitra: Today we have been studying the lecture on the origins and development of the Bodhisattva Ideal. First of all we have got a question from Ratnaprabha on the meaning of the word *sattva*.

In the lecture you defined the 'sattva' part of the term Bodhisattva in a fairly straightforward way as meaning a living being. I was looking at Har Dayal's *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* and I would just like to read a paragraph from it and ask for your comments on it. 'One is tempted to believe that Pali *satta* may really be rendered by Sanskrit *sakta*, as this interpretation seems to define the chief quality of an aspirant for Bodhi. But the safest way is always to go back to the Pali without attaching much importance to the later lexicographers and philosophers. Now Bodhisattva in the Pali texts seems to mean a Bodhi being but *satta* here does not denote a mere ordinary creature. It is almost certainly related to the Vedic word *sattva* which means a strong valiant man, hero, warrior. In this way we can also understand...' (he refers to the Tibetan translation of the word, which translates as a hero or a strong man). *Satta*, in Pali *Bodhisatta*, should be interpreted as heroic being, spiritual warrior. The word suggests the two ideas of existence and struggle and not merely the notion of simple existence.

Sangharakshita: I have alluded to this somewhere, I can't remember where. I have mentioned that some authorities do hold that when the Pali term *bodhisatta* was Sanskritized it should have been Sanskritized as *bodhisakta*, that is to say, one who is making an effort towards Buddhahood. But nonetheless it was Sanskritized as Bodhisattva and *sattva* does have the [2] meaning of being. As for instance when one speaks of *sarvasattva*, that is to say all beings, one is not thereby suggesting that all beings have got those heroic qualities that Har Dayal mentions. But nonetheless it may be that originally *bodhisattva* did convey something of that sort, which was in a way lost, to some extent, later on.

There's no doubt that, however one translates or understands *bodhisattva*, the ideal is an heroic ideal. It is as though the term *sattva* probably has different levels of meaning. A general meaning, no doubt as being in the most ordinary sense and perhaps Being with a capital B, as we would say, which you can't quite reproduce in Pali or Sanskrit. So the Bodhisattva is the being *par excellence*, one

might say.

Perhaps it raises the more general question that we perhaps need to rethink our standard English versions of a number of terms. Because these versions did attain currency quite early on in the history of Buddhist studies in the West. For instance I have myself translated *bhagavan*, which is usually rendered as 'Lord', as 'richly endowed one', which I think gives the meaning better, and doesn't have all the connotations, the theistic-cum-authoritarian connotations, of the word Lord. So perhaps there's a case for reconsidering all our more generally accepted and standard renderings. Even 'the Enlightened One', for Buddha.

Ratnaprabha: Would there be a better term than the Enlightened One?

S: Well, it isn't easy to render Buddha because *buddha*, again, has got different levels of meaning, as I have suggested the term *sattva* has. Buddha clearly means in many passages, even in the Pali Canon, simply something like 'a wise man', in the most ordinary sense. But again it clearly means one who has realized the ultimate goal, one who has realized the transcendental state. So any general translation of the term would have to do justice, presumably, to those different levels of meaning if one possibly could find such a term.

Though to come back to Har Dayal, he mentioned that the Tibetans usually render *sattva* as *vira*. I think one would need to check up on that, because in a number of texts there is a double expression, *bodhisattva mahasattva*. *Mahasattva* is understood in the sense of hero. So if one understands *bodhisattva* already as hero then *Mahasattva* would be, so to speak, redundant. So that the fact that one can speak in Sanskrit of *bodhisattva mahasattva* suggests that, at least in the case of certain texts, *bodhisattva* doesn't quite convey the sense of *maha*. You have, as it were, to add to it.

Sometimes, of course, it is said that the Bodhisattva Mahasattva is an irreversible Bodhisattva, as distinct from one who is not irreversible, but that is probably a rather technical refinement.

Perhaps we shall never know what exactly Bodhisatta meant for the people who originally used the term. One could say again that one can distinguish two kinds of Bodhisattva: those who are bent on the realization of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Bodhisaktas, as it were, and those, let us say from the irreversible Bodhisattva upwards, who have actually realized at least a measure of supreme Enlightenment and whose consciousness, therefore, is saturated, one might say, with the [3] experience of Supreme Enlightenment, at least to a great extent. And they are Bodhisattvas in the sense of 'Beings of Bodhi', beings who have been born or reborn from that Bodhi experience. Not that they don't continue to make an effort but in their case the effort is not an effort in the sense in which we have to make it, it is so to speak more spontaneous. Anyway, enough about Bodhisattva.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Dharmadhara and concerns the meaning of the term Bodhisattva also.

With the term Bodhisattva you distinguish the denotation (seeking Enlightenment) and the connotation (seeking Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings) My question is, has the connotation always been implicit in the term, in which case the term perhaps could have been more accurate originally, or was the connotation added later to counteract the one-sided Arahant Ideal? If it was added later how was it possible to apply it to the Buddha himself, who was so other-regarding?

S: Let's take that stage by stage.

Dharmadhara: So the question - Has the connotation always been implicit in the term?

S: In the term Bodhisattva? Well, it must have been, inasmuch as originally the goal, Bodhi, was both other-regarding and self-regarding. Was both other-regarding and self-regarding in the case of the Buddha himself, as shown by his actual life and example. So even though the connotation wasn't, as it were, spelled out in so many words it was certainly implicit from the beginning, as the Buddha's own example demonstrates. So that means that the other questions don't really follow on, or do they?

Dharmadhara: I was asking which possibility, or was there another one and how was it that it wasn't more accurate originally then?

S: I think I have touched upon this in the lecture itself when I speak of the importance of the Buddha's own personal example. Because if you had the example of the Buddha before

you you could hardly doubt that there was an other-regarding aspect of the spiritual life. It wouldn't need to be spelled out, perhaps, in so many words. That was only necessary, as again I have suggested, when a certain deformation of the spiritual ideal had set in and when the self-regarding aspect had been over-stressed. So that there needed to be a compensatory emphasis on the part of the Mahayana on the other-regarding aspect.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Dharmapriya and concerns the writing of your memoirs.

In the lecture you draw out the distinction between saying or writing, on the one hand, and doing or being on the other. Although you make the point especially with respect to the Buddha several of us thought that a similar distinction [4] applied to you, namely, that your lectures, essays, and more scholarly books such as the *Survey* are your sayings, so to speak, whereas your memoirs are an attempt to communicate what you are, your being. Is this indeed the reason, the main reason, why you devote so much of your time and energy to your memoirs? And the second half of this, are there other important reasons for writing them?

S: This requires a little consideration, though I think I should say first of all that I don't devote very much time to my memoirs, I wish I could devote more. I haven't actually worked on them for many, many months, I think not since last May or perhaps June, but certainly not later than then.

But let's have your question bit by bit again. Because it is something that I have thought about only quite vaguely so I need to put my mind on it more intently, so to speak.

Dharmapriya: In the lecture you draw the distinction between saying or writing on the one hand and doing and being on the other (**S:** Yes, that's all quite clear.) Although you make this point especially with respect to the Buddha, several of us thought that a similar distinction applied to you, namely that your lectures, essays, and more scholarly books are your sayings, so to speak, whereas your memoirs are an attempt to communicate what you are and your being.

S: I think that whatever you write, whether it is on something objective, on a subject, or whether it is about yourself, about your personal experiences, does convey or does communicate something of you. I would say that if one read the *Survey* one would get, I think - obviously I can't speak here in the way that some others might be able to speak - but I think one would get a certain impression of me as an individual as well as an impression of the subject matter of the book itself. So I think, therefore, that one can't make an absolute distinction between that writing which communicates some subject, say Buddhism, and that writing which communicates oneself. But I would go on to make a further distinction, though I must say that these things are still in process of being sorted out in my own mind; between writing which is less and writing which is more creative. All writing - all writing that is to say short of the telephone directory or something of

that sort - is creative, in however minor a degree, or in however diluted a form. But I think probably one could say that a memoir or autobiography was more creative, or more *likely* to be creative, than a work of some other kind, a work of, let us say, a non-literary kind if one can use that expression. And I think that probably, though I am speaking a little hesitantly here, I think that probably the more fully creative the writing is the more fully the author, the writer, expresses himself *through* that. So to that extent, with those limitations one could *probably* say that I was expressing at least more of myself as a person or as an individual through things like the memoirs than through, say, things like the *Survey*.

On the other hand it occurs to me that perhaps I can now turn that around a bit and say that it depends, even [5] then, on what exactly one is writing about - whether, let's say in the *Survey* or whether in the memoirs. If, say, in the memoirs I describe how I went for a walk with somebody and we had a certain conversation, to what extent am I communicating myself? Am I communicating myself really to a very great extent? On the other hand if I give, in the *Survey*, my feelings about a certain aspect of Buddhism, an aspect of some importance, an aspect about which I feel very deeply and with regard to which, perhaps, I have some experience, *am* I not communicating myself? So it is not so clear cut, not so straightforward, as one might expect. But nonetheless I do appreciate the distinction, I think the distinction probably has some significance.

Kulamitra: When you were saying that, in a way you are talking about different aspects of yourself. To talk about yourself implies a sort of uniformity, in a certain way, but maybe there are so many levels of self-experience that different things communicate different aspects of oneself.

S: That's true, Yes, I think the question that arises is, is there any literary form that would enable one to communicate all aspects of oneself - one's deeper experiences as well as one's more superficial ones, one's inner ones as well as one's outer ones?

I have begun to suspect that there is probably only one literary form that enables one to do that, and that is probably the Dostoyevskian novel. [Laughter] But I think it is rather late in the day to be embarking upon any venture of that sort. But you see what I mean, if you have read Dostoyevsky, and you probably will.

So therefore probably one has to be satisfied with revealing or communicating different aspects of oneself in different ways through different literary forms. Many people have remarked on the fact that they see in, for instance, the *Travel Letters* a side of me which they haven't seen in my other writings. So to the extent that they are interested in a more comprehensive view of me, individually, that certainly helps them to achieve that. It therefore corrects any possible view that one is a sort of disembodied intelligence. [Laughter] I have been continuing my letter from Tuscany, I wasn't able to quite finish it in Italy itself and I couldn't help remarking on the number of occasions in the course of the pages in which I described my visit to Naples, that I mention having cups of tea and coffee. One wouldn't usually find any mention of such things in a work, for instance, like the *Survey* or even the *Eternal Legacy*. [Laughter] So one is reminded that the writer

does actually have a physical body with certain needs, whereas one might have overlooked the fact and thought of him in terms of a disembodied intelligence.

But it is a quite interesting question, one would in fact like there to be a literary form which enabled one to express adequately all the different aspects of oneself. But that is quite a tall order, even for the Dostoyevskian novel.

Dharmapriya: There may be; I am not sure if this part is answerable as were the last questions, it's basically to do with the... well, you could almost ask the question why do you spend any time, almost, on your memoirs. [6]

S: Well, one might say why does one spend any time at all writing? This brings me to a much broader question which applies especially to creative writing. I have been considering recently, and I have been giving some thought to this, what is the nature of creative writing, what is one doing, what is the nature of artistic creativity in general? I have come to the conclusion that creative, artistic activity is in a way a quite normal way of dealing with, assimilating, coming to terms with, integrating, one's experience of life itself, one's experience of reality if you like. And at one level or another it is going on all the time in the case of all human beings. If it isn't going on or not going on to an appreciable extent you are virtually dead. This is something I want to think more about and perhaps write something about a little later on. But do you see what I am getting at? I see writing, especially, because that is what I am more familiar with, as having a sort of existential function, as enabling us to cope with reality, cope initially with reality with a small 'r', as it were.

Because, when one is actually writing, when one sits down to write, what is one doing, what is one conscious of doing? You are grappling with your material, and one really is grappling, very often. You are surrounded by a sort of chaos, a chaos of impressions and ideas and experiences and you are grappling with them, and you are trying to reduce them to some kind of order. This is basically what you are doing. It's as though through you, through your experience, the universe, almost, starts becoming subject to a sort of order, at least ideally. Do you see what I am getting at?

Rilke had this idea of the poet recreating existence, didn't he? - and that the poem was the recreated form of experience, of life. So I think of creative activity, think of creative writing, in that sort of way and of it as having a spiritual function, therefore, ultimately.

I think one can't really separate the written from the spoken word. When people talk, especially people who know one another, very often they are trying to make sense of their experience, they are trying to reduce it to some sort of order. If you listen to ordinary, if one may say so, uneducated people, talking about something that happened, you can actually see them doing this. You can see them actually shaping, or hear them shaping their experience and reducing it to something which they can accept and assimilate. You can even see the experience itself, or their version of it, changing as they talk about it. So through literature we do the same thing, we shape reality, we make it more assimilable.

So when I am writing about Buddhism you could say that I am *grappling* with Buddhism, I think you can see this quite clearly in the *Survey*, I am grappling with it. I have got this mass of material, I am trying to make sense of it, I am trying to come to terms with it, trying to integrate it into my own life, as it were. But when I am writing my *Travel Letters* I am doing exactly the same sort of thing but with another aspect, another facet, of reality in the form of, so to speak, ordinary life. And one can't really distinguish in principle, with regard to subject matter, between the two types of writing. Except that perhaps one may be more creative, or if you like more imaginative inasmuch as your subjective contribution is greater. Or at least your overt or explicit subjective contribution is greater. [7]

Perhaps that throws some light, though it is all still quite tentative and provisional, not anything that I have as yet fully worked out.

Kulamitra: Could I just ask, in what way is writing, then, better than just reflecting, in the sense of that sort of assimilation of chaos?

S: I think it is better because it is much more difficult. If you are just reflecting it can be quite dreamy if you are not careful. Having to write, really get it down in black and white, in actual words, ties you down and makes demands on you that reflection just doesn't do. *[Laughter]* Reflection is too easy, it allows you to get away with too much. You think you have come to terms with something but you haven't, you have just got a vague, dreamy sort of impression, you haven't really reduced it to a precise and concrete form which you can grasp and apprehend, which is what you really need to do.

Also to come back, just for a moment, to the memoirs specifically. Memoirs are concerned with one's past, and I think when one writes memoirs, especially after many years, it's a way also of coming to terms with one's past and therefore to an extent with oneself. It's a way of bringing oneself up to date about oneself. I have certainly found writing this last instalment of memoirs, that when I come to write about something that happened thirty years ago I can quite often understand it better now as a result of writing about it than I did at the time when I was actually experiencing it. And that is surely a gain, one might say.

Anyway, let's pass on.

Devamitra: Still with the subject of communication, Kulamitra has a question about the nature of Buddhist communication.

Does the Buddha, as it were, have a direct impact on another person, as it were 'being' to 'being' which couldn't come under the heading of words or subtle gestures or even telepathy in the sense of a non-verbal transmission of concepts? Is there something else going on besides all these forms of communication? I am thinking obviously about those incidents you mentioned where the Buddha, with a very few words, has a very big impact.

Is there a sort of impinging on another person, as it were?

S: I think we can probably approach this by thinking in terms of our experience of other people. I think we will find that the being of other people always does impinge on us in that way. Because we often get a quite definite impression of someone, whose being impinges on our being before we have even spoken, before we have even looked at one another. Do you see what I mean?

(Kulamitra: Yes.) So presumably the same thing can happen in the case of a Buddha and an ordinary person, the being of the Buddha can impinge on the being of the ordinary person. But inasmuch as it is the being of the Buddha it will impinge on him only to the extent that he is open to such impingement. To some extent at least he or she will have to be - well, if not on the same wavelength on something approximating to it. Not that the Buddha can [8] hit you over the head, so to speak, with his being.

Kulamitra: But if that were so, and there was some sort of correspondence between the two people, would that impingement, as it were, have a directly transforming effect on the other person without any sort of conceptual or even overtly emotional channels? Does it sort of....

S: There would need to be an element of co-operation from the other person. Other people can impinge on us in such a way as to change our mood, to change our mental state, but a permanent change comes about only with Insight. And a Buddha cannot produce Insight in you, you remaining as it were passive, by his being impinging on yours. He can only give you an opportunity to develop your Insight as a *result* of the impingement of him, of his Insight, on your being.

Kulamitra: Could he, as it were, make it easier for you to be receptive as well? Through that sort of

S: Aha! This raises all sorts of questions. There is a parallel discussion in Christian theology, that you need the grace of God to be saved. But even in Christianity you are not completely passive, you have to be able to receive that grace. So the question arises, is there another grace which has enabled you to *receive* the grace? You seem to have got yourself into that sort of position, if you see what I mean, but within a non-theistic framework, of course.

So do you need the help of the Buddha, one might say, to enable you to be open to the possibility of the Buddha helping you? Otherwise you are involved in a regression to infinity. So perhaps it is best not to take even that second step backwards, or first step perhaps I should say. Just say that one needs to be open to the Buddha, to whatever the Buddha can give. But it would probably be unwise to speak of your needing further help from the Buddha or initial help from the Buddha to be open to the possibility of his helping you when you are open to him. Perhaps the difficulty is mainly verbal anyway, or perhaps I should say conceptual.

But yes, I think the being of one person can certainly impinge directly on the

being of another and therefore the being of the Enlightened person on the being of the unenlightened person. That is, I think, the short answer to the question.

Ratnaprabha: What does this word *directly* mean? In other words are you talking about through one's sense impressions of the other person or through some other medium or through no medium at all?

S: What is the basis of the distinction between direct and indirect? Presumably by direct we mean when the person is actually present. But that again presumably has reference to their *physical* presence, because the limitation of space doesn't apply, presumably, to mental states - to spirits, let us say. But again in what sense can you distinguish between mind and body? Because in Buddhism the Buddha makes a point that body and mind are neither the same *nor* different. So yes, what does one mean by directly? Directly means when [9] the person is himself, let us say, actually present, whatever that might mean. What does one mean by saying that someone is present? Because one can certainly have a sense of someone's actual presence without them being there physically. I don't mean just a kindly thinking of them but a sense of actual, direct, almost physical presence without actually there being anybody's physical body there.

So a direct impingement takes place when you have the experience, let us say, of the other person being actually present, regardless of whether you experience that as a physical presence or not.

Kulamitra: So you could, perhaps, if you made the effort or were receptive enough, or whatever, you could, as it were, feel yourself in the presence of the Buddha, or the Buddhas, and that kind of impingement could take place without...

S: Yes, because that experience is not dependent on the experience of their physical bodies. (**Kulamitra:** Right.) This is what takes place, supposedly, in visualization practice, that eventually one has an actual experience of the presence of the Bodhisattva concerned, whose being then impinges upon yours. This would of course be what is technically called the *jñānasattva*, the knowledge being. The *samayasattva*, the conventional being, being a mental construct of your own, on the basis of which the *jñānasattva* is able to manifest.

Kulamitra: So could you say that that construct of your own, in a way, is your own effort and receptivity?

S: Yes, you could certainly say that, because you have to create that, you have to bring that into being, which is not an easy thing to do.

I think quite a few people have had this experience of what one could only call 'presence', independently of the experience of any particular person's physical body. It can be the presence of someone you do in fact know and with whom you are on other occasions in physical contact or it could be someone of a different order of being, so to speak, someone deceased or an angelic being, or just a being you couldn't identify, couldn't classify as being this or that kind of being.

So that presence is essential to the impingement of being on being. The physical body doesn't have to be present, though, of course, more usually people do impinge on us in that way through their physical bodies operating on our physical senses. One could perhaps even say that that is an *indirect* impingement, because the impingement takes place through the medium of two physical bodies in external contact.

In fact you know, I am sure, from your own experience, that often you can be in close contact with someone physically but they are not, as it were, present to you. You have no experience of their presence.

Sudhana: Are you quite likely to experience this presence, not in the physical form, if you are in the dhyanas; more likely to experience it?

S: Well, there is the likelihood of that in relation to the devas, let us say, which correspond to those particular [10] dhyana states.

Perhaps also, I say this a bit tentatively, perhaps also you need to be not just receptive to experiencing presences of that kind, but to be thinking in terms of such experience, or to be expecting such experience, or to be consciously open to such experience. Rather than, for instance, to be thinking in terms of understanding or realizing the truth, in so to speak a more abstract sense, a more abstract way. Perhaps one can think of the devas as just Presences, with a capital 'P', rather than as gods. They are Presences, of which you become aware when you are in a higher, more concentrated, more refined state of consciousness.

Ratnaprabha: You said that one might say that if somebody was impinging upon one through one's ordinary physical senses that they are not really directly impinging upon one. So again, what is this *direct* impinging, is there such a thing possible as direct impinging upon one?

S: Well, presumably if impingement through the physical body is indirect, then direct impingement must be through or by means of what for want of a better term we call the mind, the soul, or the spirit.

But again this in a sense raises the question of the relationship between body and mind. Though I think it is correct to say that in Buddhism it is possible to have mind, let us say, or consciousness without certainly a gross physical body. Though I have said in a more general sense, a broader sense, that I did tend to think that where there was mind there was always body, but in a very subtle sense.

But clearly the presence that we feel is not the presence of a physical body. Take, for instance, what happens when someone dies. Usually your experience is of their being present one moment, then they die and they are no longer *present*. Their physical body is there, but that physical body, by itself, lying there, does not give you an experience of a person being present. So something, somehow, is no

longer there, something somehow has become dissociated from that physical body, which is now just a corpse, and which you don't speak of any longer as him but as it.

So it would seem, notwithstanding the difficulty of defining relationships between body and mind, that presence and direct impingement refer really to the mind, whatever that may be. It is difficult to define mind except simply as not-body, and body as anything except not-mind. But everybody knows, presumably, what is meant.

Anyway let's pass on, I am not sure how many questions we have got so I am not sure whether I should be proceeding at a leisurely pace or answering as briskly as I can.

Devamitra: I think you've got it about right. We have got a total of twelve questions and we have had four and it has taken three-quarters of an hour.

S: I think I need to go a little more briskly, then!

Devamitra: The next question in that case comes from Sthirananda. [11]

What is it that the Sangha had lost with the death of the Buddha, given that there were Arahants around at the time?

S: That's quite an interesting question because one gathers from the Pali Canon that the Arahants had attained whatever the Buddha had attained, but nonetheless the non-presence of the Buddha seems to have made a tremendous difference. Or it could be that that is the way in which it has been presented to us by the existing records. There are accounts which speak of Ananda as, in a sense, taking the Buddha's place after his death, after his own attainment of Arahantship, and actually being criticized for going around like, so to speak, a second Buddha. So we are not really quite sure what exactly did happen.

But if, as I said, the Arahants had attained whatever the Buddha had attained one would not have expected the Buddha to have been so greatly missed, as he appears to have been. So again one is forced to ask the question, did the Buddha, perhaps, not have something that even the Arahants didn't have? So what was that, was there a difference of degree between them? That again raises the question, what does one mean by an Arahant? Can we really take it that the Buddha's disciples at the time of his death were Arahants in the strict later technical sense of the term? Perhaps we can't be so rigid or so clear-cut.

Kuladeva: I recently read a book by Miss I. B. Horner called *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected* in which I think she is following very much in the footsteps of Mrs Rhys Davids, suggesting that in early Buddhism, the very early Shakyan Buddhism, the Buddhism of the Buddha lasting up to about one hundred years after the Parinirvana, in this particular time there was no particular idea of a static, fixed goal and it was more as if the Arahants, the Buddha's so-called Enlightened disciples, were not Enlightened in the way that the Buddha

was, but that they would go on to further lifetimes in which they would become more and more Enlightened. But that in the next phase, which she calls the monastic Buddhist phase which leads up to the Hinayana phase, the goal became static and limited and it was seen that an Arahant would gain Enlightenment here and now, whereas before the here and now wasn't prevalent.

S: I think I partly agree and partly disagree with that. I think it is quite clear that the goal became too narrowly or too rigidly defined, I think there is no doubt about that. But none the less, in what seem to be early parts of the Canon we do have quite explicit statements by the Buddha to the effect, for instance, that 'O monks, I am freed from all bonds, human and divine; you also, O monks, are freed from all bonds, human and divine.' And that does suggest a sort of equality of attainment between the Buddha and his Arahant disciples.

But it is, in a way, quite a fascinating speculation not only that the Arahants still had some work to do - well, the Buddha at least *knew* that they did. But I am not sure what evidence there is for that. Because for [12] instance a synonym for Arahant in the Pali Canon is *asekha* that is to say a non-learner, one who has nothing further to learn. At what period that came into use perhaps is difficult to say, but one certainly has the impression that it was current during the life-time of the Buddha, this distinction between *sekha* and *asekha*. But perhaps it would be premature to say anything very definitely, except that, yes, it does seem quite clear that there was a sort of hardening of the ideal or the understanding of the ideal, certainly within about a hundred years of the Parinirvana. And it is that hardening, perhaps, that gives rise to all these sort of questions, all these sort of difficulties. And very likely the original Sakyan or Buddhist way of looking at things was more open, more fluid, less fixed. I think her general point is probably quite valid.

But anyway, what was that question? We have strayed a little way away from it?

Sthirananda: What was it that the Sangha had lost with the death of the Buddha, given that there were Arahants around at the time?

I was sort of thinking in terms of influence. You mentioned in the lecture about the Buddha's tremendous influence. It doesn't seem...

S: But then if the Arahants were no less Enlightened than the Buddha, which at least some passages of the Pali scriptures suggest, then that influence would have been there but emanating from different individuals. Perhaps in retrospect the compilers of the scriptures in a sense exaggerated the position of the Buddha? Perhaps that is what happened.

Kulamitra: Maybe, then, you could think of influence depending as much on *punya* as *prajna*, because according to tradition the Buddha would have had more *punya*, wouldn't he?

S: Yes, this is the Mahayana view. One can find some anticipations of it in the later parts of the Pali Canon. But, there again that raises some difficulties.

Because you have this question of *punya* and you have also the question of wisdom, or what was later on called *jñāna*. And you have this concept, which seems a little odd in a way, of seeing quantity, let us say, of wisdom, co-existing with a lesser or a greater quantity of *punya*. So one is not concerned with wisdom but with *punya*, or a combination of wisdom and *punya*. So could the wisdom not act directly, did it have to act through the medium of *punya*? The Mahayana sometimes suggests as much.

Kulamitra: Don't we see that in a more mundane way when we see people with charisma having a very big influence but not necessarily having a substance that would make that a good thing?

S: Yes, that's true. For instance it is said, though again this is later doctrine, that due to *punya* the Buddha was of extraordinary impressive appearance, tall, well built, handsome, dignified, with a beautiful speaking voice. All this was due to *punya*. It didn't make his [13] wisdom more but it did provide his wisdom with a more effective instrument, and perhaps in this way the Buddha had a greater influence and it was *that* which was missed. But it wouldn't be missed, surely, by those who were more spiritually developed, because they would be able to perceive the wisdom behind the greater or lesser quantities, so to speak, of *punya*.

But then of course if one does think in terms of greater or lesser degree of *punya* one does presumably go back to previous lives and then one does go back to this whole question of the Bodhisattva career and the fact that some people are in a position, for one reason or another, to provide their ultimate Enlightenment experience with a more adequate basis for its manifestation in the world. It's a very difficult subject, one can become perhaps too theoretical. But it does seem that on the whole the Buddha's disciples, though they are presented as technically no less Enlightened than the Buddha himself, do not seem to have exerted, as far as we know, the kind of influence that he did. This must raise certain questions.

Perhaps we need to comb through the texts to a much greater extent than we already have done, think about them more carefully before we can consider the question properly. Miss Horner seems to have made some effort in that direction but she was a rather dry old lady, with I am not sure how much spiritual penetration.

Kuladeva: She does also say in the book that this early idea is resurrected in the Bodhisattva Ideal.

S: Yes, I would broadly agree with that, of course. This is what I have maintained in the *Survey*; in principle this is what happened, leaving aside the details. That the Bodhisattva Ideal doesn't represent a one-sided spiritual altruism, but a resurrectional revival of the more balanced ideal of original Buddhism, from which Hinayana, in a strict sense, was a deviation.

Anyway, let's move on.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Dharmapriya and concerns the first councils.

Dharmapriya: Actually it is to do with the first council of Vaisali, not the one immediately after the Buddha's death.

The split between the Mahasanghikas and Sthaviravadins is said to have occurred at the first council of Vaisali. I have however heard it said that you suspect that no such council took place. Could you comment on this and if no such council occurred do you know how the split occurred historically?

S: Well, a split would not have occurred simply due to a council. A split may have come more in evidence in the course of a council. We know that a split occurred because we know that there were those two divergent historical developments. But recent scholars have been delving into this whole question of the councils and they have exhibited considerable scepticism about, I think, all of them, really. So I think one has to regard the whole subject as being still under discussion. I don't think one could say that any definite conclusion has been arrived at by anybody. The different scholars [14] have their different views, I think there certainly is no consensus. But doubt has been cast on, I believe, all of these councils in the form that they have been represented in Buddhist historical traditions.

Devamitra: We have two more questions on this section. The first question comes from Prakasha.

S: Yes, but first let me refer to some literature. One can look at Warder. Warder goes into the question of the councils, and I believe so does one of the contributors, I forget - who did that big new illustrated book on Buddhism, what is it called?

Kuladeva: Bechert?

S : Edited by Bechert, yes.

Dharmapriya: Heinz Bechert?

S: Yes, you know the one I mean.

Tejananda: *The World of Buddhism*.

S: Yes. They will give one some idea of the latest scholars' thinking on the subject. But that there was a divergence which may have crystallized in connection with a council or councils, is very clear.

What were the practical consequences of the split between the Mahasanghikas and the Theravadins of the first council? Did they do the same practices and continue to live their lives in the same viharas, for example? I am not certain whether they quietly agreed to differ and just got on with their respective traditions or whether the difference really set them apart in a more thoroughgoing way.

S: We don't know what the practical consequences were because there are really no detailed records at all, but we can extrapolate backwards from the accounts given by some of the Chinese pilgrims. Because the Chinese pilgrims make it clear that at the time they visited India, in at least some monasteries, bhikkhus who were followers of the Hinayana and bhikkhus who were followers of the Mahayana lived side by side, observing approximately the same monastic discipline. And that they differed only inasmuch as the Mahayana bhikkhus studied the Mahayana sutras in addition to the Hinayana sutras and also worshipped the Bodhisattvas. So that it would seem, extrapolating backwards from those accounts, that at least to some extent, if not to a great extent, the differences were sort of scholarly differences, in a sense, rather than organizational cleavages, such as you get in the case of the different Christian churches. A bit like, for instance, one might say - perhaps it's a hazardous sort of parallel - the differences between high church and low church and broad church in the Church of England. You may get working in the same parish one priest who is rather low church, another who is rather high church and venerates the Virgin Mary, and the broad church might occupy some sort of middle ground. Do you see what I mean, it was rather perhaps, more like that? [15] Until of course the Vajrayana came along, when there was a sort of collapse, one might say, of monastic discipline and those who were following the Vajrayana could hardly remain within the monastery in those cases where they no longer observed the monastic discipline. As we know many didn't, quite consciously and deliberately - those who conformed more to what we call the *siddha* ideal. But it would seem as though so long as followers of the Hinayana and followers of the Mahayana continued to observe the common monastic discipline they didn't feel any need to separate or to live in different establishments usually, simply on account of their different spiritual principles or religious views. It's rather like it might be in an FWBO community, if you are all living in the same community and you all agree to follow the same way of life, you all agree that you will meditate morning and evening, have puja morning and evening, and you would be vegetarians and abstain from alcohol and follow right livelihood, well, some of you might be studying Mahayana scriptures, some of you might be studying the Pali Canon, others might be reading translations of Tibetan Tantric works. There would be that difference of emphasis among you, and you might even hold quite strong views, you'll have quite definite preferences, but so long as you observe the common way of life, the common ethical principles, you could still live together quite happily. Something like that seems to have happened in India within the Sangha, to a great extent, it seems. The Vinaya being the unifying factor, rather than the spiritual ideal in the more sophisticated..., I mean, the Vinaya provided the ethical basis for the practice of the Hinayana or of the Mahayana as the case might have been.

Perhaps one could say that as Buddhism moved eastward, say to China and

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Japan, to some extent the Mahayana became dissociated from its Hinayana monastic basis. Also, of course, there was a complicating factor inasmuch as a sort of Mahayana Vinaya sprang up for Bodhisattvas, but that was observed, usually in India as in Tibet later on, in *addition* to the Hinayana Vinaya, as a Mahayanistic supplement especially for Bodhisattvas. But the whole thing became, in the end, rather ponderous.

Ratnaprabha: Sorry, Bhante, I didn't quite catch, what was it that happened when the Dharma moved eastward to China and Japan?

S: That the Mahayana became to some extent dissociated from its basis in Hinayana Vinaya. In some cases that was more or less abandoned - in some cases, not in all by any means - and the so-called Bodhisattva Vinaya, Mahayana Vinaya, was observed in its place, especially in Japan.

Devamitra: There is a further question on the split from Ratnaprabha.

You described the birth of the Bodhisattva Ideal in terms of one party in the Sangha being particularly inspired by the Buddha's actual life rather than only his teachings, and the other being more inspired by his teachings. And you illustrate this by reference to incidents from the Buddha's life. [16] These are basically historical matter-of-fact incidents, the ones that you mention. However all the stories you relate are from the Pali Canon of the Theravadins, and these are the successors of the other party, the ones who were said to have been *less* interested in his life, while the Mahayana scriptures seem often to be concerned with what you might call the Buddha's archetypal life. So is it really so that the party which became the Theravadins were more interested in the Buddha's teachings than in his life, given that they preserved all these very beautiful incidents in their own scriptures?

S: Well, one can look at it like this. If one speaks of the Hinayana, if one speaks even of the Theravada and of their Canon, that Canon in a sense is not a Hinayana and not a Theravada Canon. Because it contains, because it preserves, quite a number of teachings to which the Hinayanists or Theravadins as such didn't attach very much importance, but they recorded them, they didn't allow them to be forgotten because that was their overall attitude, one of literalism, and to preserve whatever they could of the historical Buddha's teachings. So it is actually more from the different versions of the so-called Hinayana scriptures that we can get a better idea of what Buddhism was like in the very early days. It is difficult to reconstruct, say, Sakyan Buddhism, as Miss Horner calls it, from Mahayana scriptures, for obvious reasons. In other words we have to get our evidence of what very early Buddhism was like from the Hinayana rather than from the Mahayana sutras because the Hinayana sutras, though they do represent a sort of deformation, are a deformation of something that was originally undeformed, and do preserve some traces of it. Whereas the Mahayana sutras on the whole represent an effort to achieve a complete reconstruction and are not very useful as sources for the form taken, at least, by the Buddha's own

historical teaching.

That is open to some reservations, because there are... some of the Ratnakuta group of sutras seem to contain some traces of the Buddha's original teaching, but these haven't been fully assessed yet, it's difficult to say. But they certainly do come closer to, say, the Buddhism of the Buddha, as a historical figure, than do quite a lot of the Mahayana sutras. It's very doubtful, say, whether the White Lotus Sutra has any direct connection with the teaching of the historical Buddha. It is a sort of imaginative reconstruction, you might say, but that is not the case with the Hinayana scriptures. They are not imaginative reconstructions. However distorted the teaching has become, or however selective, at least there were some elements of the original teaching in it from which it would seem possible to reconstruct that original teaching. Therefore we have to depend on the so-called Hinayana scriptures, that is not just the Pali Canon but other versions of Hinayana scriptures that have survived, say, Chinese and Tibetan, on them rather than on Mahayana sutras.

To put it in a nutshell, from the Mahayana sutras we can usually get a better understanding of the *spirit* of Buddhism, but if we want to reconstruct the original letter through which that spirit found expression, we have to go [17] principally to the Pali Canon. I hope this doesn't sound too complicated. It's much simpler if you are a Christian or a Muslim, you have just got your Bible and your Koran and that's that! Well, no, perhaps it isn't quite so simple, not if you read the higher criticism, but then most Christians and most Muslims don't bother with that anyway.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, the distinction that you make, or the reason for the split in the preference of one party for the teachings and the other for both the teachings and the life of the Buddha, is that your own observation or have you come across that from the work of other scholars or from the tradition?

S: I believe it is my own. Because one must bear in mind what I was trying to do in this particular lecture. It's the first lecture in the series on the Bodhisattva Ideal. Historically the Bodhisattva Ideal is distinguished from the Arahant Ideal. So I wanted right at the beginning of the series to give people who perhaps didn't know very much about Buddhism at that time, just a very broad idea, a non-technical idea, of the basis of that whole distinction, that whole difference even. This is what I was trying to do. And it did seem to me, thinking about it, that the Mahayana gave more importance to the life of the Buddha, to the personal example, and the Hinayanists certainly to the word of the Buddha and the literal, not to say literalistic, sense.

Kulamitra: Since the history is quite complicated and probably very difficult to be certain of, do you think it would be quite good if, as time goes by and our own Movement gathers strength, we just talked about the Bodhisattva Ideal in its own terms without reference to its historical origins?

S: I think so, except that we would probably have to drop the term Bodhisattva, because that is a historically conditioned term. Perhaps just to speak about the

Buddha's life, the spiritual life as we understand it. Certainly when talking to newcomers there's no need to have to unravel with them all these historical complications, that's only confusing. Just simply say Buddhism teaches a balanced spiritual ideal. Buddhism emphasizes both wisdom *and* compassion. Though they might come along one day and say, 'I just read a book about Buddhism which doesn't say anything about compassion at all', and you say, 'Ah well, that must be written by a Theravadin, and they departed quite early on from that originally balanced teaching of the Buddha himself, they played down compassion. But we don't do that, we stick to the Buddha's own teaching and we emphasize both wisdom *and* compassion.' But you don't need to explain all that to begin with.

I think this will happen with us more and more, as we sort out the Buddhist tradition, as we sort out what is really useful, what perhaps the Buddha really did teach. Certainly what we ourselves find helpful in our own spiritual lives. I think this is already beginning to happen in the Movement.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Tejananda. [18]

Tejananda: This is on the nature of the experience of mahakaruna.

To what degree does an Enlightened being actually feel the pain of unenlightened beings? Does this actually amount to an unpleasant experience for the Enlightened being?

There is a second part, would you like me to just leave that?

S: That is quite a big question, in some ways it's an unimaginable question. I have, I think, quoted somewhere, maybe in the *Survey*, Tennyson's line 'some painless sympathy with pain'. But I don't think sympathy with pain can be completely free from pain. And if one thinks in terms of the suffering of all sentient beings, that is a tremendous amount of suffering. But then on the other hand if one thinks of the Enlightenment of an Enlightened being, that's a tremendous amount of Enlightenment. So it could be that the experience of Enlightenment is able to sustain, as it were, the experience of quite a lot of pain. We have, I think, to think in some such terms, though it is very difficult for us to bring these two principal terms together and really imagine what it would be like to experience, at the same time, the suffering of all sentient beings *and* Enlightenment. We can sort of mentally construct the idea, but it is very, very difficult to even begin to grasp it. What was the next part of the question?

Tejananda: This is a more general area.

What is the nature of feeling, for instance emotion, happiness, like, dislike, sadness, that an Enlightened person would experience; assuming that passionlessness does not mean that they experience no thing at all? Is it conceivable, for instance, that, if two Enlightened people were looking at a work of art, one could express an, as it were, subjective liking for it, and the other a subjective, as it

were, dislike?

S: This raises questions of spiritual experience, artistic experience, creative experience, which I touched on at the very beginning. One might even ask, well, would a work of art *mean* very much to an Enlightened being? What would it have to give him, as it were, if his work was really done, one might say? But obviously one speaks with some hesitation about the experience of the Enlightened being. I think there is always a temptation to see it as something quite remote, something, as it were, separate from life, not involved with life. For us it's very difficult to think in terms other than those of either being involved in life and over-involved in a way or completely separated from it. Difficult for us to think in terms of being involved with life, for instance living life, experiencing it, even in a sense enjoying it, but at the same time *in*, so to speak, an Enlightened way. Because the Enlightened person eats, the Enlightened person drinks, the Enlightened person speaks, the Enlightened person even sleeps, does all the things, up to a point, that ordinary unenlightened people do. So the Enlightened person might even enjoy a work of art. But no doubt it wouldn't mean the same thing to him that it meant to an unenlightened person who was still [19] on the spiritual path. He might see what was in it in a manner of speaking, without again, in a sense, though only in a sense, feeling it. But again it is very difficult to imagine that kind of experience.

Tejananda: You say 'in a sense', an Enlightened person wouldn't feel it?

S: Well, again I am trying to guard against the extreme of dissociating the Enlightened person from life, from experience. He wouldn't stand in front of it, for instance, feeling cold and indifferent, in the way for instance that a person would who had no love for art, no interest in art. It wouldn't be that sort of attitude. But what sort of attitude *would* it be?

Tejananda: But to take it away from the question of paintings, or something like that, just with regard to feelings in general. A feeling of happiness, or a feeling of sadness, would that feeling be possible?

S: It does seem quite clear from, say, the Pali scriptures that the Buddha, an Enlightened being doesn't experience negative mental states, doesn't experience sorrow. We are specifically told that the Arahants didn't experience sorrow at the time of the death of the Buddha, whereas other beings did. But I don't think that one could say that Arahants don't experience happiness. Well, the Dhammapada says 'Nirvana is the supreme bliss', so presumably that bliss is experienced, but again it's not the same kind of bliss, or not bliss in the same sense as what one normally experiences. So again one leaves unanswered the question what kind of bliss it is.

Tejananda: I suppose it is the same with regard to the sorrow. I mean, with respect to the feeling of unity and therefore sympathy with people who are suffering...

S: Yes, it is the type of experience peculiar to the Enlightened person and having only perhaps the remotest analogy for the sort of sympathy that we feel with the sufferings of other people. We can be sure that there would not be indifference, but there would not be the sort of identification into which we are liable to fall. Beyond that, perhaps, it is very difficult to say anything.

We are told that the Buddha bore physical suffering, mindful and self-possessed. We are not told that he enjoyed it, but he bore it mindful and self-possessed, it did not disturb his mind. We are also told that dhyanic experience, blissful dhyanic experience, did not disturb his mind. So it is as though the Enlightened person possesses the capacity to experience but he doesn't make of that experience a basis for any kind of unskilful reaction or response.

You could presumably imagine the Enlightened person as experiencing intense sorrow at the sight of the suffering of sentient beings, but at the same time, you might say, it might sound paradoxical even self-contradictory, that his mind would not be *moved* by that sorrow, not in a reactive way. He wouldn't for instance act *impulsively* as a result of that, or without due thought. Though that [20] doesn't mean I am saying that a Buddha would take thought in the way, perhaps, that we might. His mind, if he had a mind, would operate in a completely different way. But again not *completely* different because that makes him too different, too separate, non-human rather than supra-human. Anyway, perhaps we had better pass on. How many questions left?

Devamitra: Only three. The next question comes from Ratnaguna.

I have heard that you had said something to the effect that Ananda was the first exemplar of the Bodhisattva Ideal in that he looked after the Buddha rather than looked after his own needs. Is it true that you said that or something similar?

S: I think I have said something similar. And, yes, it is perhaps also significant that Ananda did function, as far as we can tell from the records, in somewhat the same way - I mean functioned after the Buddha's Parinirvana as it were - functioned in somewhat the same way that the Buddha himself did. Went around from place to place preaching the Dharma, went with a large following of bhikkhus and was even criticized for that. It does seem, again from the records that we have, the information that we have, that if anybody came somewhat close to the spirit of the Buddha it does seem to have been Ananda. But again, perhaps the records are imperfect, it's difficult to be very definite, or very dogmatic about that. But Ananda certainly comes across as a quite attractive sort of character, whereas Arahants like Mahakasyapa *don't* come across in quite that way. Even Moggallana doesn't always.

Was there any particular reason for the question?

Ratnaguna: I just heard it said and was interested if it was true.

Ratnaprabha: There was some vague suggestion that this would imply that
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Ananda had sort of delayed his own development in terms of spending a lot of time in solitary meditation and so on, for the sake of the Buddha, and therefore didn't gain Enlightenment until after the Buddha's death. Could that be the case?

S: I think one could look at it like that. I think though that would be a rather superficial way of looking at it. Because it would suggest that service, so to speak, was not a part of spiritual development, whereas it very definitely is. One might even think that it was a *surer* path of spiritual development in some ways. Because it means one has to subjugate, if that is the right word, one's own ego, one's own interests, one's own desires in the way that Ananda must have done.

So I certainly wouldn't say that Ananda had opted, as it were, for an easier path or a more mundane path in opting, rather in agreeing - because he was the one who was approached - to look after the Buddha. I think there is no explicit suggestion in the Pali scriptures that [21] he, as it were, nobly sacrificed his own spiritual development to the worthy task of looking after the Buddha. It is true of course that the Pali scriptures do represent him as attaining Arahantship after the Parinirvana, but I don't think there is any suggestion that the delay was due to him being concerned with serving the Buddha. Though it is perhaps interesting that there is a delay. *Perhaps* it suggests that in the case of the life of Ananda there wasn't that very fixed idea of a definite goal, out there, which was the case with the Hinayana generally, or with those other Arahants, perhaps.

Ananda in a way seems, perhaps, to have been less goal-oriented in a positive sort of way, one could look at it like that. But perhaps we still have to do quite a lot more research and comb through the scriptures. There are quite a lot of things of this sort of which at present we can simply take note and perhaps reflect on their spiritual significance, but their historical origins it is very difficult to disentangle.

Devamitra: And now for a question from Tejamati.

[Tape Two]

Do you have any idea when and how the tradition that a Buddha cannot be killed arose? Could it have arisen in relation to the Devadatta episode? Is it conceivable that Devadatta, or anybody else, could in fact have succeeded in killing the Buddha, or is there reason to think that it would have been literally impossible?

S: I don't think we can at present tell when that doctrinal concept arose, that a Buddha could not be killed though he might be wounded. Though one can say in a more general way that the idea that a Buddha could be killed seems to go against the whole, as it were, 'aristocratic' attitude of early Buddhism. Do you see what I mean? Early Buddhism seems to have had a very strong idea of, let us say, the dignity of the Enlightened person, and seems to have been quite unable to imagine that dignity as being affronted in any really serious manner; seems to have thought, seems to have felt that the nature of the universe, almost, was such as to guarantee that that sort of thing just wouldn't happen. In

other words there is a complete antithesis, say, to the Christian way of thinking. Because in the Christian way of thinking, God himself or Son of God at least is incarnated, is crucified, is humiliated; this sort of way of thinking, one might say, is totally foreign to early Buddhism. I am not obviously discussing the rights and wrongs of it. We have something like it later on in the case of the Mahayana where the Bodhisattva is regarded as undergoing all sorts of pain and suffering, but I don't think there is an emphasis on the Bodhisattva as being *humiliated* in the same sort of way, do you see what I mean? And that is, perhaps, rather interesting.

So this is what I mean by referring to this, though I put it within single inverted commas, 'aristocratic' emphasis of early, of primitive Buddhism. If one looks at it quite objectively, aside from all doctrinal assumptions - at least, let's say, from a Western point of view - there seems [22] to be no reason why even a Buddha might not die an unnatural death. It would seem that Milarepa was poisoned, other Buddhist teachers have been poisoned, have died in other ways, great mystics have been martyred. So I think perhaps we have to look at this whole matter in a quite open-minded way. It could be that the early Buddhist conception, or doctrine even, that a Buddha could not be killed, could not die an unnatural death, didn't arise out of the very nature of Buddhism itself so much as out of the general cultural-cum-spiritual assumptions of India, or even of upper-caste Indian society at that time. Just as, for instance, a Kshatriya could not have imagined a Shudra speaking rudely to him, in the same way one couldn't imagine anyone venturing to kill a Buddha, do you see what I mean?

So I think, as I said, we have to be quite open-minded about this and just look into the historical origins of this doctrine and perhaps to the cultural and spiritual attitudes of which it is possibly an expression. It *may* not be an expression or a manifestation of the truth or the spirit of Buddhism itself.

Dharmapriya: There does seem to be the contrast with the tradition that Moggallana was murdered, and if he was an Arahant, and in that sense just as Enlightened as the Buddha, it does have a distinct contrast.

S: Though of course if one introduces that distinction of a greater or lesser quantity of *punya*, I mean the Buddha's quantity of *punya*, or the quantity of *punya* required to produce a Buddha in the technical sense was so great as to counteract any likelihood that he would be actually killed. Whereas the amount that was required, so to speak, to produce an Arahant was not sufficient to prevent that same Arahant being killed if his past karma required that. But this is looking at it rather technically and in a narrowly doctrinal kind of way.

Vairocana: You have said before something like the universe, so to speak, having a sort of soul, and again it would go against the whole soul of the universe for a Buddha to actually be killed, since he was the first being to spread Enlightenment. Whereas people like Milarepa and other mystics came after.

S: Well, that rests on the Buddha's historical role, as I have called it. But then there would seem to be no reason, no logical reason, why even someone fulfilling

that role shouldn't die an unnatural death. One might even argue that it would set a sort of seal upon them in a strange sort of way.

Kuladeva: But, didn't the Buddha die an unnatural death in as much as he ate those mushrooms, or whatever they were, from Chunda the smith? Didn't they result in his death?

S: Not strictly speaking, because the Buddha had already resolved to die in the sense that he consciously rejected the remainder, whatever it was, of life left to him three months earlier. So the mushrooms may have been the occasion of his death but they were not the cause of his death, because he had *already* determined it.

Kuladeva: But couldn't it be said that he just knew that this incident was going to take place and he would therefore [23] die in three months' time because he was going to eat those mushrooms?

S: But that is not what we are told. The actual passage does say that Mara brought to his attention the fact that he could live longer if he so wished but he rejected the remainder of his life, that is all that we are told. So if we were to say that he foresaw that in any case he was going to die, that would be adding something to the text without any actual evidence that we could do so.

One might in a sense even go so far as to say, continuing the same line of thought, that it would be considered a great indignity for a Buddha to die at all. I think one might say - ah, I am getting on to a track of something else but never mind, let me go on - the Indians generally seem to have a dislike, I am talking about Indians whether Hindus or Buddhists or whatever, a dislike for the tragic view of life. If a Buddha were to be killed that would be tragic, wouldn't it? It's as though the Indians weren't able to envisage a tragedy of that sort. In India there was a classical drama but no tragedy, it was always happy endings. If anyone dies a god appears and brings him back to life. The Indians shrank from tragedy, it would seem. Tragedy such as developed by the Greeks and continued later in Western Europe represents a very definite vision of or attitude towards life, which was not part of the Indian way of looking at things. So the inability, as one might say, of the Indian Buddhist to think of the Buddha or even envisage the possibility of the Buddha dying an unnatural death is perhaps connected with the inability of the Indian mind, almost, to imagine a genuinely tragic situation.

In the West death is seen as tragic in a way that it isn't in the East, possibly because of the doctrine of rebirth. But I think it goes even deeper than that. But one would need to go into the nature of tragedy which is a very deep question indeed. But I suspect that in Buddhism as a historical phenomenon there is a sort of limitation here that we need to be aware of, because if it is a limitation we don't want to import it into Western Buddhism, however historically significant it might be. One might even go so far as to say that perhaps in the West one has to think in terms of a Buddha who could be killed, or at least be open to the possibility of even a Buddha being killed. The Indians seem not to have been open to that possibility. Of course it could be that - this is looking at it completely the wrong

sort of way - it could be that, yes, as a matter of fact, actually, in reality, a Buddha can't be killed; perhaps one should be open to that possibility too. But I rather suspect that this way of looking at things is due to Indian cultural conditioning. This is what I am saying, I think, so let's initially at least be open to that possibility.

Ratnaprabha: Going back to the question of the *punya* having influence on this. I wonder if the answer could be the other way around; that it's not that the Buddha cannot be killed because of his *punya* but that no one can kill a Buddha because no one could have such bad, so much demerit, or should I say such an unskilful state of mind, as to get into a circumstance where they would actually succeed in killing a Buddha. [24]

S: No, I don't think that follows logically because Devadatta had the *will* to kill the Buddha, so he had got into that frame of mind.

Ratnaprabha: But perhaps he didn't *quite*, because he didn't succeed, after all. I mean this accounts for the fact that he didn't succeed. [Laughter]

S: Well, he seems to have tried quite hard. But I would go even further, perhaps say something even more drastic, I don't think one can fathom the depravity of which sentient beings are capable. Our eyes have been opened to that in recent decades, haven't they?

Devamitra: The last question comes from Dharmapriya concerning facing the Buddha.

At the end of the lecture you explained why in the puja we sit face to face with the Buddha, namely in order to confront our own Buddhahood. But for the last three years we have sat in rows sideways to the shrine, for reasons of decorum and respect, so far as I understand. Can you comment on this apparent discrepancy?

S: Yes, this did occur to me when I read through the article. I am not really quite sure what the answer is. Perhaps there is a difference between when one is performing one's personal devotions and when one is performing them in company with a lot of other people. I think when one is performing one's personal devotions it is probably better to sit right in front of the shrine and have the Buddha directly before you. I think most people would in fact do that, but when one performs, say, a puja when there is number of you you are not just there as an individual facing the Buddha, you are there as a member of the Sangha. And all the members of the Sangha aren't able on that occasion to face the Buddha directly, so it would seem that the most harmonious and decorous arrangement is for them to sit in those two rows or those two sets of rows. It wouldn't be physically possible for them all to sit directly facing the Buddha.

There is also a distinction, of course, as I have mentioned before, between the Tantric attitude and the Hinayana-cum-Mahayana attitude. The Tantric attitude is more personal and perhaps therefore it is more appropriate when you are just

alone with the Buddha, so to speak, to sit directly in front of him. But on a more, as it were, public occasion, where in a sense more decorum is appropriate, you, in a way, in a manner of speaking, treat the Buddha more respectfully. Also more mindful of the fact of your membership of the Sangha. It is not just you and the Buddha - it's you and the Sangha when there are a lot of you, so you arrange yourself around the Buddha in a way that gives expression to the fact that it is the Sangha of disciples. It is not a sort of one-to-one relationship between you and the Buddha, it's the Buddha as the centre, or the focal point, of a number of radii, one might say. [25]

Devamitra: I have just wondered from time to time about sitting in rows when you have got both men and women present in public classes, which does happen. Do you have any thoughts about that?

S: I think it would be definitely preferable to have men on one side and women on the other, but I am well aware that there are practical difficulties in the way of that, especially when one has members of the public present, because there would be a cry of separation, segregation, etc. etc.; you know it quite well. But I think in principle it would be much better, especially on those occasions where there was roughly an equal number of men and women. It happens quite spontaneously in India. I think it is observed on at least some occasions in *some* Buddhist centres, I think possibly in the States, but I am not completely sure of this.

Ratnaguna (to Devamitra): Isn't your point that it would be unfortunate to sit opposite, looking at a woman?

Devamitra: Well, it could be for some, in some circumstances.

S: I think if that is the case it would be better just to have single sex pujas, if one is as susceptible as that. I think the main thing, though, and what one perhaps can insist on, is just decent mindful behaviour in the shrine room on the part of all concerned. I think at least in our public centres it would be premature, to say the least, to try to introduce separate seating for men and women. It might also not be very practical. In the case of the Order, unfortunately we have got a comparatively small number of women so it might be a little difficult for that reason, even if the women Order Members were happy with the arrangement, which they probably would be.

Dharmavira: On the question of decorum in the shrine room during pujas I have noticed in some Mitra ceremonies that people kiss the Mitra and also recently on a retreat during the puja people kissed the retreat leader.

S: I heard about this. *[Laughter]* This is a new development, the retreat leader certainly wasn't me! *[Laughter]* I've never had that experience, I must have been short on the charisma! *[Laughter]* But, yes, I don't really know what to think about it. It is certainly quite unconventional but perhaps it's fast becoming a convention. It's very difficult to limit the spontaneous manifestations of people's affection or whatever, and one wouldn't wish to do that. On the other hand clearly one has to

bear in mind the element of decorum too, but no doubt there is a way of people kissing and kissing. People might do it in a completely acceptable, decorous sort of way, others perhaps not, it is difficult to generalize. I think it's something about which I don't come to any conclusion at this moment. I only heard about this novel development a few days ago, I must say I was amused rather than otherwise. It certainly paid tribute to the very effective way in which that particular Order Member had led that particular retreat.

A few years ago people developed the practice or the habit of presenting a flower to whoever was leading the puja when they came up to make their offerings. I remember last year in Tuscany I got lots and lots of flowers from people [26] who were being ordained. This year I got very few, I don't know what the reason for the difference was, [laughing] I don't know whether again my charisma is declining or [laughter] whether they were just a more hard-boiled lot of people. I have no idea at all, one just accepts these things, they come and they go. Maybe on this particular retreat, yes, there were lots of kisses given to the retreat leader, maybe next time he might even be expecting them and he might not get them. [Laughter] So maybe one shouldn't be too worried about it.

Anyway, is that all the questions? So how did you get on today, going through the lecture? Any difficulty? You had two groups and you listened to the lecture. You will remember of course that it has been edited and published in this particular *Mitrata*. I have a copy of the transcript, I don't know whether they are generally available or whether you are just going to listen to the lectures.

Devamitra: They are not generally available.

S: Well, listening is just as good. O.K. then, that is all for today.

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejmitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Two: The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart

Devamitra: Today we have been studying the second lecture in the Bodhisattva Ideal series, which is The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart.

We have fourteen questions altogether, the first of which comes from Ratnaprabha concerning *gotra*.

Ratnaprabha: Where does *gotra* fit in with the arising of the Bodhichitta?

S: If the Bodhichitta arises you are on the Bodhisattva path, you are a Bodhisattva, and if you are a Bodhisattva your *gotra* is already determined.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think you could explain what *gotra* is?

S: It's a rather obscure conception. It seems to have originated with the Sarvastivadins and to have been developed from the Mahayanists. But I suppose, very broadly speaking it can be said to be the idea that inasmuch as there are different spiritual goals, that is to say the goal of the Arahant, the Pratyekabuddha, the Samyak Sambuddha, there is something in one that determines one in the direction of the realization of this or that goal, rather than either of the two others, and that something is what constitutes your *gotra*. You belong, as it were, to a particular *gotra*, perhaps - I won't be too sure about this - almost by virtue of your temperament. In some ways you could regard the concept of *gotra* as a rather artificial one. You, for instance, opt for a particular spiritual path, a particular spiritual ideal, why do you do that? - because you belong to a certain *gotra*. That doesn't really explain anything, do you see what I mean, especially since within the context of the FWBO we don't think that there are in reality three alternative spiritual ideals; for us the concept of *gotra* isn't very important. This is why [26] I haven't really dwelt on it or even mentioned it very much.

The Yogacharins systematized the teaching and according to them there are five kinds of people: those who would definitely follow the Arahant path; those would definitely follow the Pratyekabuddha path; those would definitely follow the Samyak Sambuddha path, or Bodhisattva path; those who were not determined in any particular direction, which would seem to suggest that the other three were determined in their particular directions; and those who were *icchantikas*, didn't have the Buddha nature - though that was a subject of a great deal of discussion

- and wouldn't follow any spiritual path and realize any spiritual goal.

I am of course presenting this whole concept of *gotra*, which is in fact quite a subtle one, in quite crude and popular terms. I think Har Dayal has something to say about it in his book on the Bodhisattva doctrine. Perhaps that's all that really needs to be said for the time being.

Tejamitra: Is it also used lower down the spiritual life with regard to... I have heard the term, 'the feeling place of the mind'. Is that the same term or am I ...?

S: No, I think you are mixing that, perhaps, with *gochara*. *Gotra* is a term deriving from Brahminism, one might say, because *gotra* means family, or rather clan. Brahmins always belonged to a particular *gotra*. Kshatriyas also have *gotras*, there is a dispute as to how their *gotras* originate, some authorities or sources say that Kshatriyas take the *gotra* of their family priest. If he belongs, say, to the Bharadvaja *gotra* they consider themselves to be of the Bharadvaja *gotra* too, but that is disputed, all would not agree. It is mainly Brahmins who have *gotras*, especially those Brahmins who are responsible for the mantras which constitute the Vedas.

Gautama, for instance, or Gotama, is a *gotra* name, not a family name in the Western sense. Many of the proper names, as we regard them, which are encountered in the Pali scriptures, are *gotra* names, like Bharadvaja. When someone is called Bharadvaja it's not a proper name in the ordinary sense, it really should be translated as a Bharadvaja, a man belonging to the Bharadvaja clan.

Chakkhupala: Is that also true of Aniruddha?

S: To the best of my recollection Aniruddha is not a *gotra* name. I am not sure whether Kashyapa was a *gotra* name, it might have been a *gotra* name. There were three Kashyapa brothers.

It is, in a way, a sept name, the ancient Greeks had septs, didn't they? But maybe one need not go into all that. But, yes, *gotra* as a spiritual term in Buddhism is derived from a term with a more mundane meaning. From meaning family or clan it came to mean spiritual family or spiritual clan.

Ratnaprabha: Another term that I came across as preceding the arising of the Bodhichitta was *adhimukti*, but again I could find out very little as to what that meant. Would you mind saying a bit about that? [28]

S: *Adhimutti* is something like aspiration or determination, and that clearly is necessary in the case of one trying to follow the spiritual path, especially the Bodhisattva path. I believe in the Abhidharma it is reckoned as a positive mental state. Again I think Har Dayal discusses this term.

Devamitra: The second question comes from Prakasha concerning an image of

the Bodhichitta.

In the lecture you mentioned the descent of the Holy Spirit as being analogous to the arising of the Bodhichitta. In Christianity there is the image of the dove. I still find this image powerful and evocative. Is there a corresponding image in Buddhism for the arising of the Bodhichitta? The Jewel is rather static. Do you think we could use the image of the dove for this purpose within the Movement?

S: The dove, of course, in Christian art does represent the Holy Spirit, doesn't it? Therefore you will find it in representations of the Annunciation. Birds in Buddhism; I can't think of any parallel to the dove; there is the swan. The swan features quite prominently, actually it is the hamsa, features quite prominently in Indian religion generally, especially in Hinduism because it is supposed to have the property of separating milk from water. And in Vedanta especially, Shankar for instance uses the figure or symbol of the hamsa to represent the *jnani*, the wise man who separates the real from the unreal, truth from falsehood. But the hamsa doesn't really figure very prominently in Buddhism, to the best of my recollection. I can't say that I have, personally, any strong feelings about the dove. The Eagle also doesn't feature in Indian Buddhism. The vulture, of course, does, the vulture features to an extent that it is a vulture's feather that Padmasambhava has in his cap. Here the association is with the fact that the vulture flies higher than any other bird - in the same way the yogi as exemplified by Padmasambhava soars higher into the transcendental than any other being.

The peacock has some symbolical associations in Buddhism, the peacock is associated with Amitabha.

Prakasha: I wasn't necessarily thinking about birds, but about any image.

S: No, I was just letting my mind indulge in a little free association. Because that is the only way that one can *arrive* at images, really, you can't sort of think them out or postulate them on purely logical grounds. If someone feels an affinity for the dove, fair enough, it's a factor of your experience, nobody else can have anything to say about it. I don't know whether doves in general would catch on in the FWBO, let's wait and see.

There are the various animals of Buddhism, I have spoken about them, haven't I, on occasion. The elephant, the bull, the horse and the lion; each representing a phase of the Buddha's earthly career. The elephant being associated with his conception, the bull with his birth, the horse with his going forth and the lion with his [29] first proclamation of the Dharma. Then of course one has one's windhorse. One also has a winged horse in the Jataka stories, I believe with the head of a parrot, if I am not mistaken. But perhaps I am mistaken, *[Laughter]* but there might be more than one such creature. I have a vague recollections of a parrot-headed horse, perhaps in the Jatakas or perhaps not. I think there is something curious about that winged horse in the Jatakas, anyway.

But what was the real thrust of your question, as it were?

Prakasha: Is there a particular image that symbolizes the arising of the Bodhichitta?

S: I must say, I can't think of one. There is the image I mentioned in the lecture itself, the image of the blind man on a dark night in a dunghill, coming upon the Bodhichitta. The jewel itself is static but there is action in the fact that the blind man stumbles upon it and presumably seizes hold of it.

But we just have to search the Buddhist scriptures more thoroughly, because the Buddhist scriptures are full of imagery. In Tuscany I was reading the first volume of the newly issued translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra. It's full of imagery, often in the form of proper names. There are thousands of them, I am sure one could find something on to which some people might latch and which they might find useful and inspiring. We haven't even begun, really, to know the Buddhist scriptures.

I was thinking about this recently when I was reading something about Dostoyevsky, I mentioned him yesterday, didn't I? And a critic made the point that even in his novels Dostoevsky is constantly citing the Christian scriptures. That made me reflect further that even in our ordinary everyday language, even as Buddhists, we often use phrases of biblical origin. For instance, somebody comes back to Padmaloka and I might remark, 'the prodigal has returned', you see, that is straight out of the gospels but one doesn't think of it in that way consciously because that expression, the prodigal son, has become an integral part of our language and literature. But then it struck me that we have not yet done that with the Buddhist scriptures, images, figures of speech from the Buddhist scriptures, references to the Buddhist scriptures have not yet infiltrated our language, our English language, as Buddhists. We need therefore to know those scriptures to a much greater extent than we do, be much more familiar with them so that we can refer to them or use figures of speech from them without perhaps even always consciously realizing the source from which they come.

Also anybody might use the expression, 'prodigal son', but who would refer, even among English Buddhists in that way, unless they did it quite consciously and deliberately for a lecture, to, say, the Parable of the Burning House or the parable of the son who wandered astray and his skilful and compassionate father? The images and the symbols of the Buddhist scriptures haven't yet become part of our mentality in that way; so there is a vast untapped store of material there. It isn't enough just to read the scriptures - they really have to become part and parcel of our whole way of thinking, feeling, and experiencing. [30] That is going to take some generations, but perhaps we can make a start. I think if you searched the Mahayana scriptures in particular you would probably hit upon the sort of image to which you would respond, image for the arising of the Bodhichitta.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Tejamitra concerning the cosmic Going for Refuge.

In the lecture you say that the Bodhichitta is 'more like a cosmic will

in the direction of Universal Enlightenment'. Is there a correlation between the Bodhichitta and the cosmic Going for Refuge?

S: To the extent that there is correlation between the Going for Refuge itself and the Bodhichitta itself there must be a correlation between those two things on a cosmic level, on a cosmic scale, but one must remember that the language I used there is to be taken as it were poetically, not as it were scientifically. We did go into this quite a bit, I think it was in this year's Tuscany, maybe last year's too. I think sometimes listening to that talk people have taken my language there rather too literally, not to say literalistically. Perhaps I didn't explain myself at sufficient length, which perhaps was difficult in those days, when the lecture was originally given.

Devamitra: A question now from Kuladeva on Bodhichitta and God.

In the lecture you talk about the arising of the Bodhichitta in terms of the [eruption] of the transcendental.

S: I think the transcription says 'eruption' but I think I said 'irruption', just for the sake of the record.

This sounds similar to the descent of the Holy Spirit which you use as an analogy to it. Later you describe the Gandavyuha Sutra praising it as if it were a deity. How can one clearly distinguish between the two so that the Bodhichitta is not confused with God as Holy Spirit, especially so that people do not carry over belief in God transferred to the Bodhichitta?

S: I think, actually, that it would be quite unlikely; that people would be quite unlikely to carry over, say, God associations to the concept of the Bodhichitta. It is in its origins, so to speak, so obviously psychological rather than cosmological.

Kulamitra: I had the experience of playing these tapes on the old Seaford retreats and the Battle retreats and then picking up questions in the study group the day following. I am pretty sure that after that lecture people did feel - whether they saw that positively or negatively - that the way you described it in terms of the Absolute Bodhichitta and so on was rather like a very broad conception of God, which I think [31] is the sort of conception that the people who come into contact with us have; I don't think people that we contact very often have a personalized Father figure; they do have this very vague, undefined feeling that there is some sort of God. And maybe they quite often like to keep *all* their beliefs, don't they? So they can sort of take in this aspect of Buddhism and say, 'that's just like I already believe in such an area'. Do you think that is valid or invalid?

S: I think, to begin with, with quite new people, especially with people who are, perhaps, quite sincere, one shouldn't be too particular, not too pedantic about terminology. If it strikes them - if the Bodhichitta as explained by me strikes them

- as similar to what they understand by the term God, I think one can simply say that maybe there is something common between the two concepts. Because clearly they haven't got an orthodox concept of God and one doesn't want to waste time discussing something which might be unfruitful. Just put it aside, don't attach too much importance to it. Say maybe, 'yes, maybe there is something in common.'

But, obviously if they were to start trying to compare in detail, and especially if they had to bring in the concept of God in the more orthodox Christian sense and you explained what was really meant by Bodhichitta, the difference between the two would become quite obvious. But if they just use the term God in a very vague, general way for some sort of spiritual, transcendental element in the universe I think it is a waste of time to start off by quarrelling with that. Do you see what I mean? I think one has to be quite careful with beginners, you don't want to jump down their throats because they use Christian terminology. What else, very often, have they got to use? - that is the only terminology that they know and very often they use it in such a loose, general sense, one need not bother to argue the point.

If it is someone who has studied Christian thought, suppose it is a clergyman, to take an extreme example, there one would have to be more careful because he will have a much clearer and more precise idea about God - presumably - there have been lots of clergymen confused these days! But don't be in a hurry to pick people up, as it were, on their terminology if they seem to be generally well-meaning and genuinely making some effort to understand.

Ratnaprabha: I wonder if you wouldn't mind saying a little bit on what you see as being the difference between the Bodhichitta and, say, the modern theological conception of God, if there is such a unitary conception.

S: I don't think there is, I don't think one can usefully say anything. One would have to produce somebody's particular view or interpretation of God and see how one related to that. There is such a thing as Godless, even religionless, Christianity nowadays, apparently, so that is quite an extreme sort of development. I don't think one can just compare in those sort of general terms. I think one has to take up each individual questioner as one meets him, discuss on the particular ground which he occupies or which you occupy with him. [32]

Devamitra: The next question comes from Ratnaprabha, concerning the Bodhichitta and the five skandhas.

Is it true that you have recently said that it is unhelpful to think of the Bodhichitta as being outside the five skandhas?

S: I don't remember having said that. I don't remember. I don't think I would have said it, unless in very special circumstances. Perhaps if I ever said anything like that I probably was trying to make the point that one can't set up too much of a dichotomy between the mundane and the transcendental. Otherwise you are faced with the problem of how to relate them to each other, how to make the

transition from the one to the other. No, I can't remember saying anything like that.

Devamitra: Another question from Kulamitra on the Bodhichitta and the Absolute Bodhichitta.

Sharing the same name the absolute and the relative Bodhichittas would appear to share the same quality of creative force for good. But as absolute Bodhichitta is Reality it must also encompass the counter force of the gravitational pull. The problem of one reality encompassing counter forces may be impossible to resolve rationally, but why should the relative and Absolute Bodhichitta share the same name? Is there any way of trying to describe the Bodhichitta which is less fraught with philosophical difficulties when taken literally?

S: I think any description would be fraught with difficulties if taken literally, and inasmuch as it was a description it could always be taken literally. I think this is something that I have to go into, if I go into it at all, at greater length in a proper paper. The whole question is fraught with difficulties whether taken literally or not.

Maybe, to take you up on terminology a little bit, you spoke of the Absolute Bodhichitta as being creative; strictly speaking it couldn't be that, because creative implies production, that implies sequence, that implies time. The Absolute Bodhichitta by its very nature, so to speak, transcends time, you couldn't really speak of it as creative therefore.

Kulamitra: Right, but if that is the case since the relative Bodhichitta then appears to be so different from the Absolute Bodhichitta why have the same name? It would be quite easy to have different phenomena, as it were.

S: Well, you see, you are faced with two alternatives, either to imply that the two are different or that they are the same. If you speak of the relative and the absolute Bodhichitta you are opting as it were for sameness, but if you distinguish them by two quite different names you will be opting for difference and going to the other extreme. There seems to be no way round that.

Kulamitra: Yes, but logically wouldn't there be an [33] equally good case for calling the gravitational pull the Bodhichitta? For the same reasons?

S: No, because they are contradictories.

Kulamitra: The absolute and the gravitational pull are contradictories?

S: No the relative Bodhichitta and the gravitational pull are contradictories. I think maybe the difficulty arises over the use of absolute. When one translates the *paramartha bodhicitta* as absolute Bodhichitta one doesn't have in mind a Western style, philosophical, unitary absolute into which everything has to be

incorporated in a sort of Hegelian sense.

Kulamitra: What does one have in mind?

S: One has in mind the *paramartha bodhicitta* [Laughter]. *Paramartha bodhicitta* is literally translated Bodhichitta in the highest sense. This is roughly, approximately translated as absolute Bodhichitta but one mustn't take absolute in the Western philosophical sense. Maybe that gives rise to some confusion.

You could say that the relative Bodhichitta represents the path; the Absolute Bodhichitta represents the goal. You cannot say that the two are the same otherwise you destroy the foundation of the spiritual life. You can't say that they are different otherwise likewise you destroy the foundation of the spiritual life. They are neither the same nor different. So the fact that you speak of a *samvriti* and a *paramartha bodhicitta* means that you provide for both unity and difference. The unity is provided for by the common term Bodhichitta and the difference is provided for by the different terms *samvriti* and *paramartha*.

One can think of the relative Bodhichitta as the dynamic reflection in the individual of the supra-individual Bodhichitta. Though of course, a reflection, ordinarily speaking, is as it were illusory whereas in this case the reflection is not illusory; the reflection, so to speak, is for real.

Kulamitra: It does seem a very difficult concept.

S: It does involve quite ultimate metaphysical questions, so one cannot expect it to be an easy sort of topic to deal with. Perhaps one shouldn't go into it with beginners, but put it in very common sense terms.

Kulamitra: I almost feel that as soon as one tries to grab hold of it you have become literal and then you try and let it go and then wonder whether you are actually being led any further into understanding the Bodhichitta. It just seems very difficult to understand that sort of relationship between reality and something that takes you towards reality. It seems very difficult to understand.

S: Yes, clearly there must be for you to be able to go towards [34] reality something that is *akin* to reality; this is what it really boils down to. And this distinction between absolute Bodhichitta and relative Bodhichitta is really meant simply to express or indicate the fact that the reality towards which you are progressing is not, in the ultimate sense, foreign to you. Nor are you in the ultimate sense foreign to it, even though at present, for the time being, you are progressing towards it and appear to be different from it. But nonetheless you could not even progress towards it if there was not in you, so to speak, some kinship with it. It is a bit like that verse by Angelus Silesius, the late medieval German mystic, to the effect that - though I think that it is a Platonic or neo-Platonic thought - the eye could not be aware of the sun if there was not something sun-like in the eye. He applies that to reality. It's not *just* a reflection, you may use the image of reflection but again not to be taken literally.

In the *Awakening of Faith* it is the perfuming, as Suzuki translates it. It's the mutual perfuming of the real and the unreal. And something of the absolute clings to you, as it were, despite everything, it is not just a reflection, something brushes off just as when you are perfumed with something some infinitesimally tiny grains of the perfume adhere to you and you can follow the track of those, one might say, to the source from which they came.

Kulamitra: Maybe sometimes what have now become the Western equivalents are even more confusing than the original Sanskrit terms because, say, you equated the Absolute Bodhichitta with Reality, but then it's very difficult to think of ... well, surely, things that exist are real and would therefore have an affinity anyway. Presumably reality is actually again an inadequate term for translating what one is talking about.

S: It needs to be defined. What does one *mean* by Reality, anyway?

Yes, the fact that one uses two words like relative Bodhichitta and absolute Bodhichitta is intended to indicate that the goal towards which you are striving is not completely foreign to you, that you have a sort of inner kinship with it, however deeply hidden. So perhaps with beginners one can leave it at that. If there wasn't that inner, even though concealed, kinship you couldn't even arrive at that goal, there would be no middle term to unite you.

So in a sense the absolute Bodhichitta is the absolute dimension of something which already is present within us and experienced by us in a relative and limited form.

Kulamitra: So in that context by absolute dimension one means that thing to its highest power.

S: That thing to its highest power, yes. Or perhaps one could say highest conceivable power.

Do you get many questions about the Bodhichitta from Mitras or others listening to these talks?

Dharmapriya: We've had questions more of the problem of the *arising* of Bodhichitta, the problem of how can it arise - [35] is it caused? is it determined? this sort of question.

S: That's answered in quite simple terms, I suppose, in terms of conditioned co-production and 'this being, that arises'. You provide the right conditions, then the appropriate phenomenon arises in dependence upon them. One cannot postulate either identity or difference in an absolute sense.

Dharmapriya: It doesn't seem to satisfy people emotionally I find, that sort of thing.

S: Ah! Well, what sort of answer are they looking for?

Dharmapriya: Probably something that is more familiar.

S: Yes, well, perhaps this is where powerful images and analogies, if we could think of them, would help. This is why, originally, I think, I introduced this analogy with the descent of the Holy Ghost, so that people could make - however indirectly and inadequately - some sort of emotional connection with the idea or concept of the arising of the Bodhichitta.

Dharmapriya: Could I just pick up something that you mentioned earlier when you, as it were, corrected Kulamitra's use of the word 'creative', with regard to the absolute Bodhichitta as being outside of time? Would that not imply, then, that there is not a creative element to Buddhahood, it in a sense being also out of time?

S: Oh yes, definitely, except that you could say that when Buddhahood manifests within time it's experienced as creative. But you could not say that inasmuch as it was outside time it was, in itself, creative in that sense. In other words its creativity is a manifestation, at least from our point of view and not what Buddhahood is in itself. But again, that is to simplify, perhaps to oversimplify, because does Buddhahood - does, let's say, ultimate Reality - exclude time? There is a sense in which creativity is *within* the absolute, within Buddhahood, but not so to speak as constitutive of its essence, one might say. Does the real *exclude* the unreal, does the unreal have no sort of existence at all, can it not be related to the real in *any* way, the ultimately real? What does one mean by 'related'? It raises all sorts of questions.

But we should be aware of the implications of this term creative, because it is a rather popular term in the FWBO and perhaps we over-use it sometimes.

Dharmapriya: Are *you* using it in two different senses? Creative strikes me in a sense as opposite of reactive; and creative in the sense of progenitive, perhaps.

S: No, I never use it as far as I know in the sense of progenitive, I use the term production there. That is why I refuse to recognize for instance a woman's having a baby as a creative activity. To me that is essentially productive, not creative. You don't produce a baby in the same way as you write a poem.

There is also the point, in connection with the Transcendental dependent origination, let's say, the [36] sequence of experiences after entering the stream, that these are Transcendental, they are called *lokuttara*, there is a sequence, and we do speak of Enlightenment as the culmination of that process. So we seem to imply that Enlightenment is a process, at some level. I have spoken in these terms quite explicitly, but that all needs to be reconciled with the various conceptions of Enlightenment in a more static way. It is not easy to reconcile this language of time with the language of space.

So, in a way, this is what you are doing, this is what you are up against with these conceptions of absolute Bodhichitta and relative Bodhichitta in a way. Absolute Bodhichitta is Bodhichitta not so much outside time in the literal sense, but is conceived of in terms of space, that is to say as fixed, permanent, unchanging. Relative Bodhichitta is Bodhichitta thought of in terms of time, so that implies change, whether from greater to lesser or lesser to greater. Because if in time it doesn't change at all, there is no distinction between time and eternity, because change, so to speak, is the measure of time and time is the measure of change. Do you see what I mean? So it's really - this is the nearest one can get to talking about it adequately - that one is concerned when one is concerned with the absolute and the relative Bodhichittas, really in a sense with the same thing. Though 'thing' is not appropriate here at all.

When one thinks of 'it', though it isn't appropriate either, in terms of space, then one thinks of it as the absolute Bodhichitta. When one thinks of it in terms of time one speaks of the relative Bodhichitta, but they are really, in a sense, the same, not two. It corresponds to the non-distinction between samsara and Nirvana, or *bodhi* and *klesas*. But perhaps that is as close as one can get to it in a rough and ready way.

In one sense Enlightenment is eternally attained and in another sense it's eternally in process of attainment: and these senses ultimately coincide. That's why you have absolute Bodhichitta and relative Bodhichitta, the same term being used in each case. As I said before, allowance is made for unity, allowance is made for difference too. I think that is about as far as we can go.

Sudhana: There is just this very small point. You were referring to childbearing being reproductive...

S: Productive, I didn't say reproductive, productive. Well, it *is* reproductive, but I wasn't concerned with that aspect of it.

Sudhana: I thought you made that distinction in another seminar, also.

S: I may well have done, I have made that sort of distinction between the productive and the creative on some other occasion, I am sure. I think I was speaking then of a general tendency to over-employ this term creative about everything; creative cooking, creative washing-up, creative this, creative that, creative childbirth. I think this is just to confuse things which ought to be kept distinct.

Ratnaprabha: Yesterday you were talking a little bit about [37] creativity in terms of your own writing experience and saying that perhaps even ordinary people...

S: It may simply be productivity for all I know! I hope it is creativity. *[Laughter]*

Ratnaprabha: This is what I was wondering, you were saying that even ordinary experience, for example, conversation, can be seen as being creative for ordinary people because one is trying to come to terms with one's experience of the world.

S: Yes, in that sense it is even at that level distinct from productivity, yes, I would stick to that.

Ratnaprabha: But presumably in that sense perhaps even childbirth could be creative; or at least one's response to childbirth, perhaps, could be creative in a different way.

S: But one's response to *anything* can be creative. Response to going to the toilet can be creative! *[Laughter]* Response to *anything* can be creative, anything whatsoever. But what I meant by speaking of, say, childbirth or parturition, let us say, to be quite clear of what we are talking about, as productive is that it is a process in which the person undergoing it is, as it were, passive. They just let nature carry on, you don't have to, so to speak, do anything in the way that you do when you sit down to write a poem or a short story or paint a picture. Nature is, as it were, working through you. You are not functioning as an individual, whereas in the case of creative activity you are even at the very lowest level when you are just talking about something that happened, you are trying to make sense of it and shaping the experience, in a way, as you talk about it. That, even though it is in a very diluted form, is I think in principle creative in a way that parturition is not creative. In a way that *breathing* is not creative.

Dharmapriya: Do you not think that the confusion arises because, as far as I can gather in childbirth the woman experiences, if she is not drugged, strong sensational experiences and emotional experiences. And that creativity is a label used to describe a situation in which you are highly alive in a healthy animal way, which otherwise people perhaps only experience...

S: I would say then that that may well be so, but I would say that it is a quite debased and vulgarized use of the term creative. Perhaps the term creative now is almost beyond redemption. I don't know what we can put in its place, though.

Sudhana: Just to labour that point a bit, I think the point I was making - and I think you did say this - that there were three levels and the reproduction was actually lower than the production. And I was associating production with Foucault(?) and that kind of thing, whereas reproduction was just something that you didn't even produce really, it just sort of happened.

S: Yes, I did somewhere make that threefold distinction, that is true. It's a further refinement, one might say. [38] Because if you produce something, if, say, you produce a chair or a table that you have made as a carpenter, that is rather different from a natural biological activity in the course of which you produce something. And it is very difficult, perhaps, to see where one ends and the other begins, because cabinet making can be an art, one might say.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Ratnaguna, and he has a question about the moon.

In the simile of the moon and the reflection in the different pools of water, is the moon the absolute Bodhichitta and the reflections of the moon the relative Bodhichitta?

S: The relative Bodhichittas arising in apparently different individuals. I think that is the force of the comparison; except, bear in mind what I said before about, we usually consider that a reflection is illusory, that the moon is not actually in the pot in which it is reflected. But here that is not the case, the relative Bodhichitta is, so to speak, actually *in* the individuals in which it appears to arise by virtue of the reflection *in* them of the one absolute Bodhichitta.

It helps one to understand to some extent this particular analogy, but one must be careful not to press it too far.

How are we getting on, by the way?

Devamitra: We are about half way through. A question from Ratnaprabha concerning conditions for the arising of the Bodhichitta.

In the lecture you speak of setting up the conditions in dependence upon which the Bodhichitta arises. That is where, I think you have compared this to erecting a lightning conductor or something like this. You also speak of the relative Bodhichitta manifesting itself in one which is rather like the lightning striking the lightning conductor. Can one speak of this representing outside factors beyond one's control but which are nevertheless conditions for the arising of the Bodhichitta, as there are conditions in the sky for the arising of lightning, if you like? So do we have two sets of conditions for the arising of Bodhichitta, one that one sets up oneself and another set of conditions which are completely outside one's control and somehow allow it to manifest in one?

S: I am not sure what you mean by the distinction between within one's control and not within one's control. I think, as traditionally treated, the assumption is that all the different factors requisite for the arising of the Bodhichitta are within, have to be within one's own control. One might say, though, that there are other factors like one's being born in a country where the Buddha Dharma is known, that is not within your control; but the Buddhist might reply that yes it is, or has been, under the operation of the law of karma, you have set up that particular objective condition for yourself. So perhaps in the long run the [39] distinction falls to the ground, at least from a Buddhist point of view. But in all the traditional accounts it seems to be assumed that you set up the particular conditions for yourself. You yourself perform the seven-fold puja, you set up that particular complex of conditions. You yourself engage in those four activities mentioned by Vasubhandu.

But to take a much more general stand or to digress, or to appear to digress, it did just now strike me, in fact it had already struck me this evening, it struck me yesterday but I didn't say anything about it; that we mustn't forget - that is going outside the immediate context of the lectures - that in speaking of the arising of the Bodhichitta we are in fact speaking about Effective or Real Going for Refuge. So one might ask that question with regard to Going for Refuge, whether Effective Going for Refuge or Real Going for Refuge: are the conditions upon which it depends set up entirely by oneself, are some of those conditions *not* set up by oneself? The question might then become clearer. Do you see what I mean?

So when you think in terms of Going for Refuge or succeed in Going for Refuge does it depend upon certain conditions? Inner conditions, outer conditions, and do you set up all those conditions yourself or are there some conditions you don't set up? It's interesting perhaps to translate the question into terms of Going for Refuge inasmuch as basically the arising of Bodhichitta and Going for Refuge are the same thing, or aspects of one another. One should bear that in mind throughout the series of lectures.

Dharmapriya: Perhaps, leaping in where angels fear to tread.....

S: You see, that was just the sort of thing I was talking about, you don't say where *devas* fear to tread you say where angels fear to tread. *[Laughter]*

Dharmapriya: I don't know where *devas* fear to tread.

S: But you know where angels fear to tread!

Dharmapriya: Going to a very practical question with effective Going for Refuge, if the analogy were to hold true with the tradition that oneself, one's own self, set up the conditions that would imply for example that the activity of an Order Member isn't really positive or negative, but actually irrelevant with regard to, say, a Mitra, whether he Goes for Refuge or not, effectively. I don't know if I am leaping and making certain rash assumptions there, but it would seem to suggest that it is not possible to do something dreadful as an Order Member which will put someone off from Going for Refuge or really to help him.

S: Well, yes and no. Because the help has to be accepted or rejected and you, the person Going for Refuge or thinking in terms of Going for Refuge, have to do that. The help from, say, the Order Member doesn't do your Going for Refuge for you. In a *sense* he sets up conditions but you have to *accept* his setting up of the condition and it is your accepting of his setting up of the conditions, [40] or what appears to be his setting up of the conditions, which actually constitutes the setting up of the conditions; not *his* setting up of the conditions. You have to make *his* setting up of the conditions as they appear to be, *your own*. Do you see what I mean?

Dharmapriya: Yes, but pressing it one point further, is there not, say, an analogy between being born in a Buddhist country and meeting, say, an Order Member who will give you this input, assuming you are receptive; and, say, being born in a Muslim country and not meeting a sympathetic Order Member?

S: Well, again in this case too Buddhist tradition would ascribe it to your *own* past karma. So you have set up that particular condition, it is due to your own past good karma that you happen to meet that particular Order Member who in this life helps and encourages you. Traditional Buddhism, I think, would look at it in that way. Though obviously it can't, so far as one knows, be logically demonstrated.

Dharmapriya: You have stressed that it is *traditional* Buddhism. Does this mean that you yourself do not have an opinion on it, or have the same opinion as traditional Buddhism?

S: No, it's that I recognize simply that the connection is not logically proven and therefore you cannot use that as an argument when discussing with people who don't accept the Buddhist tradition in that sense.

Ratnaprabha: I think I can just about grasp what goes on in the case of Effective Going for Refuge and how the conditions are set up; but in the case of the Real Going for Refuge, or the arising of the Bodhichitta, where we have some irruption of the Transcendental, I still can't quite...

S: But when one speaks of that irruption of the Transcendental, it is not an irruption of a Transcendental which is totally alien to you, but a manifestation, one might say, at the level of your conscious mental activity, life experience, of something which, in a very much deeper sense, you are - to use this very dangerous language of immanence, as it were.

Anyway where did that leave us? or what were you going to say?

Ratnaprabha: Can I return to the analogy of the lightning conductor? (**S:** Do.) In the case of the lightning conductor one can set up a lightning conductor and choose the right place for it, make it the right shape and right material and so on, and it has a natural affinity for lightning in the sense that it's made of copper and electricity flows quite naturally through it and so on. But of course you won't get any electricity flowing through it unless there is a lightning storm, and lightning actually strikes it. But does this analogy fall down when it comes to the Bodhichitta because there is always a lightning storm going on?

S: Yes, because the sky is the sky of your own mind, one might say. So, yes, it does fall down in that respect. [41]

Though again there is a sense in which it is not altogether inapposite because you, as you at present are, cannot *force* anything to happen. In a sense you do just set up the conditions and then wait, or at least you *appear* to wait, or you act as though you are just waiting. You can't sort of pull down the lightning from the

sky. In a sense you have to set up the conditions and wait. You, as you at present are, have to do that. But the lightning flash doesn't just come in a completely arbitrary way, or not come. You have set up the conditions but you can't do that in too forceful or imperative a manner. One must bear that in mind too.

Kulamitra: Could you then say that in those terms your waiting can be one hundred per cent confident, and would you have to wait very long?

S: No, the waiting, if it's really waiting, can't be confident; no, confidence in that sense is ruled out. Not that you are *not* confident.

Kulamitra: You just don't know.

S: No, it's not even that. Well, yes, you as you at present are just don't know. But what happens after that is also you, but not you as present are. Because you as you at present are have to do your job and then just sort of step aside and allow you, as you at present are not, to come into operation, and not get in the way.
[Pause]

I have just thought of another sort of analogy, I don't know how satisfactory it is going to be but I will just mention it in case it is helpful in some way. I think it is like when you start doing some creative writing, you set up the conditions, for instance you clear your desk, you sharpen your pencil, you refill your pen. Perhaps you close the door, perhaps you lock the door. You get a few sheets of nice clean white paper and you just sit down and you just start writing and something comes. Do you see what I mean? You aren't thinking too much before exactly how you are going to start writing, which particular words are going to come, you just set up the conditions. And because there is that, as it were, store of creative energy within you, something does come - except when you have got a writer's block, as does sometimes happen. But normally things just happen, something comes, you start writing, and the more you write, perhaps the more you feel like writing; the more creative you become.

But you set up the conditions: settling yourself in your chair, clearing your desk, sharpening your pencil, these are all conditions, one might say, that - I was going to say help, but conditions in dependence upon which the creative urge arises and manifests itself, expresses itself. Does that help at all? (**Voices:** Yes.) Or you might even have to go to further lengths than that, you look up references in books, you jot down a few facts and figures that you will need to refer to in the course of your writing, get all that material ready, all your facts and figures, then you assemble them, you put them together in a certain way and *then* the creative urge, perhaps, arises and you start making use of all those materials.

I think one does actually find this happening, [42] and if you hurry things and you neglect the preparations in effect you neglect the creation or the arrangement of those very conditions in dependence upon which whatever it is you are trying to achieve will arise. Because if you are naturally very, very creative you don't need to bother with all those preliminaries, but one is assuming that the creative urge hasn't as yet arisen, such as one is assuming that, say, the Bodhichitta hasn't yet

arisen in the case of those who make arrangements or try to create the conditions for it to arise.

Susiddhi: I was having a look at *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry* this afternoon, and I got a nice phrase which I think is what you were explaining just now. 'The Bodhichitta manifests on the basis of preparation, but is not determined by it.'

S: Yes, because if there is so much preparation so much Bodhichitta, as it were, will automatically follow, automatically arise once a certain ascertainable set of conditions are there. There is an element of freedom about it, so to speak.

Ratnaprabha: Whose freedom is that?

S: Well, it's *your* freedom in a sense, inasmuch as the Bodhichitta is you as you are about to be, or you as you as yet are not, as I said.

Dharmapriya: I'm sorry, I don't see how one can square that idea with the idea of the conditionality of the Bodhichitta that it arises in dependence on certain conditions which you seem to say in the talk - at one point you say - 'and when you do these preparations it *will* arise'.

S: Well, one is using *will* simply as the future tense, not that it has to or must. Because oneself as one at present is does not know in detail *all* the conditions that are necessary. You put together what conditions you can. You don't know to what extent and what degree they are necessary or for how long you will have to keep maintaining them, you just don't know that. Because you as you at present are are not you as you in the future will be; the two are incommensurable to a great extent. You just don't know, you just do your best. You cannot know exactly what conditions are going to give rise to the Bodhichitta, you can know just roughly, approximately, only. So from *your* point of view as you at present are there is an element of chance, even uncertainty, though not that it is really so, but it is just that you don't know always the *exact* combination of causes and conditions which *in your case* are going to enable the Bodhichitta to arise.

It is not that you just have to get all the ingredients, like making a cake, and you can be quite sure exactly what the result is going to be, inasmuch as you are now not what you will be then. That is where also the element of freedom comes in. You as you will be are free from, to some extent at least, you as you now are. You as you now are cannot provide for or dictate to you as you will be then, [43] or bind you as you will be then, or *anticipate* even, you as you will be then. Only in a very rough and approximate and vague general manner. Sometimes we speak and think as though we know exactly what we will be like when we are Enlightened, so to speak, where actually we have no idea at all. We have just got some vague general concept derived from the scriptures or our reading or reflection and so on. But we don't *really* know what it is going to be like.

This is why Shantideva says, admittedly exaggerating quite a lot, the arising of the Bodhichitta is like the finding by a blind man on a dark night of a jewel in a

dung heap. Because in a way you don't know what you are looking for. You have got some rough idea, maybe he has been told 'when you catch hold of it it will feel rough and hard and a bit sharp - that is the jewel', but he could just as well pick up a pebble or a walnut or something like that.

So there is always an element of, in a way, blindness in your following the path. Because if you knew exactly what the path was like and exactly what you had to do to reach it you would be there already, which by definition you are not. It is so easy for us to anticipate conceptually that in a way we think we know what we are talking about in this respect, but really we don't, we have only got a very vague general, approximate idea about it, at the most.

So inasmuch as we don't really know what the relative Bodhichitta is like, we don't really know in full detail with mathematical exactitude or scientific precision what conditions we have to set up for the arising of the Bodhichitta. We sometimes have to sort of juggle them around a bit to get maybe the right sort of combination.

Chakkhupala: What you have been saying is rather similar to what you were saying in Tuscany in 1982 concerning the arising of Insight. And in that context you said that one need not, probably would not, actually know when Insight had arisen, but rather there was in fact Insight which knew that Insight had arisen.

S: Yes, because the knowledge would pertain to the you in whom Insight had not arisen.

Chakkhupala: Given that, would the same apply to the arising of the Bodhichitta, the relative Bodhichitta?

S: In that same sort of way, until so to speak *you* had assimilated that experience and in the process changed. But if your knowledge was identified still with the old you or your knowledge had not made the necessary adjustment you would not know that the Bodhichitta had arisen.

Chakkhupala: I asked because, as it's described as a very profound spiritual experience and possibly also with the perhaps not very good associations with the descent of the Holy Spirit, is it taken to be a spiritual experience of that order that you just know - a profoundly moving spiritual experience that you would know that something had changed?

S: Well, there's knowing and knowing. You could say that on one level you would know because Insight is a form of [44] knowledge, or rather you have knowledge. But the framework of conceptual knowledge that belongs to the you that you were before the insight arose or before the Bodhichitta arose, may not yet have been able to reorganize itself in such a way as to contain, in a manner of speaking, the experience that had occurred. In that sense you would not *know* what had happened, there would be no conceptual bridge for you across to it, even though that experience itself was an experience of knowledge, of Insight. But in a way it's

knowledge or Insight of a profounder kind and there would not be a link between them which would enable you to say, in the terms of your old knowledge, that you knew that that experience had taken place. In a sense you would know, but in a sense you wouldn't. You wouldn't know in the sense that the old knowledge wouldn't be able to encompass the new experience. There would have to be further refinement of your conceptual mental activity for that to be possible. Then you would know, in the old sense even, or in an extension of the old sense, what had happened. You would have created that link.

Ratnaprabha: Also, at the same time in Tuscany you were talking about the arising of Insight being at least possibly a gradual process, and you likened it to grains of flour gradually filling up scales until finally they tipped, but you weren't quite sure of the point at which they tipped. Can one again speak of the arising of the Bodhichitta in the same way as being a gradual process or is it more like this lightning strike?

S: Presumably one can speak of it in the same way, as a gradual process; even the Going for Refuge as a gradual process. Sometimes people do say - this is in respect of effective Going for Refuge - that they don't really know at exactly which point they made the decision. Sometimes they do know, they have a definite experience on retreat, but it doesn't, so to speak, hit everybody like that. It just sort of grows on them and they realize that yes, that is what they want to do and in fact they have wanted to do that for some time but they can't really say at which point, precisely, they started feeling like that. Maybe it was last month, maybe it was last year, they are not sure, they just know the feeling has been growing on them and now it stands out and is quite distinctly recognizable. But the whole idea of gradualness and of suddenness raises all sorts of logical and metaphysical problems, but we won't go into those now.

Devamitra: Another question from Ratnaprabha concerning *dharma-niyama*.

Ratnaprabha: This is just a clarification question.

Is the *dharma-niyama* the same thing as spiral conditionality and the functioning of the creative mind?

S: I am not sure. I doubt it if one sticks to the Abhidharma understanding of those terms. I would imagine that creative mental activity, like reactive mental activity, would come under the *mano-niyama*. I [45] imagine so. One might have to reinterpret that list to give a different interpretation. *Dharma-niyama* is usually, traditionally explained or illustrated by various supernormal events taking place in connection with the life of the Buddha. For instance that on the occasion of his Enlightenment and so on the earth quaked in various ways - that is given as an example, as a manifestation, of *dharma-niyama*. It doesn't really seem to make much sense. There are other indications that *dharma-niyama* can be explained as I have explained it, in terms of purely spiritual or even transcendental experiences taking place within the individual. Because those aren't covered by that five-*niyama* classification, unless they are to be included in a transcendental subdivision of the *mano-niyama*. If that is not so then one has to relegate

transcendental experiences to the *dharma-niyama*. That seems to be me more logical. But perhaps one would need to look into all the Abhidharma texts which speak about the five *niyamas*, because they are not mentioned in the suttas.

I don't know that it is explicitly mentioned that *mano-niyama* includes transcendental mental events. If it doesn't then one could very easily regard *dharma-niyama* as representing those events and therefore as coinciding with at least the transcendental section of the spiral path. But one would need a little investigation before one could be really sure that one could interpret the term in that way.

Ratnaprabha: What about the section of the spiral path before the transcendental, before knowledge and vision of things as they really are, would that be a mixed section?

S: No, that is in principle reactive, at least potentially reactive, because it can react in an unskilful way or there can be a reaction from those levels or those stages of an unskilful reactive nature at any time.

Ratnaprabha: But potentially creative as well, presumably.

S: Again the word potential is a dangerous one, but at least as they at present are they are mundane and not transcendental, so if the *mano-niyama* was considered just mundane they would definitely be included under the *mano-niyama*. Hence if the transcendental mental events were to be included under the *dharma-niyama*, *dharma-niyama* would exclude those mental events which could turn in either direction, so to speak. Because as they are at present they are mundane and not transcendental, they merely provide a possible basis for the transcendental but they are not themselves transcendental.

I am not sure whether this idea of the five *niyamas* is treated in the Abhidharma in detail anywhere. It is usually just a list with very brief explanations, I haven't actually looked into it. *The Buddhist Encyclopaedia* hasn't got yet to 'n', *niyama*. One could perhaps look through the indices to the various volumes of the Abhidharma Pitaka and see if there is anything there. [46]

Ratnaprabha: I have tried doing that, but can I ask you another question on that just in case you know?

When you list the *niyamas* in *The Three Jewels* you do give them in the order by which the last three are *mano-niyama*, then *karma-niyama*, and then *dharma-niyama*; I think that is correct. But presumably, as you have been speaking about the *mano-niyama*, it would include mental events which were not karmically neutral, which were karmically effective, and therefore it would seem that the *mano-niyama* and the *karma-niyama* must overlap to a large extent.

S: Yes. If they didn't overlap, one could only make them not overlap by regarding the *mano-niyama* as covering simply - what would one call them? - mental states in which one was, as it were, passive, and which were merely perceptual, so to speak. I think in *The Three Jewels* I have adopted that point of view, as far as I remember.

Ratnaprabha: That it is merely passive mental states.

S: I think so, I won't be sure of that because it's a long time since I have looked into these things. Maybe it has to be all looked at again, all the different Abhidharma texts on the subject. I can't even recollect whence I derived that particular order. It must have been from some text or other. I think you might find that Mrs Rhys Davids has something to say about the five *niyamas*. I think she does so in a book entitled simply *Buddhism*. A relatively early work, a little Abhidharma material I think. I am not sure if we have got that in the Order Library, we might have. She may well give some references. But it would be good to tie in the five *niyamas* with the Dharma as we look at it, so to speak.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Prakasha and concerns traditions of puja.

The traditional forms of poetry and devotion that have come down to us in the FWBO are limited to the Sevenfold Puja and the Tiratana Vandana. How rich and varied, actually, is the field of Buddhist devotion, and how does it compare in richness and scope to devotional forms in Christianity? I was thinking of Bach's B minor Mass.

S: I think perhaps we should keep the terms devotional and liturgical separated. Devotional is much broader, you can be very devotional, a devotional attitude, even engaged in devotional practices, without them being ritualistic, as it were, in the way that the Sevenfold Puja is or in the way that a mass is. So we are really talking about liturgy, I think, not about devotion. Liturgy is not a popular subject with scholars in Buddhism, it is a subject they tend to avoid. If one goes just by the literature one gets the impression that Buddhist liturgy is not nearly as rich, say, as Christian liturgy, that is to say Orthodox and Roman Catholic liturgy. But that may be an impression simply arising out of the fact that there is no literature on that particular subject. This [47] is again something that requires investigation. The Tibetans have a very rich and elaborate ritual, a number of rituals, I am sure the Shingon school has. Various forms of Chinese Buddhism, not excluding Ch'an also do have. But to what extent and what degree it is comparable to Western Christian ritual, the richness and so on, it is difficult to say.

It is true that Christianity has its Bach's B minor Mass, but then Tibetan Buddhism has got its liturgical music which some people might say would have a very much more powerful effect spiritually than even the greatest of Bach's or Mozart's or Beethoven's masses. It's perhaps difficult again to compare because there are so many different kinds of music producing very different effects. So one has to be careful that one is really comparing similars and not dissimilars. Perhaps it is

difficult to compare Western religious music with its Eastern equivalent, the Buddhist music.

What was the question?

Prakasha: The first part of it was, how rich and varied is the field of Buddhist devotion?

S: I think devotion in the sense of liturgy we really just don't know, I think we just have to accept that further investigation is required. Someone will have to go off and attend various Buddhist ritual or liturgical celebrations, observances.

I think one can say this, that perhaps in the case of the Christian mass, the ritual, the liturgy, the theological content is of central importance. Whether there is anything of that kind in Buddhist ritual or literature it is difficult to say, I am a little bit doubtful, because the whole idea of the mass is connected with, or represents or embodies - these are probably not technically correct expressions - Christ's sacrifice on the cross and so forth. And whether we have anywhere in Buddhism that kind of very central and very close connection between liturgy and doctrine I'm not so sure. Certainly not in Buddhism as a whole, possibly in certain specific forms of Buddhism. Maybe someone could investigate that, the scholars aren't interested in this kind of material, usually. To some extent in the case of Tibetan Buddhism, but even then only a few scholars seem interested in that, and even then they approach it from a sociological or anthropological point of view, usually. There's a flavour of Jung perhaps thrown in.

Prakasha: Is there any other liturgy in, say, the Theravadin tradition apart from the Refugees and Precepts and the Tiratana Vandana?

S: They are not liturgies, refugees and precepts aren't liturgies in the technical sense. There are all sorts of ceremonies, in the Theravada it is ceremony rather than ritual. Though, again, yes, there are a few rituals on the fringes of Theravada Buddhism, as when, for instance when they paint in the eyes of a Buddha image, with recitations of Buddhist scriptures from the Pali of course. But this doesn't seem to be really indigenous to Theravada Buddhism - it seems to have been borrowed from Hinduism, not even from the Mahayana. [48]

I think we just don't know enough about Buddhism in certain respects still. But it's probable that the greatest ritual developments have taken place in some form of Tantric Buddhism of either the Tibetan or the Chinese or the Japanese. We know that at a certain phase in the development of Japanese Buddhism the performance of ritual played a very important part in the popularization of Buddhism, especially among the cultured and aristocratic classes. It really was visual Dharma, as it were. We know that liturgy plays a very important part in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, especially that of Russia now. I heard someone speaking on the radio recently about Eastern Orthodox Christianity and they said that in Russia the public practice or manifestation of Christianity was forbidden, but they were free to perform the liturgy within the Churches, and the speaker said 'and after all that's the most important thing'. So that is where they place the

greatest emphasis, not on preaching outside, social activities in the name of Jesus, but in the celebration of the liturgy which is still permitted within the churches. And from the Orthodox point of view that is the most important thing. And it is often said that the strength of Eastern Orthodoxy is in that, not in its theological teaching, not in its social work, but in its constant celebration of the liturgy.

Ritual, obviously, does have a very powerful effect upon people, and they don't have to understand it. Though no doubt if one understands it it is even more effective.

Devamitra: The next question also concerns puja, from Dharmapriya.

In the past you have aligned the arising of the Bodhichitta with Stream Entry. This suggests that producing conditions suitable for the arising of the Bodhichitta is analogous to a *vipassana* practice. Now, Shantideva gives puja as his method of developing these conditions. Surely puja in *this* sense is far more exalted than puja as we usually celebrate and experience it, which even when 'good' so to speak seems to consist merely of very positive emotion, strong devotional feelings and a vague feeling of Sangha. Should we not be striving towards pujas that would be at least the equivalent of dhyanas or otherwise of considerably higher nature, and if so how could we go about it?

S: Perhaps we should. I have sometimes said in the past that the readings that we have supply the, as it were, *vipassana* element, the insight element, within the context of positive emotion, the dhyanic element. For instance we always recite the Heart Sutra, we always have done after inviting the Buddhas to proclaim the Dharma. So it is, actually, all there, in a sense or in principle or at least in a rudimentary form. Perhaps people just do need to take it all much more seriously.

I think there's a lot more that we could do but it has to grow out of our own experience. I don't think we can have a little blueprint for an ideal puja just thought out rationally. I think pujas have improved over the years, but no doubt there is still room for improvement. [49] We have, sometimes, very good pujas in Tuscany, as I think most of you know and have experienced; and on retreats in this country. Perhaps there does need to be an upgrading of pujas, as of so much else. But it was interesting to see that in Tuscany after the first year there was a definite upgrading. Special cloths were purchased in advance and taken out to Tuscany and there was a lot more trouble over the organization and decoration of the shrine, and changing the shrine in accordance with the particular festival that was being celebrated, or particular Bodhisattva who was being honoured that particular evening. That is all a step in the right direction, of artistic creativity manifested. It's even extended to the congregation, so to speak, there have been some attempts to - what shall I say? - aestheticize the congregation that would be more pleasing and attractive, coloured blankets and things. It did look better this year in Tuscany, there are one or two present who were in Tuscany, I think those somewhat reddish cloaks or blankets did introduce an element of uniformity

which was quite pleasing, but it wasn't overdone. There was a certain range of shades of red one might say; they weren't absolutely uniform by any means but that didn't matter, they all did blend, they did all harmonize. Not absolutely everybody had a red cloak or blanket but nearly everybody did and it did make, I think, quite a pleasing difference.

Devamitra: Another question on the same sort of theme from Tejamitra.

I have heard that you have mentioned that to perform a sevenfold puja, say, in the evening you should really have experienced the emotions which the puja gives expression to during the day. In my ordinary day I find this difficult to imagine at present. Do you think that this is due to a lack of clear comprehension of purpose or do you think that the situation may be improved when I make a deeper connection with the puja such as I imagine the Tibetans have in their culture?

S: I don't remember making that statement but it is the sort of statement I could have made and I think I can imagine what I must have been getting at. I think what I was getting at was that there mustn't be too great a gulf, as it were, between your ordinary mental state during the day and the mental state that is appropriate when you perform the sevenfold puja. I think I was meaning, or trying to point out, that during the day you must be experiencing, at least in a rudimentary form, at least to a limited extent, the sort of emotions which you experience more intensely in a more structured form, perhaps, within the context of the sevenfold puja.

For instance, there must be some element of devotion present throughout the day, however faint it may be. Even some element of Going for Refuge, or consciousness of Going for Refuge, in the case of an Order Member. And there must be some element of regret for any unskilful action you happen to perform in the course of the day. So the sevenfold puja should really represent a sort of flowering of seeds [50] which are present all throughout the day. Not making too much of a point of that but just wanting to emphasize the fact that there must not be too great a disparity between what you are trying to do in the shrine room when you are performing the sevenfold puja and what you have been doing during the rest of the day. I think that would have been my main point. It's almost as though during the day you try to keep in touch with the sevenfold puja, or to be building up towards it throughout the day. Not just suddenly think of all those positive emotions the minute you enter the shrine room, having totally neglected them during the rest of the day. That isn't very good.

The same with meditation. You can't possibly hope to be completely unmindful during the day, not bother about mental concentration, and then just go into the shrine, sit down and start concentrating and meditating. You have to practise some degree of mindfulness and meditation during the day to be able to meditate satisfactorily in the evening. Sometimes if the disturbance is relatively superficial you can put it all aside and just get down to meditation but that is more difficult, or more rare. It depends also on the degree of underlying interest in meditation, or

sevenfold puja, as the case may be.

Tejamitra: From the point of view of puja, I also put in that I imagine it's going to improve when it's more part of our own culture, as we deepen our own experience of the puja.

S: Yes, I am sure that is the case. And when it doesn't feel anything foreign any more.

For instance, if one comes into contact with Christianity, Christian art, Christian symbols, one doesn't accept what they mean, but nonetheless they are not strange or unfamiliar. If in the case of Buddhism it's the reverse, you accept the meaning but the form, the cultural form, the symbols are a bit unfamiliar, you don't *feel* them in the way that you would like, that takes time, both so far as you individually are concerned and as far as the spiritual community is concerned.

Devamitra: The next question comes from Sudhana.

Are Vasubhandu's Four Factors traditionally practised in any particular way? Would you recommend any particular way of practising them?

S: I don't know that they are practised in any particular way or in any particular order. It did occur to me, just reading through the lecture this morning, that perhaps it isn't necessary to emphasize all four equally in the case of each individual person. That some people will concentrate more on one than another and perhaps if you concentrate even on one, wholeheartedly, that would be enough by itself. I am not sure of this, but at least I am reasonably sure that we don't need to emphasize all four of them equally. Though if you can practise all four no doubt that's best.

I don't know that there is any living tradition of the actual concrete practice of these four. I don't know that there is. There are separate practices, no doubt, [51] pertaining to each of them. Perhaps we need to organize or develop something of that kind.

Dharmadhara: Are they in verse form at all?

S: Not that I know of, they might well be, there is so much of Tibetan literature that we just don't know, hasn't been translated, but I haven't come across any versified account or description of them. Perhaps someone could produce one, or even produce something in prose which people could recite or reflect upon. Obviously one would have to produce it out of very deep feeling for those four after reflecting on them oneself and perhaps trying to practise them oneself. One could compose a sort of liturgy to help one do that.

Dharmapriya: As far as I understand the selection of readings in the puja, the key reading after the sixth section should be Buddhavacana or something similar

to it, which would generally rule out verses in praise of the Buddha, which generally do not purport to come from an Enlightened being. But it strikes me that probably for our practical purposes verses in praise of the Buddha or Avalokitesvara are very important. I am wondering whether we should not - I hesitate to use the word rule - but far more frequently put emphasis on those readings after the first or second sections, something like that. Matriceta's verses in praise of Sakyamuni, for example.

S: Yes, perhaps we should. I suppose it depends on the length of time available. I am not happy, personally, with late-night pujas, when often people are tired and they don't want to have a long puja, or a long puja is not appropriate unless one started quite early on.

Devamitra: The last question is from Prakasha.

In the first lecture you emphasize the Buddha's life and personal example as having importance as well as his teaching. This seems to emphasize the importance of biography. What biography of Buddhist Bodhisattvas would you recommend? Are there any examples in Western culture of people who exemplify the Bodhisattva Ideal, or have even some glimmer or reflection of it, however faint?

S: I don't think there is much in Western literature, really. I think those biographies of figures in Western culture, history and so on, which are inspiring are usually those where a very heroic element or attitude is exemplified in the face of obstacles, difficulties, disasters. I think there are quite a few biographies of that sort. But in the case of biographies of saints and mystics there is very often that element of intolerance, narrowness, fanaticism, mixed in with other quite positive things and one can't wholeheartedly enjoy or recommend the biography.

For instance, there is the figure of St. Catherine of Siena, a very admirable woman in many respects, quite extraordinary. But she was utterly devoted to one of the very worst Popes that ever existed, and that is saying quite a lot, and was a fanatical supporter of his. Which [52] seems almost inconceivable, but there she was, the evidence is all there in her letters which have survived. He was a dreadful, horrible sort of person. It was he who precipitated a great schism, but she supported him with all the earnestness of her nature, she was utterly blind to his faults. If she had been asked she no doubt would have said that it was not proper to see the faults of a Pope, there were no faults, he was the Pope and that was that, he was Christ on earth. She repeatedly addresses him as Christ on earth, but he was an abominable character. If she was really a saint she should have seen it, which apparently she didn't. So there is that element in her biography which is not at all admirable, though she shows extraordinary qualities of heroism, determination, self-denial, self-sacrifice; quite remarkable qualities. But one can hardly recommend her biography for general Buddhist reading. Do you see what I mean? One would feel happier recommending the biography of a honest soldier or something like that.

Nelson's biography has its heroic aspect, very definitely. If I thought, I could probably draw up a list but I can't do that just at the moment. And sometimes one comes across biographies of relatively unknown people who did exhibit in perhaps very ordinary circumstances really quite heroic and remarkable qualities. They can be dug out and made more popular. Autobiographies too. For instance there's Samuel Butler's autobiography or slightly novelistic autobiography, *The Way of All Flesh*. Maybe in some ways it's a bit low key but it does tell a very interesting story of a son emancipating himself from the constricting influence of his father. The same with the autobiography by Gosse, *Father and Son*. It's not very heroic but there is an element of heroism, one could say, in a man in the end daring to grow up and disagree with his father and disagree with his father's way of thinking.

There's lives of explorers, even great inventors, great artists which show great qualities of heroism. Michelangelo's biography, his wholehearted concentration on his work, devotion to his ideals in that particular way. Fra Angelico's for that matter. Perhaps we should draw up a list of approved biographies for Buddhists.

Devamitra: You have just been emphasizing the heroic aspects of the lives of those various people as opposed to...

S: Yes, I mentioned heroic because in the case of biographies of Western figures one doesn't usually expect to find an element of, say, insight or compassion in the Buddhist sense, but perhaps one does find some element of heroism. So I stressed it not on principle but because that was usually all that one could really find.

Devamitra: So you've never come across any figure that to your mind had suggested the great compassion in any way?

S: Well, it's limited. Compassion perhaps for the poor but hatred for heretics and readiness to burn them at the stake. It's selective compassion, 'kindness to ten persons', as Orton says, and hatred for a hundred others. [53]

Devamitra: But a figure that many people quote is that of St. Francis.

S: Yes. But there again he was a staunch supporter of the Papacy. The Pope of his time was not a very bad one - well, he was bad politically, not morally, that was Innocent XIII, wasn't it.

He was an extraordinary figure in many ways, no doubt. In the case of, say, wisdom it usually manifests in what people write rather than in their actual lives. It is rather difficult for wisdom to manifest in one's life, in a way, wisdom in the higher sense, also it's got to manifest in a way that is interesting from a biographical point of view whereas heroism can manifest in that way. Heroic actions, I think, one notices, are more spectacular than genuinely wise actions. What form would those transcendently wise actions take? Usually the role of

teaching or writing. There may be a basis of transcendental wisdom in ultimate heroism but it's not perceived as wisdom, you just perceive the heroism that is its manifestation.

Sudhana: Presumably the compassion couldn't have manifested anyway, because it can't manifest in writing, or can it?

S: You can manifest compassion in your day-to-day life, in your dealings with other people. But the presence of compassion is doubted if your compassion manifests in a very selective way. If you are only compassionate to your own family, that is not Buddhist compassion. If you are only compassionate to people of your own race or nationality or religion, that is not compassion in the full Buddhist sense. A lot of Christians have been kind and compassionate to a limited extent but usually their compassion excluded heretics and Jews and all sorts of other people. Perhaps sometimes even Christians of another nationality, at least for the time being.

Sudhana: It seems very strange that there can be quite a genuine feeling for compassion for people of a particular race or a particular belief and quite the opposite for those of a different race or belief.

S: But then that raises the question of what one really means by genuine. Perhaps one just has to say that, or accept that compassion or love can be very limited and it doesn't *really* become compassion in the *full* Buddhist sense until it becomes, at least in principle, unlimited and you are making a genuine effort to make it unlimited and not to confine it to any particular group of people, and consciously accept that as an ideal. I mean, an orthodox Christian would not accept that you should love a heretic, you should hate a heretic because God hates him.

Sthirananda: In a way you are saying there is nothing in the history of Western culture that actually reflects the Bodhisattva spirit. [54]

S: Well, I have distinguished between the heroic elements and other elements, the Bodhisattva Ideal as being a many-sided thing. Perhaps a few aspects are reflected but perhaps not what Buddhists would regard as very prominent, that is to say the compassion aspect and the wisdom aspect. One might find a trace or a glimmering in the case of certain individuals who are very much individuals, for instance like Blake. I mean Blake definitely would not have thought in terms of loving Christians and hating non-Christians. I can't imagine Blake having that sort of attitude. But they are people rather on the fringes, outside the pale so to speak, who might even have been themselves persecuted or killed as heretics in the middle ages.

Dharmapriya: While you have been saying this I couldn't but think of your reference in one of the Perfect Vision *Mitrata* seminar extracts, about 'Is there insight outside of Buddhism?', where you made the reference to Hinduism. The problem with Hinduism, as far as I remember, are in terms of the *miccha ditthi* of

the caste system. One could not but think that the problem (of pseudo and limited compassion seems to do with the *miccha ditthis*?) almost as if you restrict sentient beings to a very very narrow group, or only a narrow group of living beings are worthy of compassion.

S: It's very difficult to separate the emotional and the intellectual aspects of that, sometimes the one seems to come first, sometimes the other. In the case of the caste system the emotional attitude of discrimination and the intellectual justification for it on the part of high-caste Hindus are so closely interconnected, by this time quite impossible perhaps to separate them.

I think nonetheless one should try to detect whenever one can some traces of genuine spiritual experience, and even some reflections of the Bodhisattva Ideal, in the religion and culture of the West. If we *can* find such reflections they are very helpful to us. They enable us to make some connection with, so to speak, the spirit of Buddhism through the medium of Western culture, and that is obviously useful.

Ratnaprabha: You mentioned Samuel Butler, would you say that some of the other great novelists do show a certain amount of compassion? I am thinking perhaps of Tolstoy or George Eliot, or some of the nineteenth-century novelists.

S: This is true, but I think ultimately compassion has to manifest in life, not just imaginatively. Because you could presumably write a very appealing novel describing someone who was very compassionate, it could be a quite moving description but from that it does not necessarily follow that you, the author, are compassionate in your life. Perhaps in some cases your compassion finds an outlet in literature but *not* in life. Some people have said that Tolstoy, though very compassionate in his writing, was very cruel in some respects in his life, even to some of those who were supposedly quite near and dear to him.

Some writers in general have been quite cruel to other people quite irrespective of the sensitivity that apparently [55] manifests in their writing. Think for instance of the artist and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini if you have read his autobiography. His artistic work is beautiful, very delicate and inspired, but look at the life he led, he was an absolute ruffian. It is very difficult to combine the two; by his own admission he was an absolute ruffian, actually takes *pride* in being one. On some occasion when he or his brother, or both of them, had murdered somebody he regards it as a noble act which is worthy of admiration. Apparently people at the time did rather admire Cellini, not just for his art but for being such an honest gentleman. So quick to take offence, a real gentleman, very quickly on the draw, very quick to use his dagger, very quick to avenge what he thought was an insult. And Popes and Cardinals patted him on the back and patronized him, and bought his work. It's quite extraordinary.

He was quite an extreme case but there is a thread of that running all through the Italian Renaissance.

Anyway that got rather away from the question.

Prakasha: I think that did answer it.

S: That's the last. So we ended up talking quite a bit about puja. I did mention that perhaps we need to upgrade our sevenfold puja, perhaps we do. Well, upgrading is always in order, isn't it, on any particular spiritual front. So perhaps in the course of this retreat itself you could give it a little attention or just consider how you might upgrade the pujas, either your own or those at your centre or in your community. There is the aesthetic element, that is quite important. There is the element of devotion, the element of time.

Tejamitra: Another thing that improved the pujas in Tuscany was that the new Order Members took turns in leading meditations and pujas and we had a day dedicated to the Bodhisattva on whom that Order Member who was leading had a visualization practice. They were on alternate days at the end of Tuscany, and that added a *lot* because the leader was very devoted to that Bodhisattva.

S: But presumably when we have our sevenfold puja in the more general sense, when the devotion is directed more specifically to the Buddha, everybody should have that sort of feeling for the Buddha or link with the Buddha, could we not say? Anyway, I will leave you to think about it.

End of tape

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Three: The Bodhisattva Vow

Tejananda: We've got thirteen questions on the Bodhisattva Vow, Bhante. We start with one from Ratnaprabha on the meaning of *pranidhana*.

In the lecture you translate the word *pranidhana* as being 'vow', or even 'determination' or 'promise' - you used words like that. But Har Dayal seems to think that it doesn't really mean vow and determination so much as a wish or aspiration. It says, 'it may be inferred that the idea underlying *pranidhana* is that of an earnest wish and not strictly that of a vow or resolve', and he suggests that it should be rendered as earnest [56] wish or aspiration. I wondered if you had any comments on that.

S: Obviously this is a question of definition. I would say that 'earnest wish' is perhaps too weak. 'Wish' is much too weak - even 'aspiration' in the sense that he seems to be using the word is much too weak - because when you simply wish that something may be so it means that you would *like* it to be so but that you are not necessarily doing anything to *make* it so. But that is certainly not the Bodhisattva's position. He is not simply wishing that all sentient beings may attain Enlightenment - he is also doing whatever he can to bring that about. I would say that to regard the *pranidhana* as a wish in that way, or even as aspiration in that way - a sort of pious wish, as it were - it seems to amount to no more than that - is really totally inadequate.

This may just illustrate the fact that whereas Har Dayal is very familiar with the text, the literature of the subject, he doesn't seem to have much sensitivity where spiritual life itself is concerned. I would reject 'wish' as quite inadequate, even 'earnest wish'. The Bodhisattva doesn't simply wish that others may gain Enlightenment, it is really quite absurd if one thinks about it. He resolves - in other words he is going to do whatever he can to bring about that particular desired result.

I think probably the most accurate translation is 'resolution'; probably that gets nearest, because the Bodhisattva resolves. Also, in a way, what Har Dayal said is quite absurd because if one thinks of the form that the vow takes, the specific form that it takes, especially, say, the ten great vows or the forty-eight vows of Amitabha, it is quite clear that we are not concerned with a mere wish.

Ratnaprabha: It could be that he has been misled by the form of words which

are used in the sutras, where it often says, 'May such and such occur, and may this and may that'. I don't know if that is a bad translation or just the way that Sanskrit is put. 'May my pure lands have no beings from the lower class in it', and that kind of thing.

S: No, the vow in that case takes the form 'if, when I attain Enlightenment, such and such has not happened, might I not in fact gain Enlightenment'. So this suggests that you are resolving that something shall be done. If it *isn't* done you don't want to be Enlightened, so that isn't just a pious wish. The non-doing of that would be incompatible with your Enlightenment; so again that isn't an expression of a pious wish or hope that things may be so. I don't think we can consider even 'earnest wish' to translate.

But again, perhaps one can add here that one very often gets the impression, in the case, perhaps, of individual Mahayana Buddhists, that the vow has in fact *become* a wish. That the vow amounts to them no more than *wishing* that it may be so because they are not actually really doing anything to make it so, or doing so little that it doesn't really count. Saying, 'may all beings be happy' and just leaving it at that, not bothering to do whatever you can to *make* them happy. So, one might say, 'may all beings gain Enlightenment', or 'may all beings be delivered from sorrow', but unless you are actually doing something to bring that about it isn't actually a vow or resolution, or determination, it's simply a wish.

I think that probably is an important distinction, though [57] clearly Har Dayal wasn't thinking in quite that way. When you take the precepts, there is no question of just *wishing* that you may observe them, you *resolve* to observe them. Some people think that the wish is sufficient. I am not speaking so much within the FWBO now, but there is a general feeling that if you wish that something may be so it's equivalent to working really quite hard that it may be so. You find this especially among - how shall I say - semi-socialist, semi-politically minded people who wish that some desirable change may come about and consider that the vigorous expression of that wish is tantamount to actually doing something to bring about that particular state of affairs.

Anyway, perhaps enough about that; so resolution is to be distinguished from wish.

Tejananda: The second question is from Susiddhi; it is on the necessity of vows in a Bodhisattva's practice.

To what extent does the Bodhisattva need his vows to enable him to stick to his practice of the *paramitas* until he attains irreversibility?

S: I think one must make a few distinctions here. If the Bodhichitta has actually arisen, well one doesn't need vows in the sense of supports of that Bodhichitta. One needs vows in that, as it were, disciplinary sense only if the Bodhichitta is as yet merely, let's say, an effective Bodhichitta - there has been an effective arising of the Bodhichitta rather than a real one. That is to say you have [*unclear due to sneeze!*] no more than an intellectual conviction about the Bodhichitta which you

hold sincerely and in accordance with which you try to live, but the Bodhichitta as an actual experience, parallel to Insight with a capital I, hasn't as yet arisen.

So in the case of the Bodhichitta having actually arisen your vows are the *expression* of that rather than a support of that in a disciplinary sense. One could of course say that the formulation of vows possibly hastens the development of that Bodhichitta, but the Bodhichitta does not depend upon the vows, so to speak, for its existence. Again, perhaps one shouldn't try to distinguish too rigidly between the Bodhichitta and the vows in which that Bodhichitta expresses itself. It's not that the Bodhichitta arises and then you bethink yourself that perhaps you ought to take a few vows. The vows are quite natural expressions, to use that term, of the Bodhichitta once it has arisen. They represent the various perspectives which you see opening up before you now that the Bodhichitta has arisen.

But perhaps you are thinking more in terms of vows in the ordinary sense, as we sometimes have them in the FWBO, rather than of the Bodhisattva vow as such in the full sense.

Susiddhi: I was under the impression that a Bodhisattva could actually lose the Bodhichitta, fall away from the path of practising the Paramitas.

S: This depends on what kind, so to speak, of Bodhichitta has arisen. Whether it's - let's say, a provisional Bodhichitta, or an effective Bodhichitta, or a real Bodhichitta.

Susiddhi: I was thinking in terms of the real Bodhichitta and a Bodhisattva of the path. [58]

S: Because some of the Mahayana texts do say that there is a distinction between the stage of arising of the Bodhichitta and stage of irreversibility from full Enlightenment as such. But that sort of distinction depends upon there being a real distinction between the Arahant path and the Bodhisattva path, because if you resile, as it were, from the Bodhisattva path then you find yourself not back on the worldly path but on the Arahant path. But if one doesn't acknowledge the validity of that distinction, then that sort of question, obviously, doesn't arise. You can only think of the Bodhisattva vows as sustaining the Bodhichitta if you make a real distinction, ultimately, between the Arahant path and the Bodhisattva path. So within that context, yes, you might say that the various vows do sustain, among other things, the Bodhichitta until it reaches its culmination, in a way - to some extent its culmination, at the stage of irreversibility. This all takes place within a framework of differentiation between Bodhisattva path and Arahant path, a differentiation which I don't really consider valid.

Susiddhi: So irreversibility, then, almost disappears.

S: No, it is displaced, or replaced where it originally was. Because irreversibility, irreversibility of the Bodhisattva, becomes irreversibility from simple

Enlightenment, Enlightenment as such; becomes equivalent to the real arising of the Bodhichitta, the real Going for Refuge.

Dharmapriya: This would imply that the whole structure of the Ten Bhumis is really only valid if one distinguishes between the Arahant and the Bodhisattva path.

S: If one takes them literally as *bhumis* on a separate Bodhisattva path, yes. But it is again quite surprising if you go through the canonical accounts of them, what an amazing amount of Hinayana material is found in those *bhumis*. You are practising the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Nidanas and all sorts of other things, so it isn't perhaps such a separate path as it appears *even* on the testimony of the Mahayana sutras.

But, yes, the ten *bhumis* don't seem to be a sequence that corresponds at all closely to actual spiritual experience. I think I have mentioned in the *Survey*, they seem to be a series of portmanteaus in which one stuffs as many doctrinal categories as possible.

But this whole question of getting back to spiritual fundamentals and asking oneself what the path is really about and not being misled by later, apparently different, doctrinal developments, is a very central and very important one. It is unfortunate that I haven't been able to get around to writing a systematic book about it, but maybe somebody else could do that. All the material is there scattered through so many seminars, or the leading indications are there.

Tejananda: The third question is from Prakasha on the reformulation of the Bodhisattva vows.

As I understand it, you have said that the Bodhisattva vow is literally impossible to take and put into effect, even for someone in whom the Bodhichitta [59] has arisen, as no one can actually save all sentient beings, for example, not even a Buddha. And for that reason you have also said that the Bodhisattva ordination is not relevant. Rather than discard the vow altogether would it be possible to reformulate the vows, perhaps as resolutions that do reflect the Bodhichitta but that are relevant and practical to our own lives? In short, to remake them in formulations that really are the concrete practical expressions of the Bodhichitta in the life and work of a Bodhisattva.

S: I think I prefer to get back to and to emphasize a sort of unified concept of Going for Refuge, arising of the Bodhichitta, arising of Insight, opening of the Dharma-eye and so on, rather than speak too much in terms of the arising of the Bodhichitta and the Bodhisattva vow separately, as it were. Because in a way that perpetuates the very distinction that we are doing our best to nullify because we see it as lacking real validity.

But on the other hand what came to be known as the teaching of the arising of

the Bodhichitta, the taking of the Bodhisattva vow, does represent a very important aspect of the Going for Refuge itself. It represents the altruistic aspect and it has been said, I forget by whom - it might have been said to me personally by Mr Chen - that the great characteristic of all Bodhisattva vows is their universality. If there is any limitation it's not a Bodhisattva vow. You resolve to help deliver *all* beings, etc. etc., there is no limitation. So that one could say that not only does the arising of the Bodhichitta represent the altruistic aspect of the Going for Refuge, represent the altruistic aspect or dimension of the whole spiritual life, but it also makes it clear that in practical terms the application of that spirit of altruism, that other-regarding attitude, has no conceivable limit. Do you see what I mean? When you become aware, so to speak, of the altruistic implications of your spiritual life you see that you cannot put, you cannot impose, any *limit* on those implications. You cannot say 'I'll go so far, but no further. I'll do so much for other people but no more.' It may be for the present that you are not able to do very much, but in principle you recognize no limitations to what your spiritual commitment might require you to do for other people, assuming that you are able to do it, are in a position to do it.

So this is, perhaps, what the arising of the Bodhichitta and the Bodhisattva vow really represent. You realize that the altruistic implications of the spiritual life, the fact that you have committed yourself to the spiritual life, specifically to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, are in fact limitless. Whether one should formulate that recognition in a traditional way, as a particular set of vows, for the sake of one's personal spiritual encouragement - that is another matter.

One might say that inasmuch as there is no limit to egolessness, so there is no limit to altruism either. It is not that you are going to get rid - to speak in such terms - of your ego up to a certain point but after that you are just going to stop, you are going to allow a certain amount of ego to remain; no, you don't take that attitude. There is no limit to the extent to which you are prepared to get rid of your sense of ego. In the same way, as regards the other-regarding [60] aspect of the spiritual life there is no limit, in principle, to what you are prepared to do for other people. This is what really the Bodhisattva vow is all about.

In other words, once you have committed yourself to the spiritual life you just don't recognize any limitations, either subjectively or objectively, either on the self-regarding side or the other-regarding side. I think it's important to get back to the fundamentals of what the Bodhisattva vow is really all about, that is to say you reformulate it or relate it to the basic teachings, or what seem to be the original basic teachings of Buddhism.

What did the question actually say? Let's make sure we have actually dealt with the question.

Prakasha: The possibility of suggesting that we remake the formulations so that they really are the concrete practical expressions of the Bodhichitta.

S: Are you speaking of the really arisen Bodhichitta? (**Prakasha:** Yes.) But one can only do that when that Bodhichitta has actually arisen, which is tantamount to

Real Going for Refuge. So for most people perhaps that would be a rather academic question.

I think one has to deepen one's realization of the altruistic implications of the spiritual life itself, the altruistic implications of the Going for Refuge, in other words one's realization of the compassion aspect of wisdom, or the fact that compassion is, so to speak, co-ordinate with wisdom. I think I have mentioned that in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* there are many questions about how one can recognize a Bodhisattva, that is to say a *Real* Bodhisattva; and one of the ways in which you can recognize a Real Bodhisattva is that whenever he is asked a question about - I forget what it actually is, perhaps it's Nirvana or something like that - in his reply he always brings in compassion. So one can translate that into broader, more general terms and say that if, when you are asked a question about the spiritual life, you speak only in terms of personal development and you don't bring in the altruistic aspect, you aren't really yet on the spiritual path if you don't recognize at least in principle that other-regarding aspect; that your leading of the spiritual life can't just be for you, can't just be for your own sake, it has implications for others. It imposes upon you even duties with regard to others, responsibilities with regard to others.

So one can put it another way: if you are asked a question about Going for Refuge and in your reply you don't bring in something about the Bodhisattva vow, you haven't really Gone for Refuge - but this is putting it a little paradoxically. But you see what I'm getting at. It is very important and significant that the Mahayana did take upon itself to bring out in a quite remarkable and dramatic way the altruistic implications of the spiritual life. Unfortunately, due to certain historical developments, that came to be represented as constituting an alternative path rather than as a formulation or reformulation of *the* Path.

Susiddhi: Shouldn't we have something in the Movement, then? It sounds unbalanced if someone just says 'I wish to Go for Refuge.' Shouldn't there be added pledging themselves to something else? [61]

S: In a sense that is true, 'I wish to Go for Refuge' - but why? - 'for my own benefit and the benefit of all beings'. Unfortunately for one reason or another we have been left in the Buddhist tradition, on the whole, with some rather one-sided formulations. We have to try and bring them together. I did mention, I don't know whether it was in the course of last year's Tuscany or the one before, but I had sometimes wondered whether it wouldn't be a good idea on certain occasions within the context of Puja for Order Members to at least recite or to have read the Bodhisattva precepts. Not that one is literally taking them, but as a *reminder* of the altruistic aspect of the spiritual life and of the Going for Refuge itself.

Of course in the Going for Refuge and Prostration Practice you go for Refuge with all sentient beings, don't you? - or at the head of all sentient beings, as it were. So in that particular context it's well brought out that your Going for Refuge is not for your own sake alone. But perhaps it needs to be further emphasized.

Dharmapriya: In practical terms, again and again one hears of an Order

Member who has, as it were, neglected himself and is run down and has been putting himself into the objective needs of the situation, so to speak, so much that he needs a break, or something of this sort. It doesn't strike me, however, that that is because he has been over-emphasizing the altruistic side, or would you say it does?

S: Well, what do you think, what do you think the reason is?

Dharmavira: Could be lack of emotional connection with that ideal. With the ideals of Going for Refuge.

S: Could be - any other possible explanation?

It is certainly not a *bad* thing to put yourself into the needs of the objective situation, it is a very good thing. It is not a bad thing to think of other people. In a sense it's not a bad thing to neglect yourself. I think you are not being really objective when you do the sort of thing that Dharmapriya described. Because if you neglect yourself you are neglecting the instrument that you have to use to work for others. So if you look at it more objectively you would say: 'If I don't keep this particular piece of machinery, so to speak, rested and in good condition I am not going to be able to do very much for other people.' So perhaps your so-called altruism or concern for the needs of the objective situation is a little blind, in a way. It's not a completely objective concern, there are perhaps other factors at work, possibly of an unskilful nature. Do you see what I mean?

Sometimes you may have to respond to the needs of the objective situation in such a way as to, in a sense, damage yourself, but you should do that only if you know what you are doing and think that on the whole, in the long run, that is justified. Sometimes that sort of situation may arise, you may find yourself in a situation of emergency. You may find yourself in a situation where you are helping to save people's lives, and you may not spare yourself in that sort of situation. But apart from such emergencies you will keep yourself in good condition so that you *can* be of greater and more effective service to other people. [62]

So that sort of neglect of yourself is incompatible with your concern for other people. So that if you neglect yourself in that way in a situation other than one of emergency you are not in fact being fully and truly altruistic, though you may think you are. It's easy to speak in this way theoretically, sometimes in practice it's very difficult to know, it's very difficult to know whether you have really overstepped the mark or not, or whether you ought to have overstepped the mark or not. Maybe one just learns from practice and experience, what you can and should do and what you cannot and should not do. One doesn't want to disregard one's own health, safety and so on, but on the other hand one doesn't want to be precious about them, not even in the name of altruism.

Ratnaprabha: Can I just return to what you said at the beginning of this question concerning the universality of the vows and how this relates to the other remarks you made about their unrealisticness - that they shouldn't be taken because they are so unrealistic. Isn't a universal statement inevitably unrealistic?

S: No, I would make a distinction. In the traditional formulation of the Bodhisattva vow you say, for instance, 'I vow to save all living beings'. That sort of vow you cannot realistically take, but you can say: 'I place no limit on what I am prepared to do, when the time is ripe and when I am ready, for other living beings.' Do you see the difference? It's not that you are saying that you will do something of, so to speak, an infinite nature, you are saying that you will place no *limit* on what you are willing and prepared to do. That is rather a different thing. Have I made that sufficiently clear? (**Voices:** Yes.)

Prakasha: I guess what I had in mind when I asked the question - that's what I meant by a reformulation.

S: For instance, you don't say: 'I will do so much for sentient beings but I am not going to do so much, further than that I am not going to go', you don't make any such statement. You say, for instance: 'At present there is very little I can do but I would like to be able to do a lot more, in fact I would like to do everything, I place no conscious or explicit limit to what I am prepared to do.' So that is rather different.

You are open to all possibilities but that does not mean that you actually give a definite undertaking that you will perform all those things. In a sense you don't *know* what form, ultimately, your aspiration is going to take, what you may need to do or will see needs to be done. You just remain open to the possibility of helping people in any way that you can. You don't impose any limitation, any closure.

Tejananda: The fourth question is again from Prakasha and is about the general nature of the Bodhisattva precepts.

What is the general nature of the Bodhisattva precepts? Are they practical or cosmic?

S: On the whole they are practical and on the whole they are other-regarding. They are not like the vows. They are [63] a sort of Mahayanic equivalent of the Hinayana precepts. To the best of my recollection they are all, or very nearly all definitely practicable however difficult some of them may be. They do give certain definite concrete pointers as to the sort of thing that one should be doing if one is aware of and therefore in a sense trying to practise the altruistic aspect of the spiritual life and one's own Going for Refuge.

Tejananda: Fifth question from Kuladeva on Going for Refuge and the Bodhisattva vow.

Kuladeva: I think you have already very largely answered this question but I will ask you anyway.

Do you think the Bodhisattva vow was stressed by the Mahayana because it ceased to be implicit in the refuge formula, or does it represent a doctrinal development?

S: I think to begin with the refuge formula had lost its significance, the act of Going for Refuge has lost its central position in Buddhist spiritual life. The central position seems to have been taken by becoming a monk. So the Mahayana to some extent was a movement of reaction against that, and they therefore stressed the altruistic aspect of the spiritual life. But since the going for Refuge had lost its central position they didn't stress, it would seem, the altruistic aspect of the Going for Refuge. They formulated what amounted to, one might even say, an entirely new ideal. Not ultimately new, because it did hark back to the spirit of the Buddha's original teaching, but certainly new as a formulation, new as a way of looking at the spiritual life. As distinguished from the more Hinayanistic way.

Ratnaprabha: So do I understand you to suggest that in a sense in the Mahayana the Bodhisattva vow replaced the Going for Refuge, in a sense, because the Going for Refuge had been so devalued?

S: No, I don't think it is just the Bodhisattva vow by itself, it's the whole Bodhisattva ideal, the concept of the arising of the Bodhichitta and the practise of the Paramitas and the formulation of the vows. These were all intended to stress the importance of the altruistic aspect of the spiritual life which had been lost sight of by many people within the Buddhist movement. One could say that in some of its more popular versions or more popular formulations the Mahayana sometimes lost sight of the *self*-regarding aspect of the spiritual life in such as to appear to suggest sometimes that you could help others without having helped yourself; not that you literally have to help yourself first and *then* help others. The Bodhisattva didn't exactly become a Buddhist social worker, but there was sometimes a very great deal of emphasis on what the Bodhisattva did for others, but very little mention, perhaps, of what he was doing for himself by the way of personal spiritual practice.

I think Har Dayal comments on the fact that in the Bodhisattva's practise of the Paramitas, and especially the bhumis, not very much provision is made for the practice of meditation. When it comes to meditation it is as if he has got to take time off from his Bodhisattva life and [64] Bodhisattva career to brush up on his meditation! Do you see what I mean? As though it wasn't always fully realized or remembered, perhaps one should say, that in the same way that the altruistic aspect of the spiritual life is the counterpart of the self-regarding aspect all the way along, in the same way the self-regarding aspect of the spiritual life is the counterpart of the other-regarding aspect of the spiritual life *all the way along*. All the way along the path. It's not that you follow the Arahant path and from time to time take a bit of time off for altruistic activities, it's not that you follow the Bodhisattva path and from time to time take a bit of time off to brush up on your meditation and personal development. You do your best to integrate these two aspects all the time, because you see there's one path, there's one person following it. There is a self-regarding and an other-regarding aspect, there are not two paths, a self-regarding and other-regarding back and forth between which you switch from time to time.

This is why I think it's quite dangerous, in a way, to think in terms of undertaking some particular practical responsibility and saying, 'even though I know it's not very good for my spiritual development', I think that represents a severe dichotomy. Even though you may have been initially unwilling, you should be able to plunge into that objective responsibility in such a way that it *does* become, while not ceasing to be an objective responsibility into which you plunge, it does at the same time become a means of your personal spiritual development. I think if you are not able to do that you have not unified those two aspects of the path which you really need to follow the path *at all* one might say if one was going to be very severe or very strict. *[Pause]*

One could say again, work is the great Tantric guru. It does seem - I have noticed over the years - that quite a few people have grown more by doing things which initially they didn't want to do, than by doing, very often, those things that they wanted to do. I think one needs to distinguish very carefully between what one needs to do for the sake of one's personal development and what one wants to do. The two don't necessarily coincide. Often people tend to think that if you very much want to do something then it must be good for your development.

What I am really saying, I suppose, is that in the long run you should not really be able to make that distinction in a hard and fast sense, of whether you are doing something just by way of responding to the needs of the objective situation or for the sake of your own personal development. It should genuinely be both at the same time for you, so far as you are concerned.

I really have noticed - again over the years - that people do grow with responsibility, sometimes quite dramatically.

Tejananda: Still keeping with vows, a question from Dharmapriya on vows and ordination.

Dharmapriya: I think you have answered most of this.

What is the relationship between the Bodhisattva vow, the Bodhisattva precepts, and the Bodhisattva ordination?

S: Bodhisattva ordination is traditionally said to be [65] two-fold, or rather one might say, perhaps, that there are or were two traditions of Bodhisattva ordination. One transmitting the chitta, the other transmitting the precepts. To the best of my knowledge these have been unified in Tibetan Buddhism, I am not so sure if they have been unified elsewhere. As far as I remember the tradition of chitta goes back to Vasubhandu and the tradition of precepts to Nagarjuna, but I have to check that to make sure it wasn't the other way round.

I think in practice one usually takes the Bodhisattva precepts in much the same way, for instance, that one might perform the seven fold puja, as a means of assisting in the arising of the real Bodhichitta. So I think in practice the Bodhisattva ordination has come to mean a sort of public acceptance of the Bodhisattva ideal regardless of whether the Bodhichitta itself had *really* arisen. And of course it re-enacts what happens when an ascetic, say, meets a Buddha and is inspired by him and the Bodhichitta arises, and he thereupon makes his Bodhisattva vow. It sort of enacts that scene, so to speak, or re-enacts it in such a way as to encourage, to stimulate, the actual arising of the Bodhichitta. Just as in fact we Go for Refuge as a means of stimulating, so to speak, the *real* Going for Refuge. We enact what happened when this disciple or that met the Buddha and heard him preach and the Dharma-eye was opened and that person spontaneously said, 'for Refuge I go'. So we re-enact that by way of encouraging the recreation within ourselves of that actual experience.

So the Bodhisattva ordination and taking of vows as it exists in Mahayana Buddhist countries today takes place on the provisional and/or effective level but as a means to the achievement of the *real* level.

Dharmapriya: This would suggest to me that, because of the correspondences that you have drawn, that in you are saying that in this sense we do the Bodhisattva ordination every time we do the Going for Refuge, so to speak.

S: Yes, one could certainly institute that sort of parallel. And hence perhaps it would be not inappropriate sometimes to recite the Bodhisattva precepts which perhaps bring out some of the more altruistic implications of the ten precepts. Though as I think I showed in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*, those ten precepts themselves have very definite other-regarding implications.

Tejananda: I know you spoke about the Bodhisattva precepts on the last study seminar, the sixty-four and made the same suggestion. I wondered if there was any way we could actually start instituting that by publishing or making available to the Order the precepts?

S: It does occur to me that perhaps we could make some sort of start on the

Order anniversary, when we have the puja. I do have them translated, I translated them years ago with the help of Dhardo Rimpoche in accordance with his explanations. They are quite short, simple. I don't think that an original Sanskrit text of them does survive, but certainly there are Tibetan and Chinese translations. I think they are taken, they are extracted, if you like anthologized, from Mahayana [66] sutras, so they represent the, in a way, disciplinary essence of the Mahayana sutras.

Maybe someone could make a note to remind me of that in a few weeks time, so that I have them all ready possibly for the Order anniversary. I would have to dig them out of a file that I probably haven't opened for a long time.

Tejananda: On the same sort of subject, relating back to what you were saying about puja last night, I thought it would be very good if you could make available the remainder of the translation of Shantideva which you used to make the puja so that we could create an extended puja from it.

S: Right, yes I do have that again hidden away somewhere in a file. I've not seen it for quite a long time, I would have to search for it, that make some time but I will do it in due course; again if I am reminded from time to time.

Tejananda: One more question on vows and this is concerning your own Bodhisattva ordination, from Kulamitra.

At the time of your own Bodhisattva ordination which Bodhisattva vows did you make and did you extend this at all afterwards?

S: No, I took the Bodhisattva precepts, I didn't make any vows. I considered I had quite enough on my plate when I took those precepts. Mr Chen did make the point very strongly that having taken the Bodhisattva ordination one should formulate one's vows but I didn't ever feel moved to do that. He told me he had formulated a number of sets of vows, I think he told me once what they were, they were very impressive indeed. I didn't feel that I myself could venture to formulate any such vows. Maybe it's my naturally cautious nature! *[Laughter]* But yes, I felt that the precepts were quite enough to be getting on with and the fact that one had made that general blanket statement or vow that 'I resolve to gain Enlightenment for the sake or the benefit of all', in a way that for me comprised everything.

Maybe that's a little disappointing, but that is what happened.

Kuladeva: So the precepts you took on this occasion were these precepts that you have been talking about?

S: That's right, yes.

I don't know that among Tibetans there is a tradition of drawing up one's own sets of vows. I think this is a *Chinese* tradition that Mr Chen was describing. I have

never heard of Tibetans doing this, but that would need to be checked. I doubt, actually, whether they did this.

Kuladeva: Did the precepts come from a particular tradition or were they quite general?

S: To the best of my knowledge the precepts are general, having been extracted from the Mahayana Sutras and in explaining them to me Dhardo Rimpoche relied upon the commentary on the Bodhisattva precepts by Tsong-Kha-pa, I doubt very much whether there would be any great difference between the Gelugpa interpretation of those precepts and the Nyingmapa [67] interpretation. I think it is common Mahayana ground.

Dharmapriya: At a meeting in Germany a Gelugpa Geshe spoke of three levels of ordination, the Gelong, the Bodhisattva and the Tantric ordination. I assumed, as Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana hierarchy; saying that in this order they were higher and higher. Am I right in assuming that by Tantric ordination he meant something like an abhiseka or being simply given a visualization?

S. Presumably he meant abhiseka. The term ordination is not used in that context strictly speaking, but perhaps he didn't care to go into those sort of distinctions.

I have dealt with this in that article I wrote years ago, *Ordination and Initiation in the Three Yanas*.

Dharmapriya: Where is that article?

S: It originally appeared in *The Middle Way*, in about 1961 or '62. We are planning to include it in a volume of papers and essays. This used to be well-known within the FWBO, quite a few people had copies of it years ago. I wrote it just to clear up a lot of confusion there was at that time among Western Buddhists on the subject of ordination and initiation. It probably isn't out of date now, no I don't think it is out of date though I think actually more people do understand these matters now. And of course I explain or expound Buddhist tradition, especially Tibetan Buddhist tradition. I make no attempt to reinterpret in the way that I am now doing. But it's useful, obviously, to know tradition as such. Though I was conscious of all sorts of anomalies, because I got a report from Germany saying that in the Arya Maitreya Mandala they'd had a Gelong wonkur, a Bhiksu abhiseka - which seems to me a dreadful confusion of categories. So it was partly in a way because I came across such instances, such evidence of confusion of thought on the subject that I wrote this article.

Tejananda: Now we've got a couple of questions arising from the ten great vows in the Dasabhumika. Firstly from Ratnaguna on the third and sixth of them.

I wondered if you could throw some light on these two vows for us.
Vow three: To see all the incidents in the earthly career of a

Buddha.

S: That is one takes a vow to be reborn at the same time as a Buddha and in the same place and to actually personally witness one Buddha or another performing every one of the, I think it's the ten or the twelve great acts of the Buddha. Be present either as a human being or as a deva at his birth, to witness his going forth, to be present when he preaches his first sermon and so on and so forth. This is the meaning of the vow.

Ratnaguna: Quite literally?

S: Quite literally, yes.

Ratnaguna: Would it be fair to interpret that vow?

S: One could do so!

Ratnaguna: Because we went into these vows in some detail and we were thinking in terms of that one being more [68] like to think about or contemplate the incidents in the life of the Buddha and to re-enact them yourself spiritually.

S: This is not actually what the vow or the sutra says, tradition does take it quite literally, I think it is *meant* to be taken quite literally. Because the whole Bodhisattva Ideal is taken quite literally in the sense that one does think and speak in terms of hundreds and thousands and millions of different lifetimes in which one practices the Paramitas and does all these sort of things. So one should be careful that in explaining one doesn't, so to speak, explain away. But nonetheless there can be within this present life some faint reflection of that particular vow.

This is, perhaps, the sort of reason for which I say you can't take that sort of vow. You can regard it as representing the archetype of a particular spiritual possibility and just see within yourself some faint reflection of that. Or you participate in that archetypal vow to your own very limited extent, but you can't *take* that vow. I make this distinction between yourself literally taking that vow and reflecting that vow within your own life in the measure that you are able. So this is, in a way, what you are saying. You can't think of taking that vow, it seems quite incredible and impossible perhaps. But you can certainly mentally review or imaginatively re-enact yourself in your own meditation, perhaps see the life of the Buddha, the great events in the life of the Buddha and feel inspired by them.

And the other vow?

Number six: To perceive the whole universe.

S: That's to be taken quite literally, it's quite clear what it means. *[Laughter]* So clearly it is a vow that you can't exactly take. But what does it mean when one, as it were, reflects this vow in one's own limited experience, to the best of one's

ability? To see as much as possible of reality. To see things as clearly as you can. To see *everything* as clearly as you can.

There is another way of looking at this but it involves some quite extensive metaphysical considerations so I won't go into it now. Keep it maybe for some other time, possibly for a lecture.

But yes, the points that Ratnaguna has raised illustrate exactly what I was saying about the impossibility of taking the vows as actually formulated in tradition. But one can certainly regard oneself as, to the best of one's ability, *participating* in those vows, or reflecting them to some extent.

Kulamitra: When we went through them we actually found them very inspiring. So presumably when we go through them with Mitras we can bring things out in that sort of way. That there is a spiritual point to all those statements even though one needn't take it on board literally. (**S:** Yes) We did find them, actually, very inspiring.

S: Good, Because after all a lot of people find the ten precepts difficult enough to take and observe. What would they do with all these vows! Also I am not in favour of [69] encouraging people to indulge in spiritual daydreaming, which it can amount to. Just sort of fantasize about yourself observing all these wonderful vows whereas actually you are not practising, perhaps, even the precepts very seriously. Taking the Bodhisattva vows do not represent some sort of Buddhistic Walter Mitty exercise, if you know what I mean, I take it that everybody is familiar with Walter Mitty. Some of his little fantasies were sort of Bodhisattva like, weren't they. He was saving lives, he was the great surgeon for instance who stepped in when all the other surgeons failed and performed this terribly difficult and dangerous operation under very difficult circumstances. Nobody thought it could be done but he did it! [*Laughter*] Then he comes back to reality with a bump.

Tejananda: This one arising from the fourth great vow from Sudhana.

The fourth of the ten great vows mentions the duties of a Bodhisattva. What are the duties of the Bodhisattva? Are there a list of certain duties?

S: I am not sure whether there is. I am not sure what specifically it is about, I think in a general way it is quite clear what the duties of a Bodhisattva would be all sorts of altruistic and other-regarding activities. I don't know whether any particular set of duties is being referred to here. Perhaps it's meant to be just taken in a general sense.

Tejananda: A point from the tape which might be a possible mistake, to be cleared up from Susiddhi.

In this lecture you say 'another list of passions is that of the five asravās. Asravās is an untranslatable term, very roughly it may be

rendered as poisonous fluxes and these poisonous fluxes are; craving, hatred, restlessness and anxiety, sloth and torpor and indecision.' Would I be right in saying that list is actually the nivaranas or hindrances rather than the asravas?

S: The five are usually called the klesas, that particular set of five that I enumerated, I enumerate them later on don't I?

Ratnaprabha: You enumerate the klesas later on but those five are the nivaranas.

S: Yes, those are the nivaranas, yes. As far as I know they are never called asravas. There is also another misprint, or slip of the tongue - I am not sure which it was - where I speak of the ten great vows instead of four great vows I noticed.

Chakkhupala: Was it your intention in that context to actually speak of the asravas or the nivaranas? Because you explain what asrava means, the poisonous fluxes, so which should we consider to have been included in the lecture

S: Yes, because the context is to eradicate all passions. I think the context being Mahayanistic it is [70] more likely that it was the five klesas, that is to say anger, greed, conceit, ignorance and distraction. I think it is more likely. But nonetheless one could regard passions here as covering all those unskillful mental states whether as represented by the five asravas, the five klesas or whatever.

Chakkhupala: Perhaps I am confused here. You do actually list and mention the klesas. Three formulations, the akusula mula, the klesas and the one that is in the question. The one which is in question, the list you give is of the hindrances to meditation but you name them as the asravas of which I believe there are three.

S: The asravas should not be confused with the nivaranas. They are distinct, yes.

Chakkhupala: So my question is is it more appropriate to keep the list of the nivaranas and to delete your reference to the poisonous fluxes or to retain the reference to the poisonous fluxes and substitute karmasrava, bhavasrava and avijaya?

S: You could do either but I think, as far as I can remember my intention was to speak of the five hindrances, yes. I might have been misled by the fact that in the Chinese tradition - I used to hear this a lot from Mr Chen - the five klesas as I have called them, or mahaklesas one can call them, are often spoken of as poisons. So they could be, as it were, confused even with the poisonous fluxes if one uses that translation for the asravas.

But nonetheless, notwithstanding that, passions includes all unskillful mental states, howsoever formulated, in whatsoever sets of five or three or whatever.

I think, while we are on the subject, the main difference between the five klesas and the five nivaranas is that the nivaranas are hindrances to the attainment of samatha whereas the five klesas are a combination of hindrances to samatha and to vipassana. I have gone into this in a slightly different way, from a slightly different point of view in other contexts.

Tejananda: Dharmadhara has a question on the decomposition of the corpse meditation.

S: You've probably done it often enough.

Dharmadhara: With my background it's all part of it. *[Transcriber's note: Dharmadhara is a doctor]*

I was wondering how relevant the decomposition of the corpse meditation is for the present time. Not so much with regard to needing positivity or a strong stomach but more due to the lack of material. And it occurred to me, I was wondering if there was a substitute, something more satisfactory and I wondered about possibly using the image of a cremation. Because I saw one in the Tibetan Trilogy and it seemed like it was more easy to relate to in a meditation and you end up with ash which could blow away.

S: That's true, yes. I think it depends to some extent [71] on the strength of that particular klesa which you are trying to get rid of. It may require very drastic treatment. But I think for most people the sight of an actually decomposing corpse would just give rise to feelings of disgust and revulsion on a purely psychological, not to say an organic sense. You might be literally sick and it might not affect you spiritually at all. One must remember the principle of the thing, because if you are sufficiently sensitive the falling of a leaf, a withered leaf will have the same sort of effect, will impress you in the same kind of way. So you have, perhaps, to try to ascertain what is it that you need. Is a falling leaf sufficient, or if you keep a skull in your room is that sufficient or do you need something even stronger. But yes, perhaps it would be quite helpful to see a film of a cremation, or to keep a picture or a series of pictures of a cremation in progress. The physical details of which wouldn't be enough to revolt you in a purely negative, even unskilful way, but which would definitely impress on you the *fact* of impermanence.

Dharmadhara: So do you think it would be worth experimenting?

S: I think it would, yes. Sometimes when one sees bits and pieces of corpses it's merely unpleasant, it doesn't have any spiritual significance. For instance if you are out driving and you notice rabbits and pheasants have been run over it doesn't inspire you with thoughts of impermanence, it's just unpleasant or maybe you maybe even feel sorry for those animals.

Sometimes one sees reports in the papers or hears on the radio of motor

accidents, many people killed and one can then reflect human life is liable to these accidents, it is impermanent. One may not necessarily live out the full span of one's human existence. As Pascal said, I think, just a hair, just a grain of dust is sufficient to destroy you if it gets into the wrong place. Life is very precarious.

On the other hand you don't want to reflect on that in an unskilful way, in such a manner as to immobilize yourself. So that you are afraid to set foot outside the door in case you are going to be knocked over by the proverbial bus.

Dharmadhara: It seems that the Indians were, I was going to say fond of the corpse meditation, would you say that would be that they would therefore have had, possibly, a stronger sense of craving?

S: I think Indians do have a strong sense of craving. It has also been quite popular in Sri Lanka, in the Theravada countries, the corpse meditation, at least to some extent. One does hear of people doing it.

I think you have got to be sufficiently mature spiritually to be able to, as it were, absorb the lesson, to be impressed by the fact of impermanence without being merely shocked or disgusted.

Tejananda: The last but one question is from Ratnaprabha on the Stupa meditation.

I am afraid this is slightly complicated but it is because I am a bit confused about the meaning of the flaming drop and the blue sky in the stupa meditation, because [72] you have said slightly different things about them in different places.

S: I have a feeling that I have had this question before, but never mind.

I asked you this question in Tuscany but at the time I didn't realize the discrepancy between what you said then and in the lecture, which may not be a real discrepancy, I am not quite sure. So perhaps I could just ask you.

S: Perhaps there will be a third discrepancy now! *[Laughter]* Then it will require a further question.

Ratnaprabha: Shall I just say what you said before or just let you explain what the two are and forget about what you said before?

S: No, let's see the discrepancy or apparent discrepancy, in case there is actually one.

In the lecture you say that the flame or drop symbolizes ether and the blue sky is consciousness. In Tuscany '82 you said that the flaming jewel symbolises akasa, i.e. ether, in the sense of the

unconditioned, and the blue sky is not consciousness but Mahasunyata or - you gave an alternative in Tuscany - you said alternatively the drop can be plain akasa and the sky the unconditioned. But you didn't associate either the drop or akasa with consciousness in the sense of the vijñana skandha and you made that point quite specifically.

S: Let's go through the different levels. There is earth, water, fire, air, ether, which are mundane, presumably. Earth as symbolized by the yellow square, water the white circle, white disc, fire the red triangle then air the green saucer then you have got that acuminate sphere which represents ether. I think it depends upon the significance you attach to ether. I think I have touched upon this somewhere. That is akasa; sometimes akasa is a sort of fifth element but sometimes it is a symbol for the Unconditioned. I think this is where the confusion or discrepancy or apparent discrepancy comes in. I think if you leave the blue sky out of account then the acuminate sphere is akasa not as a fifth element but as the symbol of the Unconditioned. But if you have got the blue sky then the blue sky represents the Unconditioned so then apparently the acuminate disc symbolizes akasa not in the sense of the Unconditioned but in the sense of a fifth element.

Ratnaprabha: So would consciousness come into the stupa visualization in any way at all, as being symbolized by any of the items in the visualization?

S: When we do the six element practice consciousness does come in, doesn't it. Consciousness then is regarded as synonymous with the Unconditioned, isn't it. You could say that if you have an acuminate disc, and also you think in terms of consciousness - consciousness being identical with that blue sky, let us say - then you could say that the acuminate disc then represents infinite consciousness in the *mundane* sense. That is to say as equivalent to the fourth [73] dhyana and the blue sky then not infinite consciousness in *that* sense, but absolute consciousness or transcendental consciousness. One could look at it in that way.

One has got different ways of looking at the stupa, first of all with and without the blue sky against the background of which it is seen. So does that clear it up to some extent?

Ratnaprabha: I think so, yes.

Kulamitra: That very last possibility you said, that doesn't leave any space for space. If the drop and the sky are taken up as different aspects of consciousness, conditioned and Unconditioned what happens to space, because that is also in the six elements?

S: That's true. One could of course just, then, regard that acuminate disc as representing space, akasa, and then the clear blue sky as Unconditioned consciousness. But on the other hand one mustn't forget how the infinite consciousness arises, the infinite mundane consciousness, it is that consciousness which is, as it were, coextensive with infinite space. So mundane

infinite space and mundane infinite consciousness are closely associated. You have got an acuminate disc, it is a drop, you have got a sphere and then you have got a little wiggly flame, so you could even, if you wanted to, have a further refinement one representing space and the other representing infinite mundane consciousness. But perhaps that is going a little too far.

Kulamitra: Do you think it actually matters which of those different ways that you have described one actually thinks of the visualization, is there a preferred way, do you think?

S: I think there can only be a preferred way in a purely subjective sense. You just find that one works better for you than another, some people may prefer fewer stages, others may prefer more stages. But you should be clear what you are doing and clear about the significance of what you are doing.

Ratnaprabha: You called, what in the lecture you called a drop, an acuminate sphere. I have not heard that.

S: Acuminate, acume it is a sphere with a point, a sphere which is prolonged into a point. Though actually in the Tibetan representations it is not a straight point like a pyramid, it's a wiggly little thing. I don't know quite how you describe that. Wiggly little thing, flame like.

Kulamitra: Makes it sound a bit like a tadpole.

S: Yes, like a tadpole, like a tadpole standing on its head! *[Laughter]*, wiggling its tail.

So whether you have got five elements or six elements or any number, one of them at least, if you are doing a complete visualization, the last one, must represent the Transcendental. Whether it is the blue sky or the drop or the tip of the drop or whatever it is, and all the rest are mundane, representing different levels of the mundane. [74]

Ratnaprabha: Or possibly the last two representing the transcendental, and one of those suggestions you had was Mahasunyata was the sky and the unconditioned as the drop.

S: Yes, that's true. Except that then you would be missing our akasa, wouldn't you.

Tejananda: The final from Sudhana on areas of helpfulness.

Back to altruism. In the first of the four great vows section you suggest helping old people, sick people, prisoners and psychologically disturbed. Should we bring old and sick people more to the forefront of our awareness and perhaps make more effort here?

S: Why the old and the sick rather than the prisoner and the...

Sudhana: Because we have talked about prisoners and psychologically disturbed people recently in study groups. I know people in the movement are helping prisoners and psychologically disturbed people, but...

S: But there are very few people doing that, to the best of my knowledge.

Sudhana: That's why I put the emphasis on the old and the sick, anyway.

S: Probably it is easier to help the old and the sick. There is more of them and you don't require a permit or official recognition to go and call on them and be helpful if you can. It is not easy to get into the prisons and visit people there, it's very difficult in fact, but it is quite easy to go and knock on the door of some old person and get to know them and perhaps be a bit helpful.

I have mentioned this from time to time over the years, especially since we settled in Bethnal Green, but I don't know that anybody has actually taken this up.

Kulamitra: No, I don't think anybody ever has, to any very large extent at all.

S: Maybe it isn't required, I don't know. I would have thought, we always hear that there are lots of old people living on their own, very lonely and frightened sometimes. I would have thought that a few people in the movement would be interested in making contact with some of them. Maybe it has happened in a few cases, spontaneously. I suppose people are busy but presumably one could find time to do something of that sort if one really wanted to. Or again, perhaps Order Members in particular are very conscious of the number of Mitras that they don't spend enough time with already and give that priority.

Ratnaguna: We had quite a discussion about it and we wondered if some people felt inhibited to do that because in the past we have spoken about helping the strong before we help the weak in order to eventually help them. [75]

S: That's true. I don't think I intended that you should only be helping the strong all the time but rather that the *emphasis* should be made there.

Kulamitra: I also wondered in our discussion whether, maybe quite unconsciously, Order Members felt that in a way the only way of doing things was through official formal FWBO activities. If you couldn't do that, you weren't very good at that you felt a bit embarrassed and sort of second class citizen and didn't think that maybe for you the appropriate response - well you are not a very good speaker but you are very good with old people, well do more of that. I think maybe people just aren't very imaginative. They too quickly see what is going on as the only way to do things.

S: It could be so.

[Tape 5]

Maybe there is a certain lack of imagination in this respect. Lack of confidence perhaps.

Dharmapriya: I think it's perhaps that... my memory of living in Sukhavati is that one was a bit cocooned from you might say the day to day situation of the old people in Bethnal Green. I have noticed it in Germany, an instance of a Mitra living in a block of flats, she was actually quite naturally positioned where she could help two old women and did. And then the situation of Dhammaloka with some ex-pupils of his when they had growing up pains, they turned to him for help.

S: Yes, I can remember this, because when I was living in Highgate, West Hill, my landlady was blind and after I had been there a few months I used to do her shopping for her. It happened quite naturally, she knew you were going out and asked do you mind getting such-and-such for me, and before you know where you are you are doing her shopping for her every week. But I didn't mind doing it, I had time in those days, but that is the sort of thing that happens when one is living in that sort of situation, you do come into that sort of contact with people.

I think we have to be more aware, perhaps, of the possibilities of doing things off our own bat outside the structure of specifically FWBO type activities. Because you are not *obliged* to function through those particular channels. You are quite free to do things off your own bat just on a personal, one to one fashion. Perhaps people don't think sufficiently in those sort of terms. Maybe that's where the lack of imagination does come in.

I am sure that a few of our Friends, a few Order Members around the LBC for instance are good in this sort of way individually, I am sure have sometimes helped people. I'm thinking, for instance, of Vajracitta, I think he is very good in this sort of way. I am sure that he's done something of that sort and Dayaratna is very good in that sort of way.

I have sometimes expected the women to do more in this respect, not just women Order Members but Mitras. But although I have urged them on occasion they don't seem at all inclined to, I am not quite sure why.

Kulamitra: I wonder if that's not more of the same, that people think 'well, if I am going to do anything I ought [76] to be doing what those men Order Members are doing, and since I am not ready to do that I had better just study and meditate and so on until I am.'

S: Yes, one for instance hears or reads about Catholic nuns who still in many cases do, or at least one hopes, quite a lot of good in the way of visiting the sick and the old and running errands and generally looking after them and doing what they can, and they do seem able to find a niche for themselves in that sort of way,

in a quite easy natural manner.

But I must say that I sometimes feel that in the FWBO among FWBO women members and especially perhaps among the women - I am thinking more of the women Mitras and Friends because the women Order Members are very busy, there seems to be a lack of *will* to involve oneself with people in this sort of way. I hope I am not doing them an injustice, but I have got this impression from time to time, quite definitely.

Ratnaguna: Why do you say the women, specifically.

S: I think for two reasons. I think partly because the women in the Movement have, as it were, fewer organizational responsibilities, and also that it would seem to be a more easy and natural way for a woman to get involved inasmuch as they are supposedly good with people and care more about, say, personal relations than men do, and so on.

Kulamitra: But maybe the sort of women that are in the Movement around the LBC are actually consciously or unconsciously rebelling against that view of what women should do. Whether that is...

S: It could be. In some cases I think that probably is the case, unfortunately.

Anyway, that is a big separate question. Have we finished with the original question or not?

Sudhana: I believe so. I suppose I was just wondering whether it should be more of a conscious practice, of one's own personal practice, to say 'am I taking these people into consideration', at a certain stage of your career that perhaps you should...

S: Again it is a question of being more aware, more mindful of the other-regarding or other-regardful implications of the fact that you have Gone for Refuge.

It may be that some people, including maybe some of the women think of real involvement in terms of being on the council, possibly being a chairman, they don't think so much in terms of just going out as it were into the street and doing what you individually can in a totally unofficial sort of way. But I am sometimes surprised that we are as a Movement doing much less in this sort of way than I can't help feeling we should be doing. Just on an individual basis. I don't feel that it is something that needs to be organized. In some ways we are doing quite well in an *organized* sort of way through *Aid for India*, at least in respect of helping people in India. There is less of a spirit of helpfulness than one might have expected from a Buddhist Movement, frankly, this is what I sometimes feel. [77]

Sudhana: I can't help feeling that people would respond to that sort of thing that they can understand. The local community might not be able to understand what goes on inside a community and if they never see any of the benefits out on the

street as it were, they might well be suspicious and it might be difficult for that community to spread and expand. So I was thinking from that point of view it would be good to more care about the locals around the community. It's an obvious expression that simple people can understand.

S: That's true. Although maybe - this is just me thinking aloud and switching as it were onto a sociological tack - it may be that in the old days when you were more established in a particular neighbourhood and belonged there and knew more people or of more people individually you found it more easy, more natural to do that sort of thing, to help in that sort of way. So when you are conscious that you don't belong to the local community and you are a stranger there you almost feel perhaps you haven't got a right to 'interfere' (inverted commas), or that your interest might not be welcome. You don't have the sort of feeling that you are a member of the community and you have got a sort of responsibility in a deeper sense to other people in that community and they would recognize that you had that and would accept your interest and involvement. Because everybody, almost, nowadays is not a member of the community in which they find themselves, in fact there may not be a community at all in the old-fashioned sense. Not speaking about the community in the wider social sense. It may be a collection of individuals *all* of whom have moved from other places within the last few years.

Dharmapriya: On a slightly different tack. I am thinking that you have not mentioned in the list, the dying or the bereaved, and those are two classes where I have come into contact with recently and that brings up the question of how you can help. Because you can often be in a situation where you actually want to help. Personally speaking one of my cousins is slowly dying of a form of cancer in London and I don't really know how I can help him or his parents who are very, very upset about it and how I can give any sort of assistance.

S: Well it depends what one means by help. Does one mean consolation, does one mean moral support, does one mean helping them find a meaning in it all? What does one mean, does one mean practical help, say baby-sitting if they have to go to the hospital and haven't got anyone they can leave the children with and so on? Helping them with transport or even money, one just doesn't know.

Recently two of our women Mitras who are sisters lost their mother who died of cancer and one of the women Order Members around the LBC, and I believe others too, was able to give very substantial moral support at that time, which was very good. But we don't need to confine it to the Movement itself. I think sometimes Order Members have given quite a bit of support to people who have been bereaved within their own families, they have been able to do that by virtue of their experience or understanding as Buddhists. If their father has died or sister has died they have been able to comfort or more than comfort say their parents. I know one or two cases where people, not necessarily Order Members, have been able [78] to comfort their fathers when their mothers have died, or vice-versa. So I think probably that the situation of bereavement is one of those in which an Order Member, especially, could be most easily and naturally effective. In the case of the dying I think it is rather more difficult, especially if the dying is prolonged and painful, but no doubt these are areas too where we could involve ourselves. I

didn't mean the list to be an exhaustive one by any means. Also I was talking many many years ago and people were very much beginners in those days, I had to suggest relatively simple things to do. I am sure there are other areas of concern. Young people, juvenile delinquents [*Laughter*] soccer hooligans.

Was that the last question? (**Tejananda:** Yes) So do we end on that note or has anyone anything further to say on this question of areas of helpfulness? I suppose one could in a way go on talking about it all night, there are just so many potential areas, I am sure. I just feel that we could do more in this sort of way, especially within the local community in the midst of which we happen to find ourselves. Whether as a community or as individuals.

All right then let's leave it there.

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions
Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Four: Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life

Tejananda: I'm afraid we only managed to come up with four questions on this topic. The first one is from Kulamitra and is on the vyakarana.

We were thinking about vyakarana, the Bodhisattva's prediction to Enlightenment in the light of what you said about the arising of the Bodhichitta being the point of irreversibility, and trying to understand in our own way what that vyakarana might be. Is it just the awareness of the fact of irreversibility or is it a kind of timeless experience of knowing your future success?

S: Maybe one should look at it in a quite straightforward way first, in the sense that according to tradition when the Bodhisattva does make his vow, consequent on the arising of the Bodhichitta, the Buddha in whose presence he makes it predicts him to eventual Enlightenment mentioning, perhaps, the name by which he will be known as a Buddha and also perhaps the name of his Buddha land or Buddha field. If one doesn't take it literally, and perhaps it *can* be taken literally on a certain level, then one has to find some other explanation for it. I think I have had something to say about this before, I can't quite remember in what connection but I think I did suggest that the Buddha's prediction of that Bodhisattva to supreme Enlightenment represented a sort of echo coming back from the whole universe in response to the vow because the whole universe was concerned in that vow, the whole universe would be affected by that vow. So presumably it being, so to speak, a moral-cum-spiritual universe it would have in a sense some awareness of that. As far as I remember I explained it along some such lines. But clearly there is a response. The Bodhisattva makes his vow and there is a response from the Buddha or an echo from the rest of the universe; call it what you will. [79] So it suggests that in the first place the Bodhisattva's vow is a public affair, it's not just something that he makes privately, it's something that he makes publicly, so that the vow is part of, say, the public reality. And inasmuch as it is part of the public reality, and is going to affect it, there is a sort of response.

Kulamitra: Two things occur to me from that. One is that if there is that kind of response and the Bodhisattva hears that response, the arising of the Bodhichitta looking at it from that point of view or experiencing it from that point of view rather than Stream Entry, it seems to suggest that it couldn't creep up on you, as it were, in the way that you suggested that Stream Entry might. You would actually know that it had happened had you really had the arising of the Bodhichitta. That reflection would let you know.

S: Again yes and no, because in a sense how can you fully understand what the Buddha means when he says that you will become a Buddha because you are not yet a Buddha, although you are a Bodhisattva. So do you really understand what is *meant* by Buddha? So do you really know what it is that you are being predicted to? So therefore do you really know that you are being predicted?

In other words, when the Buddha, say, predicts the Bodhisattva to Enlightenment that statement has a very different meaning for the Buddha than it has for the Bodhisattva. Because the Buddha knows what it is he is predicting the Bodhisattva to, but the Bodhisattva doesn't know it. He has perhaps a very vague, general intimation of it but no more than that.

Kulamitra: Right, but nevertheless having heard that response of whatever form he would know at least that he was supposed now to be a Bodhisattva and that the Bodhichitta was now arisen in him.

S: But again what meaning would he attach at that early stage to the expression Bodhisattva? He may not understand it very well then, compared with the way in which he'll understand it later on.

Perhaps one can also look at it from the point of view of or in terms of the prediction representing the fact that the universe as a whole underpins, or even underwrites that vow. In other words because it is the kind of universe within which the realization of the vow is possible, in fact inevitable in a sense - not taking that word inevitable too literally - once it has been made. And the Buddha as it were gives expression to that. One must also add, you mentioned timelessness, well yes timelessness does come into it because the Buddha presumably is beyond time. But looking down into time he predicts, as it were, because prediction refers to the future. But that does not mean that the Bodhisattva though predicted is *determined* to Enlightenment. Do you see what I mean? You get here a parallel difficulty to that which you get in Christian theology, reconciling man's free will with God's foreknowledge. Do you see what I mean' (**Kulamitra:** Yes) But the fact that the Buddha predicts the Bodhisattva to Enlightenment doesn't mean that from then onwards the Bodhisattva is completely determined and has no freedom. [80]

Kulamitra: Right, it's not a mechanical thing, it still depends on the Bodhisattva's actual action.

S: Yes. So therefore you can't regard the prediction as literally a prediction, and you can only not regard it as literally a prediction if you take into consideration the element or aspect or dimension of timelessness; which there is for the Buddha. In a way there's a paradox, at least from a logical point of view, that the Buddha outside time sees that the Bodhisattva is Enlightened, or will be Enlightened, but from the point of view of the Bodhisattva in time he still has free will, so to speak, and he still has to make a definite effort towards that. He can't ride, as it were, on the wood of prediction.

Kulamitra: The other thing that occurred to me from what you said about what is literally said. Is it really the case then, from a traditional point of view, from the point of view of the sutras, that the Bodhichitta can only arise in the presence of a Buddha?

S: That does seem to be the regular procedure. I would have to check what all the different Mahayana sutras say about this, but that would seem to be at least the standard procedure. Yes, certainly you make the vow in the presence of the Buddha and receive the prediction. It could be an open question whether the Bodhichitta itself arises at that point, or at that time or had arisen previously.

But certainly, for instance, in the classic case of Sumedha, who afterwards become Gautama Buddha, as an ascetic he was inspired by the sight of Dipankara, the Bodhichitta arises, he makes his vow and he attains his prediction. That would seem to be the standard procedure, standard type of situation.

Kulamitra: And that is considered what we would call the human, historical form of the Buddha?

S: Yes, because this is supposed to pertain to a previous aeon in which human beings and Buddhas and so on lived as they live now. It's not a sort of archetypal plane.

Kulamitra: Well that seems to suggest, say for instance one had the feeling that in oneself or even in someone else the Bodhichitta had arisen during the course of their current lifetime, that it would previously have arisen in a previous lifetime and they would just rediscover it in this lifetime.

S: Possibly.

Kulamitra: It all seems rather strange.

S: Well perhaps one has to reconnect with the Buddha's original teaching as far as we know it and translate it into simpler terms, into terms for instance of Going for Refuge. When you Go for Refuge to the assembled Sangha it doesn't predict your spiritual progress but it gives it support, you realize that you are not alone, there is a response, they rejoice in your merits and that no doubt sustains you. It gives you [81] in a sense an assurance of further progress. All these questions, arising in the context of the Mahayana need to be re-examined and re-evaluated in the light of the re-unification of yanas and tracking them all back to their historical sources.

Tejananda: The second one is from Ratnaprabha on reading sutras.

In the lecture that we heard today you note that the story of the starving tigress has been much misunderstood. Can you suggest how we can guard against misunderstandings when we read Buddhist texts that you have never explained in a seminar or lecture

or question and answer session?

S: Guard against misunderstandings? Well maybe one should try to classify the misunderstandings first. Has anyone any suggestions to offer, what sort of misunderstandings?

Dharmapriya: Literalism is probably one of the greatest.

S: Yes, that would seem to be the most common. I think one constantly needs to remember to relate what one is reading to one's own spiritual experience, or at least one's own efforts to lead a spiritual life. That would suggest that you have to have some spiritual experiences, or at least an effort to lead a spiritual life to begin with. Otherwise you can't make that sort of connection. You must be constantly asking yourself, 'What does this particular passage or this particular text really mean? What was the Buddha getting at, why did he bother to say this?' if in fact it was the Buddha.

I think also one needs to be sure that one has understood the literal meaning first. Understand what the text actually says, or appears to say, on the level of literal meaning. Don't be in too great a hurry to ask what it *really* means. Make sure that you have understood the letter first, because after all it is through the letter that you approach the spirit. You have no independent means of access to that.

Has anyone recently come across or heard of any examples of misunderstanding the scriptures or whatever?

Dharmapriya: Yes, it seems almost wilful. In some ways it is an unfortunate example, in Arya Maitreya Mandala I have read several of their Order Members interpreting the Karaniya Metta Sutta simile of the metta being like the feeling of the Mother for her only child. They are taking it as an *example* of metta rather than as a simile, as you brought up strongly in the seminar. It's a kind of literalism without carefully looking at the letter.

S: Yes. But mother love does represent metta *par excellence*, whereas the text says as a mother; it's that kind of intensity, concentration, that you should be feeling, but not that mother love itself is metta in its ideal form, as it very clearly isn't. Yes, that's quite a good example.

But why do you think that intelligent people like that have misunderstood the text in that way? [82]

Dharmapriya: I think they want to actually. There is a parallel interpretation and there is apparently some Indian or Hindu goddess called Maitra or... well the root is from Maitri, anyhow.

S: The Motrikas, but that isn't from the same root, I don't think it is.

Dharmapriya: The point is apparently that this goddess is a kind of cupid or

Eros figure and from that they deduce that here you have the root of maitri in the sense of erotic love. So therefore they interpret that maitri includes erotic love. At least I have heard that once.

S: That sounds very strange indeed. Maybe you could find out more about it and who this goddess is. I can't say that I have heard of her. Because usually in Hindu mythology the deity of erotic love is male, not female, it's the Karmadeva. Just find out for me who this deity is. It might again rest on a misunderstanding.

But it does suggest that they want to interpret like that if they go about it in that sort of elaborate way, via a Hindu deity. It is really quite odd.

Dharmapriya: It could be a general Indian deity, not specifically Hindu, but I will check.

S: Yes, it's certainly not a well known one. Oh, not Mandana, but that is again a masculine deity, Mandana is an alternative name for Karmadeva.

Dharmapriya: It could be a masculine deity but the main point was that the name of the deity similarly to the name of Maitreya is derived from maitri. If I am getting confused I will find out for you.

S: Yes, check up for me. Because perhaps when you meet them you might be able to clear up this confusion.

Ratnaprabha: I asked the question partly through personal experience, that on a more minor level if ever I have read a text and have later read a seminar that you have done on it I usually find that there are a few minor misunderstandings of the meaning of stories, or the exact meaning of a simile or something like that in the text.

S: Yes. I think also sometimes we must realize that sometimes Indian parables and Jatakas are making one definite point and you have to ignore the rest. For instance when the Bodhisattva as Vessantara gives away his wife and children, the point is not that wife and children are a species of personal moveable property; that is *not the point*. The Jataka is dealing with dana paramita, it's subject is dana paramita and it is illustrating how the Bodhisattva is prepared to give away even those things to which he is most greatly attached. It is not making a sort of legalistic point about a man's right, legal right or otherwise, to give away his wife and children. But you could easily say this is what that particular Jataka is teaching. It isn't, that is quite incidental and not to be taken literally in the sense of not being taken as making a valid point in its own right. [83]

Kulamitra: Assuming that you are practising and therefore your knowledge and understanding is gradually deepening, overall does it really matter if there are some minor misunderstandings as you read the sutras?

S: Well you shouldn't stop reading the sutras for fear of minor misunderstandings
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but the fewer misunderstandings, even minor ones, the better. Because in the course of years they go on accumulating. But certainly as one's own experience and one's own knowledge of the scriptures deepens you will be able to avoid misunderstandings, whether major or minor.

One needs to think about the sutras also, or think about the Dharma and relate it to one's own experience all the time.

Any other examples of misunderstanding? You must be coming across some in Mitra study groups and so on, I would have thought you would have been coming across them all the time.

Ratnaprabha: I find that people do usually read texts that you have been through so therefore the misunderstandings are not particularly serious.

S: There are lots of things that I haven't been through with them. For instance I believe quite a few of the women are reading *Women of Wisdom*, I wonder whether there will be any misunderstandings arising out of that. Perhaps none of you have read it.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think we should concentrate on things that you have been through, do you think that is a sensible thing to do, especially when leading study?

S: I think probably yes. Not that I want to discourage people from reading things that I haven't taken study on but certainly I think one *needs* to be familiar with those texts I have taken study on. That would at least give one some idea of how to approach texts when one does come to approach them on one's own, say.

Saddhaloka: Taking it the other way round, I have noticed a couple of times over the last two days we have actually tried to almost interpret things, whilst when we have come to ask you about them you have actually presented it in a more literal way. For example with what we were just talking about earlier, the Bodhisattvas prediction. We had been looking at it in a much more interpretative way than you actually discussed it.

S: Yes, we should not be in a hurry to get on to interpretation. Understand what the text says in a quite literal sense first, quite well and quite clearly. Because that corresponds to the first level of prajna, *suttamaya prajna*, just hearing properly, learning properly first and then reflecting upon and understanding and if necessary interpreting or re-interpreting. Otherwise one would just be using the text as a jumping off point for some ideas of one's own, which isn't interpretation, exactly.

Ratnaprabha: How about texts that seem to be totally incomprehensible? Is there any point in reading such things do you think? [84]

S: Not unless one enjoys the sensation of bafflement!

Ratnaprabha: I was thinking especially of some Zen texts.

S: Well one must remember that one takes those ‘texts’ completely out of their original context and perhaps they *cannot* be understood apart from that context, which you have either to recreate or if you can’t do that you have to just put the particular text, whatever it is to one side.

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmapriya on Buddhism and other religions.

Is there any Buddhist tradition at all that Buddhists should give, especially things of material value, to non-Buddhist religious movements or religious figures? For example to Hindu Yogis, to (*unclear*) monks or to Jain ascetics.

S: I do believe bhikkhus are not permitted to share with non-Buddhists the alms that have been given them by the faithful, so to speak, who gave them specifically to the bhikkhus believing that merit would thereby accrue. But I remember that there was an incident in the Buddha’s life, in the Pali Canon where (Seha?) the Jain becomes the disciple of the Buddha and the Buddha specifically asks him not to discontinue supporting the Jain ascetics who had hitherto depended upon him.

But clearly from a sort of common-sense point of view if there were people following and propagating what you regarded as *miccha ditthis* you would not regard it as suitable to support them. On the other hand from a purely humanitarian point of view if they perhaps were starving or in difficulties you would help them but, as it were, just as human beings, just to survive, but certainly not help them to propagate their teachings.

I believe there *are* some references of the kind you mention but I can’t recall them at the moment.

Dharmapriya: That was my problem, I had a sort of ticking in the back of my head that somewhere in the Mahayana scriptures it goes overboard supporting all the religious figures whatsoever. But I couldn’t remember quite where.

S: I think the general Buddhist point of view could be, or the Buddha’s point of view would have been, that those who are committed to the Three Jewels don’t give support specifically to followers and teachers of other religions. Though they may well help them with food and shelter and so on, just as human beings from purely humanitarian motives. For instance if someone was poor you wouldn’t refuse to help him because he wasn’t a Buddhist, but you wouldn’t help a non-Buddhist teacher actually to propagate his views or beliefs; you wouldn’t contribute you wouldn’t subscribe.

Dharmapriya: That would mean then that the incident mentioned early in *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Govinda where this king of West Tibet supports, I think it is an Austrian Jesuit who has finally made his way through to West Tibet in his mission, whether he is doing it out of political motives or

whatever is very definitely not following traditional Buddhist practice. [85]

S: Well you mustn't forget that in, for instance, Tibet they had difficulty sometimes in understanding the idea of another religion. Don't forget there is the question of dharma versus what we call religion. Perhaps the Buddha might well take the view that even if people aren't actually Buddhists if they are leading ethical lives and not actually teaching *miccha ditthis* they may well be supported. Do you see what I mean? As virtuous people.

In the case of that king of Western Tibet, if he saw people approaching who perhaps looked a bit like Buddhist monks and clearly didn't have families with them he would treat them as some sort of religious, i.e. dharmic people. He wouldn't have the conception of these people belonging to another religion, possibly a hostile religion. He wouldn't even be able to think, perhaps, in terms of the followers of another religion which was hostile; that would be beyond his experience. He would only see some rather unorthodox looking monks, or maybe monks of a type or sect that he hadn't encountered before. And it would perhaps only dawn on him gradually after speaking with them that they didn't, perhaps, follow what he called Dharma. Nevertheless he could see that they were quite worthy people in certain respects. Because it would perhaps only be when they started *denouncing* his religion or telling him that he was following a *false* religion that he would begin to smell a rat. Otherwise he would extend his hospitality to them. In any case they would be strangers, they would be guests. That would be his attitude as a Buddhist.

So I don't think we can interpret this as a case of a Buddhist king supporting Christian monks - no - he would not have seen it in that way at all. He would first of all see them as strangers, visitors to the king, and then he would become vaguely aware that they were some sort of religious people, some sort of monk and it would perhaps only dawn on him only after quite a long time that actually there was such a thing as a different religion called Christianity, and that they followed it and that actually they were quite opposed to what he thought of as Dharma, at least in certain respects.

Dharmapriya: This would imply that in Tibet they never really drew a clear distinction then, between the Buddha dharma and the Bon religion.

S: They did of course in the very early period, because the Bon religion was engaging, say, in animal sacrifice. But once the Bon, or the greater part of Bon had conformed, as it were, to Buddhist ethical values they were treated more or less as almost a sect of Buddhism. The white Bon. And they produced scriptures which were copies of the Buddhist scriptures except that in the case of Buddhist proper names Bonpo proper names were inserted. So a Tibetan would have been familiar with things like that. He might have thought that maybe they were a sort of Bonpo. Not *exactly* Buddhist, but near enough.

Dharmapriya: Just one other point, you have mentioned before that Tibetan teachers as refugees will have a natural desire perhaps to conform, to get a sense of security and belonging. Would that be a factor of, or rather what you have just

described be a factor in what seems to be coming up very strongly from some Tibetan teachers in Germany, that first of all they say that all religion is good. [86] If people appreciate the value of religion that seems to be the basic thing, then the Buddha dharma, Buddhism as a specific instance of it?

S: I think they don't sufficiently appreciate the situation in the West. I think they are well-meaning, I think they have discovered that that sort of talk goes down very well with a lot of people and therefore that is the way they tend to present things.

But I wonder what would happen if they went, say, to a Muslim country. I think, actually, there are very few of the Tibetan Lamas who have really come to grips with the Western cultural and religious situation. Their approach is very well meaning but very naive and superficial, usually. I think the only Tibetan Lama who got some awareness of this cultural-cum-religious situation in the West is Trungpa. I don't think any of the others have, however good their knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism itself may be. I don't think the Dalai Lama has got much idea, he seems to show very little awareness of Western culture and religion. He has met quite a number of Christians by this time and they have exchanged good wishes, which is fine, but I don't think he has any real understanding of Christianity at all. He certainly shows none in his writing or references to it. It is rather unfortunate, because he makes, I think, some statements which are quite misleading. But again I think *he* has realized what goes down well with the sort of audiences that he gets in the West.

Kuladeva: Do you think in the Dalai Lama's case it could be political or diplomatic, a means of looking for allies?

S: It could be partly that, yes.

Kuladeva: Because he has been received by the Church of England etc.

S: Well, by the Pope I think. But I think it's in a sense basically wrong because one doesn't have to agree with people in that sort of way in order to enlist their support, one would have thought. There is plenty of common ground anyway, and there are many people who would support the cause of Tibet who had sympathy neither for Tibetan Buddhism nor for Christianity. They would support it on general humanitarian, even broadly political grounds.

So one doesn't need, I think, to assure people that Buddhism is the same as Christianity in order to get their support for the cause of Tibetan freedom. If you do admit a sort of transcendental element in life you have got something in common but I think you have to be very careful that you don't seem to suggest that there is really no difference between, or no important difference between, Buddhism and Christianity at all. Because from the Dalai Lama's writings on Tibetan Buddhism he clearly *does know* what Buddhism teaches, he is well acquainted with the finer points. He knows perfectly well that it is a non-theistic teaching and he knows perfectly well what it has to say on the subject of the self and sunyata, he is well versed in all that. So if he genuinely believes that Christianity teaches the same

thing, either he is almost deliberately saying what he knows [87] to be untrue or he doesn't have any real knowledge of Christianity at all, and is just giving it the benefit of a very big doubt, or a doubt he doesn't even personally entertain. But he seems to know very little about Christianity at all, so really he is not in a position to say anything about the relations between them except in the very, very broadest sense.

I am sure he means well but on the other hand that doesn't excuse what appears to be intellectual confusion.

Ratnaprabha: If you don't mind my returning to the original question about Buddhists supporting other religions, I wonder what the terms sramana and brahmana refer to when people are told to give alms, I think, to sramanas and brahmanas. Does that mean people of other religions, possibly?

S: In the *Dhammapada* or instance, brahmana is used as synonymous with bhikkhu. I think in the *Sigalovada Sutta* brahmana is not used quite in that broad sense. I think the Buddha means here just virtuous people. The sramanas being the non-Vedic virtuous people and the brahmanas probably being the Vedic virtuous people. But both terms shade off into just virtuous people in general, people leading an ethical life. I don't think actually the text says supporting, I think it says *respecting*, but I would need to check that, I think it's respecting.

So clearly those who are leading an ethical life should be respected, at least in social terms, regardless of their particular religious beliefs, or even if they have no particular religious beliefs. But even if the texts speaks of supporting brahmanas and sramanas you are supporting them on account of their virtuous life and you would presumably would not actually support anyone, even if he was leading a virtuous life, who was propagating false views. I think perhaps, even though the terms are imprecise there is a suggestion or implication that those sramanas or brahmanas would *not* actually be propagating any false views, but on the contrary might be propagating right views.

Clearly the Buddha, inasmuch as he is addressing a householder, or is represented as addressing a householder is putting the teaching in very general terms. It would be interesting to see what the commentary had to say, whether the commentary interpreted sramana-brahmana as meaning in fact bhikkhus.

Here, perhaps, is a good example of understanding the literal meaning and then interpreting. First of all trying to ascertain what exactly the Buddha himself speaking at that time meant by sramana and brahmana and then going on to understand the spirit of that teaching and trying to see how it could be applied more widely, how it could be applied especially today in our particular circumstances. For instance when a party of carol singers come at Christmas time, do you give them some money or not?

Dharmapriya: We did, on epiphany in Germany.

S: That reminds me of a story I heard some years ago about a Catholic priest

who was approached by his Protestant neighbours, just as a bit of a joke - this was I think before the present troubles, because they wanted to build a bigger Protestant church. So they approached him for a subscription, said 'would you like, Father, contribute to the building of a bigger church'. So he said, 'I won't [88] contribute to the building of the new church but I'll tell you what I will do, I'll contribute to the pulling down of the old one!' [Laughter]

So in a way one must follow the middle path, one mustn't compromise one's principles and on the other hand you want to keep up friendly neighbourly relations. [Laughter]

Virananda: I think the way that people in the FWBO are most likely to support people from other religions is by unwittingly supporting a business which is run by people who adhere to another religion. Not actually knowing who the business is run by, who the FWBO people deal with. I think that has happened on at least one occasion I can think of.

S: I think sometimes we *know* that the business is run by non-Buddhists, but sometimes a fine point arises. If you support that business, you buy those products are you actually supporting the extension of that religion, are the profits going in that direction or are you merely supporting, individually, personally the people who are running the business. You might find it difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the two because it might be six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Dharmapriya: Can one move to a corollary and say, 'where it is ethical can we actively take moves to drain funds away from a religious body preaching *miccha ditthis*? The example I am thinking of, I am not sure if it was in the British papers or where, about the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the extremist fundamentalist in the US, where someone cost his church \$500,000 was the estimate, by attaching his mini computer to their free phone number and doing long distance collect calls non-stop, and occupying a line and then Jerry Falwell's church had to pay the phone bill. It has apparently been contested whether it is legal or not and in any case occupying his line so that people couldn't phone in with donations, was estimated to be a million dollars worth or more. It sounded quite promising in some ways! [Laughter] [89]

[Tape Six]

S: I am surprised it isn't illegal in the States

Dharmapriya: It is uncertain, it is in the courts right now.

S: I suppose it couldn't be classified as *adinnadana*, no, I suppose it couldn't because you weren't taking that yourself. Could it come under the heading of violence?

Virananda: It would seem to be a form of violence.

S: It would need to be considered quite carefully, I must admit this is a new one to me. *[Laughter]*

But yes, we should be careful that we don't unwittingly support causes that we don't really believe in. In some ways, of course, in certain respects, we are doing it all the time through taxation, but that is another matter, here we are speaking about specifically religious things. We do still have this difficulty over membership of the church in Germany, don't we.

Dharmapriya: Yes.

S: O.K. Let's have the last question, it is the last, isn't it? (**Tejananda:** It is) So, we've not done so badly.

Devamitra: This is from Kulamitra and it is on marriage.

S: From Kulamitra!

Kulamitra: It is just a question, Bhante! *[Laughter]*

S: Purely academic I trust.

Kulamitra: *Purely academic! [Laughter]*

You seem to suggest in the lecture that there are various possible forms of marriage in Buddhism, simple though they may be, but doesn't Buddhism just tolerate local ethnic arrangements for marriage without interfering, unlike Christianity, say, which imposes its own form of marriage on converts?

S: In a sense that is true, except that Buddhism does require that certain ethical standards should be observed in connection with marriage by Buddhists. So you could say that it imposes to that extent.

Kulamitra: But in fact that is a purely personal matter, isn't it, it is not a form of marriage. (**S:** Well in a sense, yes) In other words, you talked about polygamy and polyandry and monogamy as sort of forms of marriage within a Buddhist context. (**S:** Yes) But I had taken it that those were already existing ethnic forms.

S: Yes, Buddhism doesn't actually lay down forms of marriage, not even in the sense of laying down a number and permitting them all. No, it certainly doesn't do that, to the best of my knowledge. So in a sense it does tolerate, but it certainly [90] does endeavour to impose, if that is the word, certain ethical values on them, or a certain ethical form on them. I sometimes wonder whether that is enough, perhaps it was enough in those days, but I sometimes wonder whether we can afford, in the West nowadays, to leave it like that. I sometimes wonder whether we

shouldn't lay down definite forms of marriage or non-marriage. I think in fact we are actually doing that within the movement, indirectly, by way of public approval or disapproval within the Movement. I think it is happening. Though one might argue that we are merely tolerating and making the best of a bad job in certain cases. If you see what I mean.

Virananda: I don't see what you mean. I don't see how this public approval or disapproval that you speak of is being made. Could you say a little bit more about this?

S: For instance, if a male and a female member of the Movement, whether Order Members, Mitras or Friends, appear to be getting involved in a very close sexual relationship which is rather exclusive and takes up a lot of their time, prevents them going on retreat, certainly their spiritual friends will talk to them about it and say, 'look here, you are getting too involved in this relationship and you are neglecting your spiritual life and you haven't been going on retreat' and all that sort of thing. So I think this represents a general atmosphere within the Movement. That if one does has a sexual relationship with anybody it shouldn't be allowed to overstep certain fairly definite limits, and I think those limits are being understood better and better, and in a sense, via the general approval or disapproval, even *laid down* more and more within the Movement, *I think*. I am obviously referring more to what happens in East London, because that is where we have got the biggest concentration of people. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaprabha: You mentioned certain forms of *non-marriage*, as well as certain forms of marriage. What did you have in mind?

S: I am not quite sure what I *did* mean. Perhaps I was just referring to sexual relations in general.

So I sometimes wonder whether it wouldn't be good idea to go the whole hog, be more explicit, give people more definite guidelines, say 'look, these are the permissible patterns and these are the impermissible patterns', I just wonder, I am not very sure about it at the moment. I have wondered from time to time. Sometimes people like to know where they stand, and one should be given definite guidelines. But I believe they are emerging, and maybe we can just leave the process to continue in that sort of way.

Anybody got any further ideas on the subject? Maybe it is something they haven't bothered to think about.

Kulamitra: I think just by stressing the fact of commitment to Buddhism, in this country one is bound to have an effect. Because usually marriage is taken as your primary commitment. (**S:** That's true) So in a way we do come into conflict with [91] the normal ethnic standard, if there really is a uniform standard, but the old tradition, where your primary commitment was to your marriage partner and your children.

S: Yes. I think probably in this country, leaving aside religion, which is a primary commitment for some people, there are probably three primary commitments. There is the commitment to family, there is the commitment to job - which is quite strong in the case of some people, even at the expense of the family commitment. and the commitment to political party. And I think we have to make it clear that the spiritual commitment has to take precedence of these other three, though *not necessarily to their exclusion*.

It's not that you can't possibly be a Buddhist if you are married, you can't possibly be a Buddhist if you have a full-time job, you can't possibly be a Buddhist if you belong to a political party, it's *not that*. But if you are committed to the Three Jewels then that obviously imposes certain definite limits on the degree of your commitment to family, to job and to political party. And if at any time you were to find that your commitment to, or involvement in those things was holding you back in your spiritual life and development, including your service to the Movement itself, then you would be prepared to seriously consider your position, and if necessary make definite changes. I think this is generally understood, isn't it?

Kulamitra: Yes. But in this particular context, in the context of this question, it's a weakening of the generally accepted form of marriage in this country. I mean, by being a Buddhist you accept, at least to some degree, you are removing yourself from what is considered normal in marital relations. It does have that implication, doesn't it.

S: Yes. For instance you may be living in a community, and in fact your wife may be living in a community, that arrangement seems to work in some cases quite well. Not only where husbands and wives are concerned but, say, when it is a question of boyfriends and girlfriends, it seems probably the most healthy form that the relationship can take, especially if they are both quite busy with centre and other activities. *[Laughter]* In fact they usually get on quite well together and even end up *liking* each other quite a lot. *[Laughter]*. Because the fact that you are sexually attracted doesn't necessarily mean you really like each other as human beings - that is often quite a separate matter.

So I sometimes wonder whether we ought to say, well yes, we do approve of marriage, of such and such and such a kind, where for instance the partners don't actually live together, where they are living in separate spiritual communities and don't see each other any more than say, once a fortnight - we approve of *that* form of marriage. Rather than saying we are against marriage. Do you see what I mean? But I am just thinking about this, speculating, I am not sure, really. Maybe, as I said, it is better to leave things as they are and emphasize general principles, especially the principle of commitment to the Three Jewels. [92]

Tejamitra: You have then got the problem of bringing up children, if the husband and wife live separately, especially if they are in single-sex communities.

S: I think that's, one might say, a problem nowadays anyway, because there are so many single parent families, especially the woman and a child. I think we have to monitor the situation quite carefully. I have referred, I think, in Tuscany, to the

fact that a woman Mitra who had a child wrote to me and said that her child and the child of another woman who was a single parent, or solo parent or whatever they call them, the two children were both boys and from a very early age they felt a strong attraction to men in the sense of wanting to have contact with them and be picked up by them and played with by them, in a quite noticeable sort of way. So it's quite clear that a certain amount of masculine contact is necessary, at least in some cases. But that doesn't have to be provided by the actual biological father. She made the point that it was any man who happened to be passing by, it didn't matter *who* it was. Do you see what I mean? So I think that if the Movement requires parents, including mothers and fathers, to be separate, they also have the responsibility of ensuring that the children get sufficient contact with adults of the opposite sex. I think one has to accept that responsibility too. But the whole burden doesn't have to fall on the biological father or the biological mother.

Kulamitra: It occurs to me that perhaps, if Buddhism didn't actually interfere with local ethnic customs and the household that resulted from those marriages was quite restrictive of one's ability to practise the spiritual life, that in a way is a factor leading to the split between the monk and the layman. (**S:** That's true) It leaves you very little option.

S: Yes, I have spoken about this because I have been quite concerned with this. That there have been a few Order Members, at least, showing signs of wanting to get married and settle down. I think if you had too many Order Members doing that you will inevitably have, if you are to have a spiritual movement at all, some people taking the opposite stance, and in effect becoming monks, and then you will have exactly the same sort of split that you had in the case of Buddhism itself a hundred years after, well even before that, after the Buddha's death, perhaps it even began in his lifetime.

So I think I really would strongly discourage Order Members, at least, at the very least, from marrying and settling down under the same roof and raising children in the ordinary sort of nuclear family type situation - which would almost *inevitably* involve a full-time job, and almost certainly outside the Movement. So I think the best result of that that one could expect would be that certain people in effect became monks. Because if everybody became a householder type Order Member, well, I think within a generation there would be virtually no Movement left, it will have been swallowed up. I think it's as serious a matter as that. So that is why I am happy to have a few Anagarikas, in yellow robes, to counterbalance the few Order Members who are [93] getting over-involved in family life. But I wouldn't like that to happen on too large a scale because you would then begin to have a split. I would like to discourage Order Members from settling down in that sort of way. With Mitras it's rather different. But in the case of Mitras who are thinking seriously in terms of ordination they certainly shouldn't start entering into that sort of situation, if they are already free and if they are thinking in terms of ordination they should take good care that they *remain* free.

In India, in the case of this last batch of ordinations there has been a bit of a breakthrough, there is at least four, if not five young men, now young Order Members, who are quite definite that they don't want to get married. That's quite a

breakthrough in India because so far all of our Order Members have been married, and very much married, in fact, in some cases. So it means that they will be much freer, much more available for Order activities, spreading the Dharma and so on, once they have got a bit more experience.

Dharmavira: You spoke earlier on, Bhante, about more definite guidelines for marriage or sexual relations within the Movement. Would you like to expand on that?

S: I mentioned one, that is to say a sort of understanding that if you do have a sexual relationship, whether within the context of marriage or not you take good care that you don't set up house together, and also you *limit* the relationship. You don't try to see each other as often as you possibly can, in fact you do try to see each other as little as possible as is consistent with the maintenance of the relationship itself. That will vary with different people. Some people, I know can be separate for one reason or another for months together, but they still consider that the relationship continues and they remain, as it were, faithful to that relationship. As for instance when people go to Tuscany. It doesn't mean that the wives or the girlfriends they leave behind start up other relationships in their absence, and I haven't heard of that happening.

I think the effect of any sort of guideline would be to minimize the importance of that relationship, to decentralize it. To move it away from the centre of people's mandalas, to a comparatively peripheral position. And one must be quite *honest* about this, because sometimes people make out that the relationship isn't all that important and they don't spend too much time on it, can end it any time they like; but it must really *be* like that, they must really know their own minds. Some people do, but then others don't.

Ratnaprabha: So if there were such guidelines, Bhante, they would be primarily directed at Order Members?.

S: At least initially, because if the Order Members can't follow such guidelines you can't expect Mitras and Friends to. One has to start with Order Members, and perhaps among Order Members with, dare I suggest it, start with Chairmen [*Laughter*] or perhaps even Mitra convenors - the senior and responsible.

Dharmavira: So you weren't really referring to Brahmacharya? [94]

S: Well I did speak of Anagarikas, I clearly was intending that as a special case. I would like to think that all Order Members think in terms of eventual Brahmacharya but it's something that can't be hurried. I have mentioned forty as an age when you might start taking this quite seriously which gives most of you a little more time [*Laughter*] It doesn't give one or two of you *much* time does it! [*Laughter*] Let's hope you have sown all your wild oats long ago.

People do vary so much. The main thing, one must be quite honest with oneself and with one's spiritual friends on this particular topic. It is very easy to deceive

oneself and perhaps we are not really accustomed to being fairly honest on this particular score. I find it quite interesting when I observe in the case of some people within the Movement who are in sexual relationships I very rarely hear about what is going on from the *man* who is involved in the relationship, it is always the woman who tells me, almost always. If they go away together for the weekend he doesn't breathe a word, even if I am seeing him quite regularly. *[Laughter]* But she, writes and tells me, yes, they are going away next week and after she writes and tells me they went away last week and tells me what they did together, maybe the castle they visited, or the art gallery, whatever. He doesn't breathe a word! *[Laughter]* I find this quite amusing, I wait for him to mention these sort of things. Sometimes I wait for years. In some cases I am still waiting! *[Laughter]* I don't know why it is that men are so shy where these things are concerned, or they seem to be, at least with me. But the women, no, in fact they are rather pleased and rather proud, that is the impression I get, they don't mind telling me at all.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think that men sometimes feel guilty about it? *[Laughter]*

S: Well I don't know, because if that is so, why do the *men* feel guilty and not the women? I just don't understand it. I used to think men *boasted* of their conquests, but not in the FWBO, they seem to keep them very quiet. *[Laughter]*

Dharmapriya: I think not *to you* in the FWBO.

S: Yes, maybe that is what it is.

_____: Perhaps they feel more like the conquered than the conqueror!

S: Anyway, any further point?

Tejananda: There were one or two certainly tenuous connected questions which came up during the discussion. We didn't put them on the list but if you are willing to....

S: Well mention them, if they are too tenuous I shall just blow them away.

Tejananda: Well Tejamitra had one.

Tejamitra: This wasn't a particularly tenuous question it is just that it didn't come up in the discussion at all. [95]

In the past you have mentioned that there is a connection between the Bodhisattvas Vajrasattva, Tara, Padmasambhava and Manjugosha, and you have mentioned in the past that there is a certain relationship or connection between all of them but that you didn't at that time want to go into what that connection was.

S: I think to begin with it's a *personal* connection so far as I am concerned, but I think that personal connection rests on something deeper but I think, yes, it is true I haven't yet discovered, if that is the word, what that is. I think there is a sort of inner thread of connection between them but I couldn't explain what it consists in, though I can in a sense feel it. I feel that they form a natural set but I have not been able to rationalize it, as yet.

What were the other tenuous points?

Devamitra: This one's from me.

This has nothing to do with the lecture whatsoever, but when recently reading your letters in Shabda, from Italy, I was quite struck that on two separate occasions you described in one instance an Italian girl and in another instance Lord Tonypandy as *violently* flirting, and I was curious as to why you had used that particular expression - *violently* flirting?.

S: Well violently means strongly, in a very marked, deliberate provocative, open sort of manner. I am using violently quite colloquially here. But I am interested that you noticed because I quite deliberately used the same word in both contexts; it was also appropriate in both contexts, but I treated the two incidents quite differently, again quite deliberately. Not that I did it in a self-conscious sort of way, I did it as it were spontaneously, but doing it spontaneously I knew what I was doing. I wonder if anybody noticed the different ways in which I treated the two episodes? They both engaged in the same type of behaviour, violent flirtation with, in both, members of the opposite sex. But I used the same epithet to indicate that there was a definite common factor, but I treated the two episodes in quite different ways.

Virananda: Leaving aside your treatment of them one notices that the flirtation had a different effect in Tonypandy's case than that of the Italian girl's. It seems that given that there was such a marked difference in effect, your presentation of what happened was bound to take on a different nature.

S: Yes, one could say that.

Virananda: So, with the girl, she succeeded and her flirtation was effective, the men were drawn in. But with Lord Tonypandy if anything there was the opposite effect, he if anything repulsed ...

S: That's true, you are getting a bit close to what I had in mind.

Virananda: So perhaps you wanted to give an attractive treatment in the first instance and [96] more of a repulsive

S: That may be so, in the sense that I might have created that impression, but that wasn't my intention, you have wandered a little bit away from my intention.

Devamitra: In the instance with the girl there was an element of censure in the treatment of the incident. In the incident with Lord Tonypandy there was one more of humour.

S: No, I wouldn't have said that at all. I was going to say that in the case of the episode with the girl I didn't go on to criticize in any way, because after all I felt she was a young girl. It's *natural* in a way that she should behave in that sort of way, but here is Lord Tonypandy who's is an *old man* and he's behaving in that sort of way which is not suitable to his age and experience, which is in fact quite *disgraceful*, so I criticize him. I think that is the main difference of approach, that though it is, in a sense the same kind of activity - in both cases there is a violent flirtation - in the case of the young girl it is understandable, it's, in a sense what she has got to do; she is approaching marriageable age, perhaps she has reached it already, it is natural that she should want to mate and she should try to attract a mate etc., etc. But in the case of an old man like Lord Tonypandy and where the girls, or the women, as I pointed out were old enough to be his granddaughters, perhaps, it's really quite disgraceful that he's still thinking along those sort of lines. So the two cases are quite different. This is what I had in mind. I didn't intend to really criticize the girl, but I certainly intended to criticize Lord Tonypandy. I thought it really quite disgusting.

Virananda: I must say, for me, you did make Lord Tonypandy a rather repulsive character,
whereas the girl... *[Laughter]*

S: Well you can't blame her, you can't blame her, this is what I wanted to convey, she was behaving in what was to her a totally natural manner. Whereas from someone like Lord Tonypandy one might have expected something rather better. I'm not saying there may well have been other very worthy aspects of his character which I just didn't see - I only met him for a few minutes, only observed him for a few minutes - but certainly that element was there and was not very admirable.

When I described the episode regarding the girl I wasn't thinking about the episode with Lord Tonypandy or thinking that I would describe it later on, but when I came to it I realized that there was, or could be, a sort of relation between the two, or one could see them as in a way connected. I think that's how it works when one is writing. I did wonder at the time whether anyone would notice my different treatment of the two, in a sense, somewhat similar episodes.

But I attempted an explanation of his behaviour. I think I attempted two; one was that he was possibly really lecherous and two that he wanted to give the impression of there still being some life in the old man yet. Has anyone [97] any comment to make on that? Do elderly men usually behave in this sort of way? I don't know because I don't mix much in general society.

Kulamitra: There was a rather odd story with Gandhi that at a very old age he, I think slept in the same bed, not that he had intercourse with because he was

celibate, but he had some odd thing about proving that he could still be celibate in that situation, with very young girls, sixteen I think.

S: Yes, where the questions shouldn't have actually arisen. In the sense that there shouldn't be any question of a test, he should have been *beyond* tests.

Kulamitra: But there seemed to be a sign of him trying to prove that there was still life in him.

S: In a way, indirectly, yes, one could look at it like that, yes. That he was still capable of being tempted and therefore was still able to control himself. That's a very odd episode in his career. It was dealt with originally in a book published by someone who accompanied him on that tour, I think it was a secretary. It happened a lot in his tour of East Bengal I think it was then, or maybe it was West Bengal, during the communal riots immediately after partition, his famous tour. Apparently there were a number of such episodes then and they were described by, I think it was someone called Bhattacharya in a well known book in two volumes, describing that whole phase of Gandhi's career. It was published, I think, in the early sixties, and attracted a lot of comment, and that episode is now well known, though people in India didn't like to talk about it.

But are elderly men in our society concerned to show that they are still alive in that sort of way?

Dharmapriya: I get the impression more so in North America than in Europe, including Britain, of course.

S: Perhaps they don't realize what is *appropriate* to an older person, that they don't think in terms of preparing for death and being *glad* that your passions have died away and that you are free from them and can be free to concentrate on more spiritual things, or at least more cultural things. Perhaps it's an unwillingness to accept that you are passing through these different stages and that different activities are appropriate to different stages of your life. Maybe sort of clinging onto one's youth, clinging onto life itself.

I also felt that it was rather pathetic that such an old man should be behaving in that sort of way.

Sudhana: I think that in many respects the generation of our fathers actually was a pretty poor generation in that respect. Confused by Hollywood and things like that, and in actual fact are still throwing off the shackles that we as younger people did. I wonder if that is going on somewhere.

S: They are trying to recapture a youth that they never had. [98]

Sudhana: Something like that, or breaking down things that they now realize needed breaking down.

S: Bit late in the day. As I mentioned also in the letter, one of the things that struck me was that it didn't seem to bother the women in the least. I may be completely mistaken of course, and I think I suggest that. They may have been very displeased, but I couldn't detect any sign or any trace of it . I just don't know. I don't know whether any of the Women Order Members will notice or comment on this passage, we shall have to wait and see.

Anyway, I hope people do read my letters with a moderate degree of attention.

Sudhana: Critically

S: Critically in the best sense, yes.

O.K., let's leave it there then.

(End side 1)

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions
Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejmitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Five: 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life

Tejananda: Tonight we have eight questions on masculinity and femininity in the spiritual life.

S: Four on each, no doubt. *[Laughter]*

Tejananda: Not quite. There are a few on both. The first one is what might need to be a correction to the tape from Saddhaloka.

Saddhaloka: It is really a reference question Bhante.

You mention the stories from the Sutra of Forty-Two Sections, when discussing forbearance, of how the Buddha dealt with a Brahmin who directed a stream of insults at him. Does this story occur in the Pali Canon, as I had an idea that it did?

S: It does. Not so very long ago I came across the corresponding passage, it is not quite the same but it does seem substantially the same story. I can't recall the reference, but it is there, yes.

Saddhaloka: You haven't any idea? I did have a look this afternoon in the library but couldn't pin it down.

S: One would have to read through the Sutta Pitaka, I am afraid.

Saddhaloka: It's just that the story in the Forty-Two Sections is a little different from the story that you actually told us.

S: I doubt whether I had in mind the version in the Pali Tipitaka, I think I just varied the story in the Sutra of Forty-Two Sections. Either for the occasion or because I didn't perhaps recall it very precisely at that moment. The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections is after all an anthology, as far as we know, of passages from the corresponding Sanskrit version of the Tripitaka, so it's not surprising that one would be able to locate corresponding sections in the Pali Canon. [99]

Tejananda: The second question is from Sudhana and it is about the order in which you deal with ksanti and virya.

The reason you give ksanti coming before virya seems mainly grammatical. Is there not a more spiritual reason. Towards the end of the lecture you speak of virya being more important in the beginning of your career and ksanti being more so towards the end. Doesn't it follow then that in the Six Paramitas that virya should come before ksanti?

S: It is said of course that while virya is enumerated as a specific Paramita, virya is in fact necessary for the practice of *all* the Paramitas, and that is pretty obvious. As you have mentioned there's no doubt that virya is especially necessary at the beginning, or in the early stages of the spiritual life, when you need to make a very definite effort to redirect your energies from the reactive to the creative, as it were. So one could well argue that there was a case for virya preceding ksanti rather than the other way around.

On the other hand you could say that people have different temperaments. If as a beginner you were predominantly of an impatient, restless, angry sort of temperament, well you might really need to cultivate ksanti first. Whereas if you tended to be rather dull and perhaps rather sluggish and easy-going you might need to cultivate virya first. But I don't think we can say absolutely that whereas you do admittedly need to cultivate both sooner or later, it is always better for the beginner to start off with virya; one can't go so far as that. I think one can say that for some people it might be better to place the initial emphasis on virya rather than on ksanti. There is also, of course, the point that if you are enumerating terms like the Paramitas in a sequence, or if you are enumerating them at all, one must come after another - you can't enumerate them all simultaneously, do you see what I mean? So having enumerated ksanti before virya no doubt one can find reasons for doing that, and also no doubt one can find reasons for enumerating virya before ksanti. But regardless of what one needs to emphasize more in the initial stages of one's spiritual life, eventually of course there must be a balance between ksanti and virya; and it's at *that* that one really needs to aim. So one needs to ask oneself, in my personal spiritual life do I need to emphasize the element of virya more; there's no question of course of virya as a Paramita, presumably, for one, as yet. Do I need to emphasize the element of virya more or do I need to emphasize the element of ksanti more? Just as one might ask oneself, in my personal spiritual life do I need to emphasize the faculty of wisdom more or the faculty of faith more; the faculty of virya more or the faculty of samadhi more? And so on. Which particular element or aspect of the spiritual life that you emphasize more to begin with depends on where you are, your specific character, temperament and so on. But there's no doubt that in the end all these [100] different elements and aspects have to be held in perfect balance. A balance which is not static but which adjusts itself to changing circumstances all the time. It's a dynamic balance not a static one.

So does that answer the question?

Sudhana: Yes, thank you.

Tejananda: The third question is from Prakasha and is about use of 'masculine', and 'feminine' terminology.

The use of the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in the lecture has lead to a certain amount of confusion for a number of reasons. Should these terms be clarified and continue to be used within the Movement, or should they be dropped?

S: Maybe we should see what sort of confusions have arisen. I know that some confusions have arisen, I am not quite sure how or why, maybe some of you would like to contribute something on this.

Devamitra: There's the obvious confusion of identifying the so-called feminine virtues with being female by gender and the so-called masculine virtues being male by gender. And there seem to be a number which stem from that, a number of confusions which stem from that. For example, getting in touch with one's femininity by living with one's girlfriend, and that sort of thing.

S: Yes, that is certainly one confusion.

Kulamitra: I think also, sometimes, there is the confusion of ordinary masculinity and femininity with virya and ksanti; so that someone might think that just by being overtly masculine that they are actually practising virya and so on.

S: Any further comment?

Prakasha: Yes, there is another one. It is not quite clear what qualities exactly are masculine and feminine. As an example the quality of Wisdom can be embodied by both Prajnaparamita or Manjugosha. Compassion similarly.

S: I think in this particular context masculinity was associated with virya and femininity was associated with ksanti. (**Prakasha:** Yes) So it was quite clear which qualities specifically were associated with which - gender isn't the term, sex isn't the term, we don't have a proper word for this do we?

Kulamitra: I think maybe most of the problems stem from the fact that actually it's quite easy, and you do it very well in the lecture, to define the qualities of ksanti and virya, but femininity and masculinity do seem slightly more vague and elusive and by putting things in that way rather than people just concentrating on understanding ksanti and virya, they start getting worried about their own masculinity or femininity, or looking at other people. Well what is [101] femininity really, and so forth. Whereas if they had just been told about ksanti and virya I don't think it would have been very difficult to understand what was meant.

S: That's true. Nonetheless, going back to the first source of confusion. Could one not say that there are certain qualities, let's say even psychological qualities, which *tend* to be associated with one gender rather than with the other, on the

whole, or generally speaking? (**Kulamitra:** Yes) Would one maintain that there was a complete dissociation of psychological qualities from gender? (**Kulamitra:** No) Or of something, to which one would have to give some name if one didn't use the term psychological qualities? If one is objective are there no differences between men and women than their particular physical configuration? And what distinctive term would you *apply* to those differences? Do you see what I mean?

Kulamitra: I *do* see what you mean and I think therein, in a way, lies the problem. Because although objectively it does seem, by generalizing, one can actually make some quite clear distinctions, actually for some strange reason in our society at the moment this seems a very unclear area and is even disputed. I mean, as we know, there are people who dispute whether one can make such distinctions, and so on. So in a way by bringing in the terms masculinity and femininity, it sort of pitches the whole lecture, almost as an attempt to clear up or clarify some of that confusion, but maybe that is a bit much for some people to begin with, maybe they would more easily listen to just a clear explanation of ksanti and virya. I mean, it's them that are confused, it is not you that's confused (**S:** I hope not!) But I think by touching their own confusion it brings up all sorts of really irrelevant issues but in a way that people do sometimes seem to get a bit hooked on. They can't sort of let go of this rather irrelevant issue and just look at virya or ksanti. Maybe it doesn't happen that often but I think occasionally it does.

S: Well that may be all very well as regards, say, ksanti and virya, when one is speaking about the Bodhisattva path or the Paramitas, but how is one going to approach the problems or the uncertainties that give rise to that confusion and what terms is one going to use in that connection? That problem will still remain.

Kulamitra: Yes, it will.

S: So what would one do in that case?

Kulamitra: I don't know whether this is better or not but if it could be approached as a completely separate subject. You could have, for instance given a talk just on ksanti and virya, without the masculinity and femininity. (**S:** Right) And you might on some other occasion have felt like giving a talk or talking to people about masculinity and femininity, and maybe there aren't any other words that one could use.

S: Hmm, I was just thinking that one needs to relate [102] all this to the concept of individuality. I think the less one is developed as an individual, in the case of human beings, the more asura-like you tend to be, in the sense that you are sexually more sharply differentiated, do you see what I mean? And as you develop as an individual you tend to assimilate the qualities of the opposite sex, you become more of an individual. Nonetheless I have come to the conclusion that there is a difference between men and women in this respect. Certainly as a result of my experience with people within the Movement I have come to the conclusion that it's probably easier, at least in the long run, for men to develop the so-called

feminine qualities than it is for women to develop the so-called masculine qualities. Let's say psychological-cum-spiritual. And that means that at least in the case of men, or in the case, let's say, of individuals, those qualities, so-called masculine and so-called feminine, are not gender specific. Or at least let us say the experience of the individual shows that they are not *necessarily* gender specific, do you see what I mean?

Probably as a skilful means you can avoid, perhaps, mentioning the association of particular psychological qualities with this or that gender, but I think sooner or later you do have to address yourself to that particular question, because it will come up practically in people's lives, and can't be avoided.

But do you think people *are* very confused, nowadays, generally about the whole question of gender, masculine, feminine and so on? Do you think so? I'm not talking just about people in the FWBO or people in the alternative society, but people at large?

Kulamitra: Definitely, I would go so far ...

S: Because I hardly ever meet such people during my life, I read about them in the papers or hear about them on the radio.

Kulamitra: I think there is this, you talked about, in a way a less developed human being being more asuric. But there is this development in our society where people do a cover up job, so instead of developing the opposite qualities they just negate the qualities that they do have, and that seems to be very common.

S: What do you mean by negating the qualities that they do have?

Kulamitra: Well, men who are not actually very masculine but haven't genuinely developed ksanti either.

Dharmapriya: An example which I saw in one place in Germany, a so often alternative situation run by women who were obviously trying to develop their masculine qualities and it was rather macho qualities that they were developing, you might say John Wayne qualities rather than masculine qualities.

S: Well, the question was, or part of the question was whether we should not drop the terms masculine and feminine. You remember in any case I was careful to put [103] them within single inverted commas to begin with to suggest that I wasn't using them in a sense too literally, though quite often I think those single inverted commas have been ignored, at least in effect. So perhaps one can at least say that one should be careful about introducing these terms, or speaking in these terms, especially with beginners and maybe avoid using them in this sort of sense when giving talks meant for beginners, or even just for regulars.

Though that, of course, will not mean that the potential confusion has been

cleared up, you will still have to deal with it, but perhaps deal with it somewhat later on when the person has got some grasp about what the FWBO is all about and some grasp of what spiritual life is all about, some grasp of what individuality means.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, could I ask a supplementary question on this. You mentioned that men seemed to find it easier to develop the feminine qualities...

S: Perhaps I should add a rider there - when they have the opportunity and when circumstances or conditions are propitious. I don't mean under any circumstances, or even in the normal run of things.

Sudhana: I was going to ask whether, thinking only of spiritual qualities, for example virya and ksanti or perhaps wisdom and compassion; whether people who are biologically or psychologically masculine, do they find it easier to...

S: Do you mean psychologically or, or do you mean psychologically and or psychologically and/or?

Ratnaprabha: And/or. So people who are biologically and/or psychologically masculine, do they seem to find it easier to develop the spiritually masculine qualities than people who are not biologically or psychologically masculine? And the same for feminine; without having to go through it all.

S: I think once you have arrived at a balance of those qualities which are *psychologically* masculine and feminine, when you have integrated them to some extent, whether you start from a biologically male or biologically female basis I think you can in either case develop the spiritually masculine and spiritually feminine qualities more easily. Do you see what I mean?

It may be more difficult for a woman to get there, to achieve that balance between the psychologically masculine and the psychologically feminine but once she has got there I think she can develop the corresponding *spiritual* qualities no less quickly than a man who has got there. I won't say this with complete certainty, but I tend to think this. I think in the case of the woman, her difficulty, and of course it is a difficulty for men too, is to get to that point of *psychological* balance. Once you have got that point of psychological balance as between those two sets [104] of qualities I think you can develop the vertically corresponding spiritual qualities equally easily whether you are a man or a woman.

Tejamitra: Can I ask, why do you think it is that women find it more difficult to reach this psychologically balanced state?

S: I am not sure why it is, but I think it's bound up with their, as it were, heavier biological conditioning. They are more identified with their biological conditioning than is the male, and their psychological qualities, their feminine psychological qualities, are very much bound up with that biological conditioning, and they find it more difficult, therefore, to correct that imbalance than does a man, who on the

whole is less strongly or heavily bound up with his particular biological and associated psychological conditioning. This is what I have observed, this may not be the whole explanation, but I don't have much doubt about the fact.

I see women who are in the movement struggling to develop those counterbalancing qualities, it is very difficult for them to do so. And some men have to struggle to develop them too, but not, I think, so often or to the same extent.

Kulamitra: Bhante, just before we go on, on that level of leading up to psychological balance, it seems to me that before you can be balanced you have to actually accept your *imbalance* and sort of build from there.

S: Yes, indeed.

Kulamitra: Because I think what I was talking about before, about people negating their gender is really to do with not really accepting the imbalance that exists and not seeing that it's all right to be a man or a woman, but that you then have to additionally balance that in some way. I think people are reluctant to accept who they are.

S: Often you don't just negate what you are but you negate it by denying that there's any difference of gender at all, any sort of meaningful difference. It's just a sort of an accident that you happen to be a man or a woman and one of these very minor anatomical differences, otherwise you are exactly the same; I think that is unrealistic.

Anyway, I am wondering whether all of Prakasha's questions have been dealt with or whether there are some still to be dealt with.

Virananda: Could I just ask a supplementary question, this question arises out of what we have discussed that the terms masculinity and femininity might not be at all practically helpful for a beginner if they are vague and open to misinterpretation by the beginner. So:

In Buddhist thought, and that is the thought of all the three Yanas, and particularly in the Canonical literature of Buddhism, are there any Buddhist philosophical, methodological, terms which could correspond to these general terms masculinity and femininity? And if so, could these be used instead or in a supplementary way? [105]

S: I don't think there *are* any terms, I think this is why I was, in a sense, obliged - wanting to discuss the subject in that way at all - to employ these English terms, or Western terms, at least. One could *perhaps* say that in far-Eastern Buddhism, in Japanese Buddhism the terms, say, self-power and other-power correspond, perhaps, to masculine and feminine attitudes. You could perhaps speak of *juriki* qualities and *tariki* qualities, but that is going to Japanese Buddhism and Tantra, which don't have any counterpart in Pali and Sanskrit. *Juriki* is the self-power,

tariki is the other-power. They don't quite correspond to masculine and feminine, but they overlap to some extent. One is the attitude of assertion, initiative, energy, the other is the attitude of - what shall I say? - openness, surrender, receptivity. These are generally regarded as masculine and feminine in the terms we're speaking. So perhaps there is a possibility of adapting *juriki* and *tariki*. You could say that he is a rather *juriki* type of person, instead of saying he is very masculine say that he is very *juriki* in his approach, or she needs to develop her *juriki* side more. I don't know whether it would sound absurd [Laughter] or whether it would sound quite natural after a while, it is difficult to say. A newcomer might be quite puzzled, what is this *juriki*, *tariki*? One could conceivably give rise to more confusions than masculine and feminine, but some of you might like to try it out. Those are the only possible replacements I can think of. Anyway, let's go on.

Tejananda: I think Virananda has asked as a supplementary what was going to be the next question so Kulamitra has a question on a deity.

Kulamitra: Not a deity but a Bodhisattva.

Is there a Bodhisattva that is traditionally said to embody the qualities of ksanti? If not would it be appropriate to see Green Tara in terms of ksanti rather than karuna?

S: I doubt if it would be appropriate to see Green Tara in terms of ksanti. One because she is usually said to be associated with, or even to symbolize the wisdom that is speedily attained, and that has a suggestion of *virya* rather than ksanti. Also another point is that Tara, including the green Tara is the predominant form of Tara, perhaps, has many different aspects, as one can readily understand by reading that hymn to Tara in *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*. There are wrathful aspects there, so those aren't quite compatible with ksanti. Perhaps Tara, including Green Tara is too obviously many-sided a Bodhisattva for one to be able to associate her specifically with ksanti.

Kulamitra: Is there any traditional association with a Bodhisattva and ksanti?

S: Not that I know of, no.

Tejananda: There is a book in the Order library which has sets of Buddhist iconography *Two Lamaistic Pantheons* it's called, and that does have images, probably rather peripheral ones but images of *all* the Paramitas. [106]

S: That is true but those are not images of Bodhisattvas who especially symbolize those Paramitas, that is Bodhisattvas with proper names, but personifications of those Paramitas. But of course one could perhaps take the particular personification of ksanti and, as it were, make him more into a regular Bodhisattva. It's always open to one to do that, or to a group of people to do that.

Kulamitra: I think I was struck just by when you enumerated the qualities that ksanti could be said to include, that many of them had very beautiful sound. Well

they certainly led to feelings and it would be nice if those feelings could congregate around an image.

S: Perhaps one has to look through them, the lists of all the Bodhisattvas, because there are thousands of them mentioned by name, there must be surely *one* among them all even though he may not be at all well known, or even relatively unknown, who is especially associated with ksanti. It would be very surprising if there wasn't, and then one just has to raise him to a greater degree of prominence. I mean the great Bodhisattvas seem to be associated more with Compassion, Wisdom and Energy, which is perhaps understandable, those being the three principle aspects, perhaps, of Buddhahood; and also Purity. Ksanti does seem to be very closely associated with, or very representative of, the love mode, doesn't it. Even though all the Paramitas are in a way, perhaps Prajnaparamita above all, but ksanti seems none the less especially expressive of that love mode, or illustrative of it. How are we going on?

Tejananda: We have only got three more. Another one from Kulamitra on tolerance in Buddhism and Christianity.

After the degeneration of so-called Buddhist countries like Sri-Lanka into sectarian violence Buddhist tolerance may be questioned. After all many Christians will try and brush aside medieval Church intolerance as a regrettable degeneration from their true religion. Would it be better to concentrate on Buddhism's total lack of *doctrinal* grounds for intolerance rather than on its historical record?

S: I think the two are interconnected. I think whatever might have happened in Sri Lanka is sufficiently dreadful. It doesn't really seriously affect the overall record of Buddhism. And in the same way, Christians may well try to explain away certain aspects of their own history, but they have got a *lot* of explaining away to do, because it is a consistently bad record in this respect. They started persecuting almost the minute that they got the power to do so and only stopped when they were *obliged* to stop because they no longer *had* the power to persecute. This is quite clear reading the history, so I think one shouldn't hesitate to point out that the histories of Buddhism and Christianity are very different in this respect. Nonetheless I think one does also, very definitely, have to go into [107] the doctrinal and spiritual reasons for Buddhist tolerance and also even to go into and to try to define what it actually consists in. Because quite a few well-meaning people nowadays, especially in the alternative movement and all sorts of new-age groups, believe that tolerance means accepting that everything is the same, that all teachings are the same and all religions are the same, and you are *intolerant* if you question that. That is because in the West doctrinal differences have invariably been associated with intolerance, or have given rise to intolerance. That is *not* the case with Buddhism. That has to be pointed out very clearly, and so far as Buddhism is concerned it is possible to have very definite doctrinal views and to definitely disagree with *other* people's doctrinal views without there being the slightest danger of your being tempted to be intolerant, in the sense of actively persecuting the holders of other views or attempting to coerce them into giving up their views and adopting your views. This is, I think, totally unknown in Buddhism.

I think there's a lot of clarification needed. I realized this years and years ago in India when Hindus used to accuse Buddhists and accuse me of being intolerant. But in the West *Christians* have the cheek to accuse one of intolerance, accuse Buddhists of intolerance. It's really absolute effrontery, I wonder really how they have the really *brazen* cheek to do this, when they haven't even officially and publicly in most cases repented of their past crimes in this respect. No word of real regret has ever come from them. Maybe from the odd individual, but certainly not from those churches most of all responsible. They soft pedal such things now, but they haven't actively repudiated their past, or officially repudiated it. They should go in sackcloth and ashes for several years at least, all of them, down on their knees in St Peter's Square before they dare to open their mouth on the subject of tolerance!

I really am surprised how they can gloss all this over and pretend it never happened. I have had a wonderful passage in Browning's *The Ring and the Book* dealing with this very thing, I think I made a note of it so I'll read it to you sometime, maybe I will bring it along tomorrow and read it. Christians, once the climate of opinion changes, pretend they have always been tolerant, they pretend that they've always loved animals, or that they have always been against war, etc., etc. They have always treated the Jews kindly, you'll find them saying this before very long, I am sure. Whatever happened in the Middle Ages, was just a little mistake, just a little local misunderstanding. And as for all those burnings at the stake, well a few people just got a bit over enthusiastic, you can't really hold it against the church. I mean, it's really ridiculous, and they get away with it, and no one calls them to order or exposes their insincerity, calls their bluff. It really is extraordinary. Just a few secularists and rationalists; Buddhists don't usually dare to do this sort of thing, not outside the FWBO. I really am quite appalled sometimes.

The Pope, without the Catholic church ever having repented officially or publicly of all its crimes against humanity, dares to talk in terms of peace and all that sort of thing and condemn terrorism. The Catholics have been some of the worst terrorists in the past! Kings and heretics have not only been burned at the stake but assassinated, the Pope has given his blessing. What was that if not terrorism? [108] The Jesuits were trying to kill Queen Elizabeth the First. They succeeded in killing, maybe not the Jesuits, but the Catholics with the Pope's blessing succeeded in assassinating King Henry the Fourth of France, and quite a lot of other people. And now they are condemning terrorism, but not a word of regret for all that. It's really quite shameful. So I think we shouldn't hesitate to call them to order if necessary, when there is occasion to do so.

It's not that one doesn't want by-gones to be by-gones but they have committed such enormities that before you can believe in their sincerity when they start talking about tolerance and peace they must publicly repent of what they have done in the past.

Sudhana: Is there a book on Christian atrocities that...? [Laughter]

S: There is a few, there are a few in the Order library, we haven't got a very complete collection.

Also authoritative works of reference often have these things edited out. Even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the new American editions of which come under to some extent the Catholic auspices, you mustn't forget, at the University of Chicago, have watered down some of these things compared with earlier editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. But there are a few works, mainly written by rationalists and free thinkers and secularists, which give the whole story. There are a few of them in the Order library, *The History of the Popes* by Joseph Macabe who was a Catholic priest and monk for twelve years. He sometimes goes a little bit over the top but his facts are quite reliable. There is Lee's *History of the Inquisition*, two volumes, and a few other smaller works of this kind. A paperback called *The Misery of Christianity* by a German scholar, again I think an ex-priest who gives the facts.

But I think it is really a pity that these things are not better known. I really don't trust, at least the Catholic church in this way, I really believe that if they got the power again they would probably do the same things again. I think they would probably persecute, they have been doing it so *recently*, nor have they publicly expressed any regret ?. I think we would be foolish to trust them.

[Tape 7]

Dharmapriya: Just one point on that. Protestant writers are very good on Catholic atrocities even in the rise of the Dutch republic by Motley I believe it is. (**S:** Right) Or Nineteenth Century Protestant English writers are quite good on Catholic atrocities at least, by and large.

S: Right, but there are Protestant atrocities too, we mustn't forget that, as during the Thirty Years War in Germany and on various other occasions. But the Catholics have got the better record in this respect just because they have the longest history and have had greater opportunities. One can read what they did in various parts of South America. [109]

Dharmapriya: Another work is the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* which is not edited under Catholic auspices.

Virananda: Is the Catholic church the only Christian body that keeps an index of prohibited books?

S: I am not sure about that, I have never gone into this. I think strictly speaking that at present - it is very difficult to generalize but I think at present - there is not at least the old kind of index of prohibited books. I think there has been some change made, but I think nonetheless the Catholic church has some means of indicating, if not by way of an official index, what it considers as undesirable reading for Catholics. I don't think it would be quite correct to say that they abolished the index, but on the other hand they certainly don't seem to have it in

it's previous form. In a sense they have abolished it but somehow they have managed to convey their disapproval of certain works in a definite way. You would have to go into it in some detail, probably, to find out what the exact position is.

But whether other Christian churches have had an index in that way I'm rather doubtful. Because the other Christian churches, apart from the ancient Eastern ones, arose after the reformation and they themselves usually demanded freedom of speech and writing, and so on. I think you might find that some of the Calvinistic communities - perhaps Geneva, for instance or perhaps some of those in New England originally - did prohibit the publication and circulation of certain works. Calvin almost certainly did, but I don't know anything about it in detail.

Kulamitra: Do you think in terms of putting our own house in order, I mean not the FWBO one but do you think from something like *Golden Drum* when it comes out it would be worth directly criticizing what seems almost like the encouragement by Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka of an attitude which leads to sectarian violence.

S: I have already discussed this with Nagabodhi because we do intend having a column of comment, both critical and appreciative, and this may be one of the things that we draw attention to. Because we even have had letters addressed to the Order Office from Buddhists outside the FWBO, Western Buddhists, asking us what our stand was, and did we not agree that what was being done in Sri Lanka apparently with the connivance of at least some Buddhist monks was quite disgraceful from a Buddhist point of view, and should we not say so. We have actually had letters to this effect.

But again we have to be quite sure about our facts in all these sorts of cases. And be quite temperate in our way of expressing ourselves, so that we help the situation, if we do anything at all, rather than making it worse.

Kuladeva: I saw a reference recently to a monk in Thailand, I think it was about ten years ago, quite an influential monk who had made the declaration that communists were non-human beings, in fact they were embodiments of Mara [110] and therefore there was nothing wrong with killing them.

S: Yes, I couldn't tell you the source but I have heard this too.

And of course there was the case years and years ago in Thailand of a monk whom I did actually meet later on in Calcutta, a Thai monk. He was a quite leading monk, an abbot I think, but he was arrested by the police because they found in his room a book on communism. There was absolutely no question that he had no sympathy with communism, he just wanted to find out what they actually said, but according to the police he was a communist sympathizer. He was an old monk, not a young monk, and they arrested him on those grounds and forcibly disrobed him, which is absolutely wrong of course because he hadn't committed any offence at all under the Vinaya. They forcibly disrobed him but he maintained that they could not forcibly disrobe him, or could not disrobe him. Even if they had disrobed him forcibly he was not in fact disrobed, he was still a monk. He remained in prison for six or seven years and was eventually released and I met

him when he was over in India on pilgrimage. I forget his name, it was Vimala something, I think, he was quite well known. Other monks were deeply shocked but nobody ever said anything, because there the attitude is that the Sangha mustn't interfere in politics, that means mustn't criticize the Government. So actually they support everything that the Government does, as Mr Shiva Raksa mentioned in his lecture.

So tacit support of the government can't really be described as non-interference in politics! And there are many such instances. But I think we have to be quite cautious how we go about criticizing Buddhist countries in a general sort of way. We just don't want to make things worse, we want to try and make them better.

Let's move on then.

Tejananda: Still on a similar topic, intolerance in the gospels, by Ratnaprabha.

Are there any examples of religious intolerance as such, as opposed to Christ's personal lapses, if you like, in the Gospels?

S: When you say examples what do you mean?

Ratnaprabha: Examples of statements or actions taken by Christ that imply that he was promoting religious intolerance rather than say the overturning of the money changers' tables, which seems to be more a personal lapse.

S: Well as a Buddhist one might regard it as a personal lapse, but obviously Christians don't regard it in that way. I have known Christians argue that it can't be regarded as a violent action because he was only one man against so many hundreds and he only had a, what was it, a sort of whip of straw, and it was his moral indignation which routed them, not physical violence.

I think that the saying of Christ's which has been used as a justification, let us say, for active intolerance [111] more than any other, is that saying in the course of one of the parables 'compel them to come in'. This has been interpreted to mean, and it is an interpretation, though one that perhaps is justified, it has been used in support of the belief that it is justifiable to compel people to become Christians, to coerce them into becoming Christians. It is the parable where the invited guests don't turn up, so the master of the house tells his servants to go out into the highways and byways and force the people that they happen to meet to come to the wedding feast, compel them to come in.

So if you take that parable literally, well it does justify that sort of coercion. And clearly the literal meaning is one level of meaning, at least, and Christians have often seized upon them. This does not mention the Old Testament, that perhaps is another story. I am sure that there other passages or incidents but it's a long time since I have been through the gospels with these sorts of things in mind. One just has to read through them oneself. Perhaps try to discover which passages have been used by Christian writers in support of active intolerance.

For instance, St. Thomas Aquinas, who is the leading theologian of the Christian church does believe that heretics should be burned . One could perhaps look up that passage in the *Summa Theologica* which is in the Order Library and find out whether he actually cites a scripture. Padmavajra sent me up, just recently, to read or to look at a life of Sir Thomas More who is usually regarded as a very saintly character, in fact canonized by the Catholic church, but he did write a work, a dialogue on heresies and he firmly defends the opinion that heretics should be burned at the stake. But again I haven't read the work, presumably he does cite scripture in support of his belief.

Dharmapriya: On a slightly different tack, I know that Luther was posed with a question about conducting war and he very definitely came down on the side that you should conduct war, in fact it was irreligious not to fight for your prince. I cannot remember if he did cite from the scriptures in that.

S: He probably did because he knew the scriptures very well.

Islam does believe in violence, and so did Judaism, at least in the good old Old Testament days. All the Semitic religions seem to.

I think the main thing we must do is just to make clear the Buddhist position, that we believe that the clarity of thought which involves differing from other people does not result in intolerance so far as a Buddhist is concerned and so far as the history of Buddhism shows. It's perfectly possible to disagree with somebody quite profoundly, but nonetheless, not to feel the slightest inclination to coerce him into believing what you believe. Because in any case Buddhists would maintain that if someone was coerced into believing what he believed it wouldn't be a *genuine* belief. A belief that is coerced is a contradiction in terms, and Buddhists aren't concerned with purely verbal agreement, or verbal acceptance of Buddhism. The perspective of Buddhism, here, is so different. It's [112] very difficult, I think, for people to grasp it. They therefore think that if Buddhists don't agree say with Christians, or if Buddhism doesn't agree with what Christianity teaches it means automatically that Buddhists are going to be inclined to persecute Christians or even make war on them, which is really quite absurd.

This is the point that needs to be hammered home. And no doubt one can cite the record of Buddhism, that on the whole Buddhism has in this respect remained quite faithful to its principles.

Prakasha: Do you know the record of Confucianism and Taoism?

S: I am afraid it wasn't very good where Buddhism was concerned. Quite often strongly Confucian or strongly Taoist emperors, often at the instigation of the Confucian scholars and Taoists priests did persecute Buddhism quite savagely. But to the best of my knowledge the opposite never happened. I think the Taoists were worse than the Confucianists though if I remember rightly. Anyway, do we come to the last question?

Tejananda: This is the last one. This is from Tejmitra and it is about the
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Gnostic quote.

S: Which one is that.

Tejamitra: Shall I read through the quote? (**S:** Yes) You say it is from the gospel of St. Thomas.

S: Ah yes, I remember now.

‘When you make the two one and make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the upper side like the underside, and in such a way that you make the man with the woman a single one in order that the man is not a man and the woman is not a woman. When you make eyes in place of an eye and a hand in place of a hand and a foot in place of a foot and an image in place of an image then you will go into the kingdom.’

I get the idea that you use the quote as a reference to combining masculinity and femininity in the middle of the quote, but could you explain some of the other parts of the quote, what its possible meanings are?

S: I am not sure that I could explain, frankly, because in the absence of a living Gnostic tradition we really have to guess at the meaning, very often. I believe in the Order Library there are at least three translations of the gospel of St. Thomas. I think you will find that there are differences in their versions of this particular passages and I think the translators and modern commentators admit that they are not completely clear what exactly is meant.

As you say, the general sense, the general trend is clear, but for instance that bit about the image not being the image, well what does that mean? What is the original word there, I can’t remember. One would perhaps need to look at those translations and the modern commentaries and try to work it out. To the best of my recollection [113] scholars aren’t completely sure what all of these sayings, including this one actually mean. Though they are clear in part, as this one is.

Tejamitra: There was another part to my question.

Personally I find it very similar to a few Buddhist texts, especially it brought to mind the Bahiya Sutta, where the Buddha says things like, ‘in the eye only the eye’. It seems to me quite unbelievable that that comes from a completely separate tradition actually. Would you like to comment on that?

S: I’m not so sure that there is a similarity here with regard to the business of the eye. I think one has to take that in context, I think it is really talking about

something different. Because this whole passage seems to be talking about, or saying seems to be talking about, integration, so presumably the reference to the eye and the hand has some bearing on that. Just read it again from the beginning.

Tejamitra: 'When you make the two one'

S: Well that's the general idea, making two one. Integration, unificatio, yughanada that's clear enough, isn't it?

Tejamitra: 'And make the inside like the outside.'

S: That's not *completely* clear, one has a general idea, that is to say for instance perhaps it means you should be completely open, honest, truthful. No difference between what you think and what you say. But there could be a *profounder* meaning than that. Perhaps it means the unification of what we now would call the spiritual and the material, the subjective and the objective, it could have all those sort of overtones which is not quite as easy to capture.

Tejamitra: 'and the outside like the inside,' (**S:** The same) 'and the upper side like the under side'.

S: Yes, what exactly is meant there, what is the precise difference that is indicated by underside and upperside as distinct from inside and outside. It's not clear. Is the saying just being a bit redundant or is actually a slight difference of meaning intended? It's not really very easy to say, is it. What does upperside and underside symbolize as distinct from inside and outside?

Tejamitra: 'and in such a way that you make the man with the woman a single one'.

S: That's reasonably clear, isn't it. Clearly it can't be understood physically, it must be understood psychologically and spiritually. That seems the clearest part of all, perhaps the most important part.

Tejamitra: 'In order that the man is not the man'.

S: Yes, he remains a man physically but he is not [114] a man in the formal, one-sided psychological sense.

Tejamitra: 'and woman is not the woman'.

S: Right, yes.

Tejamitra: 'When you make eyes in place of an eye.'

S: Eyes in place of *an* eye, e-y-e-s. What exactly does that mean. Here it's the

other way round, not one in the place of two or more but a plurality in the place of unity.

Ratnaguna: Are you sure of the quote there, isn't it *an* eye in the place of an eye?

Dharmavira: It was 'eyes'.

S: You might find that translations differ here, but you would need to look it up. But taking it as eyes in place of *an* eye; perhaps it's referring to double vision instead of single vision in the Blakean sort of sense, do you see what I mean? Or perhaps it means that you become one with other people, there's the unification between yourself and other people, so their eyes become your eyes. You don't have just one eye, that is to say your own eye, you have everybody's eyes, you see *through* their eyes as well through your sympathetic identification with them. It *could* possibly mean that, but whether it actually *does* mean that I couldn't say, but it might mean that or something of that sort.

On the other hand it may be wrongly translated, at least according to some scholars. You would have to check up on all that. And then?

Tejamitra: 'And the hand in place of the hand, the foot in place of the foot'.

S: Well it means that if you sympathetically identify yourself with other people your hand becomes their hand. Their hand becomes your hand, there is no real difference between you, it could mean that, though I can't be sure that it actually does mean that.

Tejamitra: In the way that Shantideva...

S: Yes, one might say that, possibly.

Tejamitra: and the last bit was, 'an image in place of an image'.

S: I just don't know, I can't think what that means, can't even *speculate* what that might mean. One would have to see what the word image was in Greek, whether that Greek word was a recognized technical term in Gnostic thought and so on and so forth. In that way one might be able to deduce some meaning. The word image itself in English is quite vague, it could mean quite a lot of things.

Susiddhi: Maybe I'm putting an interpretation on it but I read the first bit as integration and the second part as transformation.

S: It could be. [115]

Susiddhi: If you read it all together, 'a hand for a hand and a foot for a foot', and then the last bit 'an image for an image', it could be a poetic way of describing

total transformation after the integration.

S: It could be, but it doesn't seem to very clearly follow. Maybe you should look up all those translations, look up the commentaries and try to find out what the original Greek words are. I believe one of the translations does give the Greek text as well. You can look up the word in the *Great English Lexicon* which we do have. Though of course the general meaning of that particular word in Classical Greek would not necessarily be the same as its technical meaning in Gnostic literature, one would have to bear that in mind too.

I think I quoted that particular passage just to make a sort of connection with an alternative Western tradition so that it didn't all sound too Eastern, too exotic, too foreign. I think that was my intention at the time. I think when one does find these parallels or these coincidences of meaning, well one should make some use of them, they are useful points of connection.

So everybody is reasonably clear about ksanti and virya, even if they are not perhaps always quite clear about masculinity and femininity?

Tejananda: I think that we have found that a great deal of the material is similar to that which was covered in the Eightfold Path series, although obviously referring to different terms. So there's a lot there which would be very good revision but isn't particularly new from that point of view.

S: Right. All right let's leave it there then.

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions
Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Six: On the Threshold of Enlightenment

Tejananda: We've got twelve questions on 'The Threshold of Enlightenment'. The first is from Ratnaguna and is about the diagram showing the dhyanas which you refer to in the talk.

In the lecture you mention in passing that you could have drawn a diagrammatic chart to depict the four dhyanas. Did you have in mind putting the conceptual formulations of each dhyana into separate sections of a chart or something more imaginative?

S: To the best of my recollection it was just four diagrams illustrating the four dhyanas plus a fifth one illustrating our ordinary state of consciousness. I did actually produce these, I don't know that I have any copy. I can only remember the first one which is the diagram representing our ordinary state of consciousness. I can look in my notes and see whether I have got them there but I haven't actually seen a copy of these diagrams for years and years. If I don't have a copy it is possible that some of the older Order Members do have one.

Ratnaguna: Were they actually like drawings?

S: Yes. [116]

Vairochana: Was that the drawing with the dots on them?

S: I think that is probably more likely the pure seeds, the impure seeds and the Buddha seeds in the different realms, possibly but I won't be sure of that.

Kulamitra: What was the one that you do remember?

S: It was in a square frame with a jagged line right down the middle. One half was filled in black and the other left white; illustrating our divided, schizophrenic consciousness.

Tejananda: A related question on visual representations of dhyanas in general from Ratnaprabha.

This is about, or related to Govinda's pictures which you mentioned

in the talk. I have got them here if you want to remind yourself, the page is marked.

S: Yes, I saw the originals of these, I think the colours are more effective in the originals as far as I remember.

I find them quite good but rather enclosed because they are all depicted as being in a cavern or a cave. I just wondered if you found that Govinda's pictures give adequately a feeling for dhyana?

S: [unclear - fault in recording] I didn't feel they gave a feeling of dhyana at all! [Laughter] Not at all. They are Jungian rather than dhyanic. And also the colours seem to me a little dark for dhyanas, but that may be purely subjective on my part. For instance *birth of happiness*, to me it just doesn't look like that. [Laughter]

Then Samadhi; this may just be my different way of thinking but I don't think of Samadhi as resembling a deep pool down in the depths, as it were. Maybe there is a way, or a sense in which one can think of it in that way, but it certainly isn't the way that I would put it personally. If it was a pool at all I would put it up in some mountain, sparkling in the sunlight. But maybe that's just me, maybe it is no more likely one than the other, or as much likely one as the other. But to me, it's very interesting, as I say they don't convey much. The turning inwards, it almost looks like a painting of someone's innards [Laughter]. You've got that red lump of meat, almost like some internal organ.

Ratnaprabha: It's supposed to be fire through the (unclear) part of a cave... (unclear).

S: Yes, but in that way it isn't really successful and effective. It doesn't look like fire at all. I hope I'm not being too naive or simplistic, but as I say, frankly what I feel. It may be right, it may be wrong but that is my own personal immediate reaction. Also *being*, well, no, maybe I had better not say any more - no doubt there are different ways of looking at the dhyanas, even different ways of experiencing them.

Kulamitra: When we were talking about this in our study group I think most of us felt as you do that it didn't [117] mean very much to us. But I wondered whether you had seen any paintings, works of art, which to you *did* convey some feeling for, at least maybe the first or second dhyanas, if not more. Does anything spring to mind?

S: I can't really say that I remember. What sort of painting could do that?

Kulamitra: Well we wondered whether *any* painting could do that, whether it was possible to visually represent the dhyanas.

S: Well there are two ways of going about it. One can go about it either in this semi-abstract way that Govinda has done, which is certainly one possible

approach. Or one can go about it by depicting a sort of dhyanic expression on a human face, I think one can go about it that way too. I think probably some painters, some artists, have captured a dhyanic like expression either in painting or in sculpture. I can't think of any particular instance off hand but I am sure I have seen paintings and or sculptures of this kind, at least a few of them.

Perhaps in the case of traditional *Buddhist* art there are a few Buddha images which convey an impression of something dhyanic. A few, they don't all by any means. Far from it, in fact.

Kulamitra: What about say some landscapes which strike us as very bright and very positive, for instance some Monets or Turners?

S: What does one mean by saying that a landscape is dhyanic? Clearly the landscape itself isn't in a dhyaana state, but it must be that the artist who painted it has represented the landscape in such a way as to suggest a dhyanic state, which again in turn suggests that he must have some experience of that himself and be endeavouring to represent it through the medium of that landscape. That could be an alternative way of representing dhyanic states. Again I can't think of any specific example.

Saddhaloka: When we were discussing it some of the paintings of Turner came to my mind. Very much alive and light, the more abstract ones, very light, expansive feel to them.

S: Well there are some modern artists, painters, painting in a semi-abstract style. I am thinking of Klee and Kandinsky who perhaps conveys something of that. Kandinsky was certainly familiar with the idea at least of meditation, he had quite a deep interest in theosophy at one stage.

Kulamitra: Do you think in a way this is a relatively subjective matter? You said looking at those pictures of Govinda - that you had seen the originals, in fact, this just reminds you of them but - they didn't convey to you a dhyanic state but presumably you feel that he had experienced the dhyanas so this is his attempt to express.

S: I don't know. Perhaps, or probably, but I don't know so I can't say and even if one has experienced the dhyanas and you try to express them in that sort of way well you are [118] not necessarily successful. The fact that you have experienced the dhyanas does not necessarily mean that you are going to be successful in representing them. Your medium may defeat you, your artistic training may defeat you. Your medium may defeat you; Govinda always uses the medium of chalk pastels, these are in chalk pastels.

Kulamitra: Right. I am wondering if in a general way painting, certainly that sort of semi-abstract painting, is too vague to communicate successfully to *all* people a sort of quite complex experience like the dhyanas to which other people may not be very familiar.

S: This is a characteristic of all the arts other than those of literature, including poetry. All the, as it were, non-verbal arts, that their meaning is subject to interpretation, a wide *variety* of interpretations. You might look at an abstract painting and to you, for instance, it might be a representation of the third dhyana; somebody else might think that it represented explosion of anger, or that it was intended to represent war or progress, or almost anything. Because by the very definition such arts don't have a meaning in the sense that a passage of prose or poetry has a meaning. There is an element of meaning of course when they are purely representational but there's less and less meaning even in that sense when the representational element is reduced.

Kulamitra: You gave the example of a face that might convey something of the dhyanas, but presumably unless it was very, very well done to some people it might convey just ordinary happiness or pleasure or something like that. (**S:** Yes, right)

Dharmapriya: Bhante, would you apply your remarks to the so-called meditative music or meditational music that has been coming out for the last ten years, often with, I don't know how you describe it technically but often with a constant drone in the background often that is supposed to inculcate states of peace or something.

S: I have not heard much of this meditative music. I did have a record called Zen Meditation Music by a Japanese classical group, very traditional music. We used to play this sometimes in the very early days on Keffolds retreats in the context of the puja. I think that to me, somehow was suggestive of something meditative, not the dhyana states but certainly something meditative, there is no doubt about that.

Personally if I think of a visual equivalent or counterpart of dhyanic experience I think in terms of light. If I wanted to represent dhyana states I would probably represent them in very bright, very light jewel-like colours - very expansive, very brilliant. I can't help feeling that that is more appropriate, I don't feel that these sort of images are really appropriate. To me they don't convey anything dhyanic at all. They convey something pertaining to the depths of the unconscious mind or something of that sort but I don't think of dhyanas in that way, I tend to think of them very much as superconscious states, *higher* states and that is I believe more the Buddhist tradition. You don't think of murky depths with little glimmerings of light percolating through, you think of something clear and radiant. [119]

Kulamitra: Whether of the dhyanas or not I certainly found that when I read the poems that go with those pictures it was much easier to understand what Govinda was getting at. Before that I really had no feeling at all for it.

S: Well, the element of words is there, therefore a more precise meaning.

Kulamitra: And I think I could say the same about the traditional similes. I think if they hadn't been explained to me I would have been quite puzzled as to what was meant.

S: I think one can work out what they mean, but the meaning that one works out is subjective, really.

Kulamitra: But in that sense it strikes me that they are not immediate symbols. That there is a meaning there but it is much clearer if you explain it, or at least you said you could work it out, but if it was actually a symbol it would have a more immediate meaning.

S: It should speak to you more directly, yes.

Kulamitra: So I wondered if there was anything in that. Unless we are sure that we are working with a symbol, if we use a visual image, should we always try and accompany that with an interpretation in words to be sure that people understand the meaning?

S: Perhaps we should but then it means we don't really trust the symbol, which in a way means that we are not really treating it as a symbol in the fuller sense. But it could be that people have become insensitive to symbols. Also we must be careful not to think that a symbol has a meaning, that this means that, it isn't so crude or so straightforward as that.

Kulamitra: Yes, but not every picture is a symbol is it?

S: Oh no, of course not. These are symbols, these illustrations, so to speak, of the dhyanas, presumably.

Kulamitra: A sort of unsuccessful symbol.

S: They can't be illustrations because the dhyanas are not as it were two dimensional visual experiences, so they are not copies of what you see when you have a dhyana experience. They are a translation of the dhyana experience into another medium, they are symbols in that sense.

Kulamitra: But they can't be universal symbols, can they, because for most of us they seem to need explanation?

S: Unless of course, as I suggested, we aren't sufficiently sensitive to symbols. I respond to these images or these symbols emotionally but not as I would to what I think of as the dhyanas. They do convey a *feeling* to me but not a feeling of dhyana at all, something almost intestinal. *[Laughter]*

It reminds me of something I read years and years ago, a description of the paintings of El Greco. Many of these paintings, like the interior, as it were, of the gut, the colours the [120] textures, they were sort of gut like, they were intestinal. I feel that a little bit with these, some of them.

Ratnaprabha: I wonder, when we had a visitor here at Padmaloka once who I was showing round, I showed her the shrine room which was then decorated in green and she said, 'ah yes green, that is the ideal colour for meditation because it's very soothing and peaceful and so on'. But do you think there is any truth in that, at least that some colours may help one?

S: I think this is generally agreed, or generally established. Red, for instance, is stimulating, green is calming. I think these are the two extremes; grey is depressing, black is depressing, for most people. Yellow is very positive, orange is very positive, blue is positive but in another sort of way; white suggests purity. Yes, green does suggest peace. But again, there are greens and greens, it mustn't be a sort of bilious green if you see what I mean. *[Laughter]* I have suggested that we might experiment meditating in rooms decorated entirely in a particular colour, with altar cloths to match and so on. I am sure it does produce a distinctive effect on the mind. Just imagine what it would feel like to meditate in a room which was entirely white, where you have perhaps a white porcelain image on the shrine, crystal bowls and crystal candle holders. The walls white, the ceiling white, the shrine cloths white, the carpet white. It would have a definite effect. I am surprised that no one has tried this. Anyway, enough about colours and symbols, let's move on.

Tejananda: The third question is from Susiddhi and is about the importance of meditation in the Movement.

Many people who have come into contact with the FWBO heard dhyanic states described in glowing terms and have had some experience of higher states of mind through their own meditation practice. Why is it that so few seem to have set their sights firmly on the rupaloka? Is it simply that they have been fooled by the viparyayas into making their home in the kamaloka or are we failing in our aim to provide the right conditions for and to inspire people to develop a strong and deepening meditation practice leading towards the arising of insight?

S: I suppose one would have to ask the people themselves. I think there is a quite wide range of experience in this respect in the Movement. Some people do seem to experience dhyana states relatively easily and naturally, others have extreme difficulty in experiencing them at all. Even comparatively new people sometimes experience them quite extensively or quite intensively. I had a letter from a woman only just a few days ago describing some very strong dhyanic experiences and sometimes Order Members who have been in the Movement for years and years have very little in the way of dhyanic experience. It's very difficult to generalize about this. To a great extent, no doubt, it depends upon one's way of life, the conditions under which one lives and works. Sometimes a modification of one's environment is needed. As for facilities, until very recently Vajraloka has been [121] under used, so I think it isn't that we haven't had the facilities which people require, though it may be that the expansion of meditating facilities will be needed soon because I believe Vajraloka is now full and looks like remaining that way. But I can't really say why more people don't have a more positive dhyana type

experience, apart from the fact that probably they are trying to do, perhaps even having to do, too many other things. And you can't just sort of slip in - well I was going to say that you can't just slip in a bit of meditation, a bit of dhyana in between, actually you can if you are sufficiently experienced or sufficiently determined.

I just wonder sometimes whether it isn't due to a lack of confidence that one can attain such states. But I think most people have experienced them at least a few times, so at least they know what it is all about, they know what is possible.

Dharmavira: Could you say more about lack of confidence in relation to attaining dhyanic states?

S: Well, I think it would be an aspect of lack of confidence in general. A lot of people seem to have not much faith, not much confidence, in their own ability. For instance they don't have a faith that they could learn a foreign language, they don't have the faith that they could learn to be an effective speaker, they don't have the faith that they could improve their English. And in the same way they don't have the faith that they could attain dhyana states, not that they have any particular difficulty perhaps with dhyana states but they don't have very much confidence in their own ability really to achieve very much at all.

I think this is the case certainly with *some* people.

Dharmapriya: That seems to me a slightly different angle to bring up another question. You have stressed, especially in the last years or so that when one gives talks or writes one should do it from one's own experience as much as possible.

S: As much as possible is a very big qualification indeed, isn't it?

Dharmapriya: Well, maybe I should still say the rest, which is in terms of retreats with beginners and in other situations I find myself called upon to talk about meditational experience, it seems very suitable to talk about the dhyanas or to turn it around the other way I feel that I am avoiding something if I don't talk about the dhyanas etc., but having very limited experience of the dhyanas, not to speak of the samapattis, samadhis or prajna, I certainly don't feel that I am speaking very much from experience.

S: I think I have talked about this before, and I have said that one should on occasion make it clear where you are speaking from personal experience, where you are representing tradition as understood by you and where are giving personal - not necessarily confirmed - opinions and speculations of your own.

For instance, if you are called upon to describe the dhyana states you can simply say, 'Bhante has described them in this way', or 'the Pali texts describe them in this way', or 'in such-and- such book such-and-such description of them [122] is given'. You don't have to speak about them in such a way as to give the impression that you have personally experienced them all, if that is in fact not the

case.

Ratnaprabha: Does this threefold division apply both to writing as well as talking? Because I think people are quite good when it comes to talking to classes or giving talks to distinguish, but I think I have noticed that in writing whether in *the Newsletter* or in longer works, people often don't distinguish in this way and tend to write quite a lot by just bald assertion. Have you noticed that and do you think there is anything...?

S: I can't say that I have *especially* noticed it but I think it depends on the type of article that you are writing. If you are not writing a sort of personal confessional article, say, 'My Experience of Buddhism', or 'My Buddhist Life', I think it is understood that when you write about Buddhism you are reflecting traditional Buddhist teaching, and that you are presenting it in the best way that you can. And I think it would be understood that you have not necessarily experienced, personally, everything. After all, all sorts of scholars, even non-Buddhist scholars write whole *chapters*, whole *books* about Nirvana. I think it is generally understood that they haven't experienced Nirvana! *[Laughter]*

So I think one needs to distinguish between the two kinds of writing, the more personal, the more confessional, the more autobiographical, and the more, as it were, objective when you don't profess to have experienced everything that you write about but in which you hope that something of whatever experience you do have will percolate through into everything that you are writing. Sometimes a lecture may be of that nature too. It being understood that you stand forth as the representative of Buddhist tradition as you have understood it without necessarily having experienced everything in depth yourself. Though clearly what you say must be informed or illumined by a *certain* amount of experience, or a certain *openness* to experience.

But you should never mislead people into thinking that you have experienced something when in fact you haven't. If they ask a direct question you should be quite honest. But there's no need to preface a description of the four dhyanas with saying 'of course I haven't experienced them myself, but this is what the four dhyanas are'. It's usually understood that you are explaining what Buddhist tradition teaches. When you come actually to discuss your own personal experience well then it may be another matter.

I think it's also important to be clear in one's own mind because sometimes one forgets. One must distinguish quite clearly in one's own mind what you have discovered from experience, personal experience, what you have discovered through your reading, reflection, discussion, meditative experience, insight and so on. Be very clear.

Tejananda: The next question is from Dharmadhara on horizontal and vertical integration.

In the section of the tape on the first dhyana you describe it as a complete unification of energies of the conscious mind. In another

place, in *Dhyana for Beginners* [Transcriber's Note: *Unedited seminar held by Sangharakshita on 'Dhyana for Beginners'*] you refer to the first dhyana as [123] integration and you say by the time you have traversed this first absorption you are integrated both horizontally and vertically. My question is are you using vertical integration in two ways, that is psychological and/or spiritual?

S: I think in this context psychological and spiritual don't really differ in meaning. Because you are still dealing with the mind in a comparatively ordinary sense, even though in a slightly more developed sort of way. I didn't mean to imply here that the vertical integration would be total, obviously, but there is a degree of vertical integration, inasmuch as you have not only unified the contents of your ordinary consciousness but have raised that consciousness as unified to a slightly higher level.

Dharmadhara: In the first dhyana? (**S:** Yes.) Can you distinguish in any way between unconscious and the superconscious?

S: Again it is just a question of definition. The unconscious is the non-conscious but we usually think of it as that which is, as it were, *below* the level of consciousness, the *infra* conscious. So I think the *infra* conscious is certainly to be distinguished from the super conscious and supra conscious even though all three are in a sense are covered by the term unconscious if you understand by that the non-conscious in the sense of the consciousness we ordinarily experience.

I think unconscious is a misleading term, Suzuki uses it with a capital 'U' in a very sort of misleading way. I don't think I ever use the term unconscious, with or without the initial capital in that sort of sense. I speak of the unconscious as that which is *below* the threshold of consciousness. It is of course true in a sense, that we are unconscious of the dhyana states, but not that the dhyana states in themselves, so to speak, are states of unconsciousness, but only that we are not conscious *of* them. I may not be conscious of you but that doesn't mean that you, in yourself, are unconscious. It's rather like that. The dhyanas are simply conscious states or states of consciousness, or states of awareness.

Kulamitra: Could we just go back to that first part because I think that is an area that has caused confusion in the past? I take it from what you said just then that even if you only talk in a particular case of integration of the conscious mind, *implied* in that is that any integration of the conscious mind raises the level of consciousness. Therefore there is some vertical...

S: Yes, I don't think you can completely separate the two, because how do you integrate horizontally, how *do* you bring together? Let's say you bring together scattered energies and if you bring together scattered energies it means those energies are not just unified but concentrated, intensified, and that results in a heightening of consciousness and therefore in a vertical integration.

Supposing you have a whole heap of things spread out on a horizontal plane, and you bring them together, well [124] naturally you start organizing them into a sort

of heap or sort of pyramid. So this is why I speak of the first dhyana or achieving the first dhyana in terms of both horizontal and vertical integration. Although perhaps the horizontal element is more prominent.

Ratnaprabha: Did you mention two distinct terms, super conscious and supra conscious?

S: Yes. Super and supra. Super meaning consciousness *in excelsis*, consciousness intensified, highly intensified; but *supra* conscious meaning that which is above even consciousness - at least as ordinarily understood. Perhaps that's not a distinction you need to bother the beginner with.

Tejananda: Now a question from Chakkhupala on dhyana as an 'external' (inverted commas here) activity.

The question arises from your statement in the lecture that the Bodhisattva's practice of dhyana should not exclude external activity. In the myth of Avalokitesvara as told in the *Door of Liberation* the Bodhisattva goes among the Tibetans teaching the dharma, then he enters the meditation of Bodhi mind and makes a long and intense effort to dispel misery and bring beings to happiness. Given that the story is mythological can this section be considered merely as a hyperbolical statement of the synthesis of dhyana and external activity achieved by a Bodhisattva or is there some sense in which we can understand the sitting meditation of the Bodhisattva as directly relieving others of suffering?

S: But can one in Buddhism directly relieve others of suffering, in the existential sense? If they are suffering physically you can relieve them of that, can you relieve them of existential suffering, can you purify them, can you follow the path for them; Buddhism would say not - as represented by those famous *Dhammapada* verses. So where does that leave us, what in a sense is the question then?

Chakkhupala: The question really hinges on how one is to interpret the bare statement that it is in the meditation of Bodhi mind that Avalokitesvara is making an intense effort to dispel misery.

S: I think we have to look at that translation. The meditation of Bodhimind, Bodhimind is clearly the Bodhichitta so what does one mean by the *meditation* of the Bodhimind? I don't think meditation should be taken in the sense that we have been discussing it just now. I think it is on account of his attitude of Bodhichitta, or the fact that he has a concentrated Bodhichitta and wishes to work for the emancipation of all beings that he relieves them of their suffering in whatever way he can. I don't think there is a specific reference here to meditation as relieving directly other people's sufferings. The Bodhisattva on account of his Bodhichitta works for the relief of other people's suffering, I would take it simply in that sense. [125]

Chakkhupala: I think what I was confusing it with or regarding it in the same light as, for example, someone in a very high dhyanic state can affect other people's states of mind, as for example you have described, a Guru sitting and sending out rays of peace. I wondered if on, as it were, an archetypal, cosmic level the Bodhisattva could engage in such activity.

S: He could, but it still wouldn't relieve suffering in the ultimate sense. One might just create more pleasing or peaceful surroundings for people. You would help provide them with a more positive environment in that way just by your own peaceful attitude and the peaceful atmosphere that that generated. People would *then* have to take advantage of that opportunity to meditate and develop insight themselves, but I certainly don't deny that that could be done, at least in a measure. It is actually done, say, on a retreat, when twenty or thirty of you have been on a retreat for a week or ten days you have built up a very positive atmosphere which can be immediately felt by someone joining the retreat at that point and they can find it very helpful and very supportive. You may not notice it because you have been building it up over the days gradually, but they notice it sometimes very definitely. So it can be done.

You can feel even the atmosphere in a shrine room where people have meditated. Even in a church when people have prayed - there is a sort of tangible effect, a tangible influence. So no doubt in the case of the Bodhisattvas, above all next to the Buddhas, a very tangible effect produced by their meditation and their spiritual aspirations.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaguna on dhyana and metta.

In Tuscany 1981 I seem to remember you saying that you thought that Buddhagosha was wrong or could have been wrong in his correlations of the four Brahma Vihara practices and the four dhyanas. I think at the time you said that he, like other Theravadin commentators saw things in too linear a way, and that consciousness being multidimensional it could well be that the practice of the four Brahma Viharas constituted as it were another separate route to the arupaloka. Does my memory serve me well and if so have you thought any more about this?

S: Your memory *has* served you well. I can't say that I have thought very much more about it. I have got quite a lot of notes on the subject and have been hoping to work them up at least into an article or a talk or something of that sort. I haven't yet been able to do that, But in this connection I would like to suggest that people just compare their own experiences. Compare your own experience of the dhyanas, if you have any such experience at least of the lower dhyanas, with your experience of metta. See if you can detect any common factors, and whether you do feel perhaps that the metta has a dhyanic element, or even that there is an element of metta in dhyana as such. Again these are all [126] matters of experience; one doesn't have to depend upon what Buddhagosha says or what the Abhidharma says, or what I say, one can consult your own experience and see

what conclusions you come to. And having consulted your own experience and come to certain conclusions you can perhaps discuss the matter with other people and see if *their* experience has been similar, whether *they* have arrived at similar conclusions. I think it's quite important to consult one's own experience when one can. I did stress this, I think on the last Tuscany. Here, clearly there is an area where one does have a certain amount of experience which one could think about, reflect upon.

Ratnaguna: The reason I asked it Bhante was because I hardly ever practice the Mindfulness of Breathing, mostly the Metta Bhavana and the Avalokitesvara sadhana and I can't really relate to the dhyanas as put in the way you put them. My experience is that I get a lot of...

S: When you speak of the dhyanas are you referring to the, what I have called the psychological analysis? (**Ratnaguna:** Yes) I think there's a bit of misunderstanding here because in the traditional psychological analysis certain mental factors are mentioned. For instance in the first dhyana there is vitakka and vicara, which is not present in the second dhyana. Then there is mention of sukkha, there is mention of priti. But sometimes I think the impression is produced by this enumeration that that is all that there is, psychologically speaking, or in terms of psychological factors or mental events in the ...

(Tape 8)

...that is certainly the impression one gets reading certain Theravada works on the subject. But one must remember that for instance to begin with in all states of consciousness there are certain factors present, certain mental events, which you should know from your study of *Mind In Buddhist Psychology*, that are present in *all* states of consciousness. And then in addition to those you have those psychological factors, those mental events which are present in all *skilful* states of consciousness, including dhyanic states which are pre-eminently skilful. Then of course you have those factors which are distinctive to the dhyanas. So you have got to combine all these for a total picture and it may be that in your experience of the dhyanas that you do have some of the more, let us say, general factors or mental events present in the dhyanas are prominent. Do you see what I mean?

(**Ratnaguna:** Yes)

So one mustn't think that that traditional psychological analysis of the dhyanas gives the whole picture, it doesn't by any means. Though sometimes one is given the impression that that *is* the whole picture, there is nothing but those particular mental factors present and therefore one can't draw much of a comparison with one's own experience. Those particular factors are *distinctive* of dhyana but they are not the *only* mental factors or mental events by any means.

Ratnaguna: I was aware that in the dhyanas there were more characteristics but I was thinking more in terms of... well my own experience is that I do have experiences of rapture and bliss without all that much concentration. So [127] I was thinking more in terms of the positive nidanas, which start off with joy, rapture,

bliss and so on. And only on the seventh you get samadhi.

S: Again that is misleading, you mustn't take that literally. It is not that there is no samadhi at all present until you get to that particular point. There is a *degree* of samadhi, a *degree* of concentration all the time, but it's intensifying all the time and it is only when you come to the link which is entitled samadhi that it becomes very very strong indeed. But samadhi in the sense of mental concentration is present all the way along. But when you experience intense priti, well the element of samadhi in the sense of mental one-pointedness is greatly reduced because priti can be a very *disturbing* factor, and samadhi in the fuller sense is experienced only when the disturbing aspect of priti dies down, when that disturbing aspect, as I have called it, dies down then you are left with pure sukkha, pure bliss which can lead on to samadhi in a fuller sense, more directly and more easily.

Ratnaguna: There is a different sort of emphasis, isn't there, in the two systems, a different flavour.

S: That is true, yes. So one must try to see from one's own experience what that is and understand what common factors there are. Because both the dhyanas and the Brahma Viharas represent *heightened* states of consciousness, states of consciousness which one doesn't normally experience. Or even intensifications of things which one does normally experience in a very limited degree, or to a very limited extent.

Tejananda: This is number seven from Prakasha on gaining access to the formless dhyanas.

Prakasha: I have actually got two questions. The first is:-

In the rupadhyanas there is a progressive unfoldment of one's being and a continuous process of a deepening of concentration. How does one enter into and pass through the arupadhyanas? Is it by the continuation of this process of the deepening of concentration, or since you mention reflection is a conceptual element involved?

S: Actually there are several procedures, I won't say very much about them because for most people it's very academic, but the main point is that you enter upon the first of the four arupadhyanas by distancing yourself from the last of the *rupadhyanas*. You try to see it objectively, to as it were disengage yourself from it and look at it in an objective sort of way. Then you, as it were, expand that feeling of distance. That is all perhaps that one can really say in a general kind of way. If you are fully absorbed in the fourth dhyana it is a very, as it were, transporting experience, a very overwhelming experience. You become, as it were, totally identified with it. It sort of takes of *possession* of you, and you *cling* to it even. But the first thing that you must do if you want to enter upon the first of the arupadhyanas is to actually detach yourself from it, to consider its faults. For instance to tell yourself that it has arisen in dependence on causes and conditions, it is transitory, it will pass away when those causes and [128] conditions are

removed, therefore one should not be attached to it. You have achieved it, yes, very well, but it is not much of an attainment after all.

Obviously you can't afford to think in that sort of way until you have actually got there, but one starts sitting loose to the experience and not allowing it to occupy the whole of one's perspective. You start looking beyond it, you start, as it were expanding, and in that way you can enter upon the dhyana of infinite space.

Prakasha: Is there a discursive element there or is it the bringing of awareness to one's own experience?

S: Well obviously one must speak in terms of a bringing of awareness but it might be difficult to disengage that awareness from the conceptual activity, which would mean that you would come down, so to speak, to the first dhyana and perhaps were reflecting upon the inadequacies of the fourth dhyana from that level, so that next time you got to the fourth dhyana there would perhaps be less of a temptation to identify your self or over-identify yourself with it. But perhaps one best not linger on the subject in view of the difficulty that *most* people experience getting into and staying in the first one, two, three dhyanas.

While I'm mentioning it, sometimes beginners have a quite extensive experience of meditation, even an experience of the dhyanas and it may be sometimes sparked off by their enthusiasm having newly come upon the Movement and maybe by their relative freedom from responsibility in the case of Friends. So it does occur to me that perhaps if one is having difficulty experiencing dhyanas one might in some cases have lost one's inspiration, as it were, for the time being and one would need to refresh that in some way. Lost your enthusiasm, let us say, for the Movement, for the spiritual life and you would need to find some way of regaining that. You'd lost, perhaps, your beginner's mind. You have got used to everything, everything has become a bit of a routine, you have been around a long time, everything has lost its freshness. One has to be able to see it all again with new eyes.

You have called the rupaloka the realm of archetypal form, you have also correlated the imaginal with prajna; besides the traditional exposition of these two would you like to see dhyana and prajna represented in these terms? Would you like to explain archetypal form as a term for the rupaloka?

S: I think archetypal realm is a useful term for the rupaloka. I have no particular preferences. I'm just concerned with communication, I just want to make things clear to people, and I will use whatever form of words that helps one to do that. I have no particular terminological axe to grind, I hope. Some terms seem more suitable than others and some catch on, others don't catch on. Some terms seem more illuminating than others. The realm of archetypal forms or even archetypal images does seem quite suggestive and, up to a point, quite adequate. It would certainly mean more to the average person in this country say that the rupaloka, or world of form. Form isn't adequate at all because this world, the kamaloka is also a world of form, so what is the difference? You have to introduce some kind of

differentiating factor, and therefore say *archetypal* form. At least it will convey [129] something and suggest that there is a difference. The realm of archetypal images will, I think, do much the same thing, especially for someone with, say, a Jungian kind of orientation. So if one finds that these terms are appropriate, or appropriate in the sense that people do respond to them and they do convey *something*, at least, to people of what you are talking about, use them by all means; until such time as perhaps we can find even more suitable, more adequate terms.

Tejananda: A question now from Kulamitra on the sphere of infinite consciousness.

Kulamitra: Actually it's already been answered.

Tejananda: Okay, we pass onto prajna then, with a question from Ratnaprabha on the Prajnaparamita Hridaya mantra.

This is about the mantra at the end of the Heart Sutra. You go through explaining, or interpreting this mantra slightly differently in the lecture on the Heart sutra from the way you do in the lecture we have been listening to. I just wondered whether your explanations are from a traditional source so that we can go back to that and check it.

S: They *are* from a traditional source or sources but I can't recollect from where. I think almost certainly they are from Tibetan sources and contemporary Tibetan sources. Obviously they can't be from something that has been published since. It may be something I heard in Kalimpong, possibly from Dhardo Rimpoche, I don't have any distinct recollection. One would also have to look at the two interpretations and to see whether they were alternative interpretations in the sort of Augustinian sense of 'the more interpretations the better', or whether actually one is preferable to the other.

Ratnaprabha: Would it be worthwhile my reading out the two interpretations?
(**S:** Can do.) This is the one from the Heart Sutra lecture:

The Mantra being Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha. The first Gate, according to this lecture refers to being gone from the conditioned, from the phenomenal world. The second Gate gone even from the unconditioned, from dualism, and from the concept of Enlightenment (S: Right) And you make a remark that one should overcome god as well as Satan. Then the Paragate, gone beyond all distinctions whatsoever. Parasamgate, gone beyond even sunyata as a concept.

S: One could regard that as duplicating a previous stage, couldn't one. Going beyond the concept of sunyata as opposed to non-sunyata and therefore going beyond duality which has already been covered.

Ratnaprabha:

Then Bodhi! (exclamation mark) just meaning Enlightenment! (exclamation mark) which comes after going beyond sunyata.

S: Yes, that is you just can't say anything.

Ratnaprabha: *Then Svaha, all is well, there is nothing more, complete auspiciousness. [130]*

In the lecture you bracket the first two Gates and say they both refer to the first level of sunyata, that is the emptiness of the conditioned.

S: I'm not sure why I did that, I can't remember, but it does occur to me that one could speak of the first Gate as going from the unskilful conditioned to the skilful conditioned, do you see what I mean? Or even from suffering to happiness, as conditioned from such-and-such conditions, say in heaven.

It seems that the discrepancies don't amount to much, the general principle is clear. It just depends how many stages of progression you decide to have and then in accordance with that you have to correlate them with the syllables of the mantra. Do you see what I mean? I would say the fuller the series the better, so perhaps it *would* be best to start off with the painfulness of the conditioned progressing to the pleasurable conditioned and that would enable one to do away with that separate stage of realization of the non-duality of sunyata which seems really to be covered. That is actually a more unified list, a more unified interpretation. The general principle is in both cases quite clear, I think.

So you go forth from suffering to conditioned happiness, and you go forth from *everything* conditioned to the Unconditioned and you go forth from the very distinction between conditioned and Unconditioned. Then you go forth to the non-dual reality, you go forth to that which can't be expressed at all except by the exclamation *Bodhi!* and after that all is well. There's a continual going and a going forth. You could even correlate them with the levels of Going for Refuge, couldn't you. That's a fine subject for a lecture for somebody. Because for every stage of going forth there is a corresponding degree of wisdom or understanding, whether Transcendental or otherwise. I will leave some of you to work all that out for yourselves, I mustn't do *all* the work for you!

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaguna on dharanis and mantras.

In Philip Kapleau's translation of the Heart Sutra he uses the word dharani for the Gate Gate mantra. Is this justified and is there a difference between a mantra and a dharani?

S: There is technically speaking. A dharani literally means something to be born in mind. A dharani is much longer, usually, than a mantra and represents an earlier stage of development, one might say, of the mantra itself. Dharanis are not usually used as invocations or for purposes of concentration in the way that a mantra is. One could only say that dharanis are more like magical formulae for protection

and things like that, or to protect a particular sutra. So yes, there is a distinction though it isn't always very clear cut.

In the case of the Gate Gate one could regard it either as a mantra or as a dharani because it is of moderate length. But usually when a formula of that sort comes at the end of a sutra I think it would be more usual to call it a dharani. So I think on balance it probably is more correct to speak of it as a dharani than as a mantra. But inasmuch as it is short and it is much recited it isn't really incorrect to speak of it as a mantra either. So yes I [131] think on the whole Philip Kapleau is correct but not so correct that you should all stop calling it a mantra and start calling it a dharani.

Ratnaguna: Because, Bhante, the actual Sanskrit text doesn't refer to it as a dharani does it?

S: It does speak of it as a mantra, but again it does use the mantra in the full, as it were, Vajrayanic sense. A mantra in a broader sense means any sort of powerful, forceful utterance. For instance in Hinduism all the verses of the Vedas, where they are in verse, are called mantras. Mantra comes from a verb meaning to call, to invoke. So the verses of the Rig Veda, the hymns as we call of them, of the Rig Veda are called mantras because they call upon or invoke various gods and goddesses. So I think in the Heart Sutra mantra, or Mahamantra is used more in a general non-technical sense. In modern India, say speaking in Hindi, mantra is often used in sense of a slogan. For instance a politician may say that Mahatma Gandhi gave the mantra of freedom to the whole nation. Do you see what I mean?

Tejananda: This is the last one, from Kulamitra on the visualization of the five Jinas.

I just wondered, is there a visualization practice concerned only with the visualization of the whole mandala of the five Jinas?

S: There are such practices, there are such texts, I don't know of any that have been translated into English, but they do exist in Tibetan. They belong mainly, to the best of my knowledge, to the Yoga Tantra. One also finds them in the Tibetan Tantric tradition, known as the Shingon school. But I think this material isn't as yet available in English, to the best of my knowledge, though so much is being translated nowadays that one can't be quite sure. It would seem to be me a very good thing if we did have the text detailing the sadhana of the five Buddhas. It's as though the Tibetans have been in such a great hurry to get onto the more esoteric stuff that they have rather neglected all that. There are two main sources in the sutras, or works which are half sutras and half Tantras, the *MahaVairocana Sutra* and the *Vajrasecara Sutra*, I have a little bit to say about these in the Eternal Legacy. These of course are well known and studied and practised in Japan where they are regarded, I think as Tantras. The Shingon school is based mainly on them.

But, yes, this is one of the things I would like to see develop; a meditation or a visualization of the five Jinas, I think it would definitely be a very useful and

inspiring practice. And it could also be done as a vipassana-type practice because one could reflect on the particular wisdoms, the jnanas of which those five Jinas were the embodiments. And it would be a comparatively simple practice, because those five figures, differing only in colour and mudra and symbol or implement.

Kulamitra: Maybe Kuladeva could translate one of them. [132]

S: That is not beyond the bounds of possibility now. Or if not now a little in the future, he did tell me that by the end of the year he would be able to start reading the Songs of Milarepa. It's on their curriculum, their programme of studies. They have got to be reading the Songs of Milarepa by the end of the year. And I am sure his tutors would be willing to help him - he seems on good terms with them.

Dharmapriya: I know that the Order Members of Arya Maitreya Mandala have a mandala of the five Jinas which they will not release outside the Order, though I don't know if they use that - they probably use it for meditation practice. They seem to emphasize that mandala very, very much.

S: Is that the lot then (**Tejananda:** It is) we seem to have covered quite a bit of ground this evening. Right, let's leave it there.

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Seven: The Bodhisattva Hierarchy

Tejananda: Tonight, Bhante, we have got thirteen questions on the Bodhisattva Hierarchy, beginning with one from Ratnaprabha on the four-fold division of Bodhisattvas which you mention in the lecture.

What is the source, the textual source, of the four kinds of Bodhisattvas; the novice Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of the path, the irreversible Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya?

S: These four kinds of Bodhisattvas are mentioned in various sources, one could say mentioned in the Mahayana sutras, but to the best of my recollection they are not enumerated as four in this way. Texts certainly speak of novice Bodhisattvas, they speak of irreversible Bodhisattvas, they speak of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya. I believe they speak of Bodhisattvas of the path, but they certainly describe Bodhisattvas of the path in the sense of Bodhisattvas who are progressing through those first six or seven stages. So even if those four are not enumerated as a set they are clearly discernible in the texts themselves. I must say it's so many years since I concerned myself to any extent with this material that I can't give you any references at the moment.

Tejananda: Secondly a question from Prakasha on the study of Sutras.

Prakasha: There are two parts to this question.

You mentioned that it is a good practice to write down and illumine texts as a spiritual practice - you mentioned the medieval manuscripts. Also to learn texts by heart. Would you comment on your experience of this?

S: I must confess I haven't done much in the way of copying out texts. I did once copy out a whole text which I still have, it wasn't a sutra it was a shastra, it was *The Awakening of Faith* and I copied it not so much for devotional reasons, though that was a factor, as because [133] that was my only way of obtaining a copy for myself. It was, I believe in any case out of print. I copied it when I was in South India, I still have that copy. I have copied *passages* from time to time but I haven't copied out whole texts in book form, or in the form in booklets, much less still, I'm afraid, illuminated them, though it is something I would *like* to have done and which I feel quite attracted by. But I am afraid this is one of those cases where I

strongly recommend people to do things which I in fact have not been able to do myself. But no doubt that will be forgiven when it's remembered that one person can't do everything. So sometimes one is in the position of recommending things that one hasn't actually been able to do oneself, and this is one of them. Perhaps also I didn't have the artistic talents, or at least hadn't developed them or cultivated them, necessarily to do things like illumination.

I remember, this carries me back a bit, I remember in my *childhood* I did these things. I can remember - I have only just now thought of it - I remember copying and illuminating things. This must have been when I was very young indeed, because I was quite interested in painting, I can't remember what I illuminated, but I remember doing a sort of scroll, copying out something. I don't know how old I was, not more than ten or eleven at the most, possibly much younger than that. I remember copying out some kind of text and painting a sort of ornamental border and then I remember making a little leather case for it, I am sorry it was leather but I'm afraid I have to be honest, a round leather container and one could roll up this sheet into a scroll and then insert it into that container. I haven't actually thought about this for fifty years perhaps. I certainly didn't remember it when I was writing my memoirs, but the question does bring it back to me. I was quite interested. I don't know where I got it from. I begin to remember now, it did contain sort of figures of something like saints in the border, in little niches as it were. It was all in colours. I don't remember what the text was, whether it was prose or poetry or anything. Yes, I was interested in those things, but it is one of the things I was never able to develop, didn't have time to develop. It also involves learning calligraphy or at least having a very good handwriting and one does sometimes see in different alphabets really beautiful examples of calligraphy.

So I *would* like to see this. I would like to see quite large size puja books produced for use in the centres, in the shrine room. Nice large, bold calligraphy which was easy to read, that you didn't have to peer at, and something which was pleasing and even inspiring in appearance. One of the women Mitras, as she was then, did produce me a puja and ordination book which she had written out in calligraphy, one could say, with some little decorated capital letters and a few other little things in colours and in gold. It's a step in the right direction. I generally use that for ordination ceremonies, you must have seen it there. But I really would like to see things copied in this sort of way, texts. I think the puja book is an especially suitable thing to copy.

Perhaps those artists who are among us will take up this suggestion. But the calligraphy, just to mention that, must be very clear, must be very legible, one doesn't want the sort of calligraphy that one has to study and work out what the word actually is, or even the letter actually is, it must be clear, it must be immediately obvious, it must be very easy [134] to read.

Prakasha: The second part of the question.

The emphasis of the FWBO at present, in dharma study seems to be on scope and variety. As a move from the extensive to the intensive approach would you recommend sutra recitation retreats where a particular text was recited and learnt.?

S: When you say recited and learnt, do you mean learnt by heart and recited? (**Prakasha:** Yes) I wouldn't discourage *any* kind of retreat or any type of spiritual activity. If a group of people wanted to do this I would be all for it, very much so, but I would perhaps suggest that they would start off with a shorter text so that they didn't get, as it were, bogged down in a very long text and were unable to finish committing it to memory, and in that way become discouraged or lose interest. Perhaps start off with something relatively short, possibly in verse.

I didn't answer the previous question fully. I don't think I have ever set out to learn much by heart myself, again recommending something I haven't always done myself. I did, though, when I was quite young, commit a lot of English poetry to heart and later on of course I committed Pali verses to heart, I committed quite a few *Dhammapada* verses to heart in Pali. But I'm afraid I concentrated on reading things that I hadn't read before rather than on learning by heart things which I had *already* read, that I am afraid was my tendency. But I don't necessarily hold that up as an example to everybody. No doubt it would be good also to concentrate on certain texts, at least in the case of some people, including learning them by heart. One can then *reflect* on them at leisure, *wherever* you are, if you are on top of the proverbial bus, or on the tube, wherever, being just driven around, you can just mull over something that you know by heart and reflect upon it. I certainly have found this to be the case with poetry that I know by heart. I am particularly fond of reciting bits of Milton - John Milton the poet, not Blake's Milton - to myself sometimes. One can do this when one is perhaps laying awake at night, just mull over some lines that one knows by heart.

Later on of course I committed things like the Stuti Sadhana to memory but on the whole I have not committed very much to memory, not learned many texts by heart but I do regard it as a worthwhile practice, nonetheless and far from discouraging I will in fact encourage people to do this if they felt like doing it.

Tejananda: You said you learnt the stuti sadhana by heart, do you mean the whole stuti sadhana, not just the verses but the text?

S: Yes I did, I learned the whole thing by heart, it wasn't very long.

Tejananda: Would you recommend that as a practice especially for those that had it.

S: Yes indeed, in fact I ask them to learn it by heart. [135]

Tejananda: Kulamitra has a question on satsang

Is satsang a Buddhist as well as a Hindu term, traditionally?

S: It's a modern Hindu term, a comparatively modern Hindu term. I don't think you will find Buddhists anywhere using this term, it is certainly not used by Indian Buddhists in India, to the best of my knowledge. The only place it might possibly

be used is Nepal where they have a traditional Sanskrit Buddhism, but I can't remember actually hearing it there. I did hear Hindu terms like bhajan used among the Newari Buddhists so they may well also use the term satsang but I don't remember it; so it would be safer to say that it's definitely a Hindu rather than a Buddhist expression.

Kulamitra: Is there any direct equivalent in Buddhist tradition you can think of, or a word that would ...?

S: Well the nearest is Kalyana Mitrata.

Tejananda: The fourth question is from Ratnaprabha on the manifestation of Reality.

This question is about some of the things you say in the lecture towards the beginning about certain things such as Buddhas and people manifesting reality to a greater degree than others, such as rocks. Is this even true if we think quite independently of our actual spiritual requirements in having Reality communicated to us or communicating with Reality?

S: I wondered whether this sort of question would come up. What I thought was that one could, if one didn't want to use that rather imposing word 'Reality', one could speak in terms of life, without necessarily reifying the concept life. One could certainly speak of those forms of life which we regard as higher manifesting life to a greater extent than do those forms of life which we consider lower. I think some people, nowadays, in the name of what I call pseudo-egalitarianism might question your nomenclature. But they would have to admit the fact that there was a difference of degree between the so-called lower and the so-called higher forms of life, whatever the nomenclature that they chose to adopt might be, whether they spoke of more highly organized life or whatever. For instance, Herbert Spencer, to take the example of a non-idealist philosopher, spoke of evolution as a process of increasing complexification, as it were - I don't think he used that term, but that is what he meant. So that the more highly evolved organism is the more complex organism, man is more complex than the amoeba, he is even more complex than the elephant. So one could speak of that as a greater manifestation of life if one didn't want to speak in terms of a higher expression or clearer expression of Reality. But the overall meaning, the overall sense, the point that I am trying to make is nonetheless, I think, clear, even if one chooses to express it differently.

One could look at the whole question much more closely from a philosophical point of view, perhaps we need to do that, but I think we will end up, at least for popular purposes with much the same kind of language. I think that [136] is inevitable. There are people who would question, in the name of pseudo-egalitarianism, whether a human being *is* more developed or more advanced than a stone, or manifests Reality to a greater degree. But I have to say the absurdity of that position is self evident, I can't regard it as a position that is held really honestly.

Dharmapriya: In that you say that at some point someone will have to clarify this in more philosophic terms, or more philosophically, and that this in a sense is a popular exposition; does that mean that, say, sharp thinking philosophically trained students actually would attack or perhaps even shred the presentation that you have made, it being rather popular. Assuming they are *not* pseudo-egalitarians for the moment?

S: I don't think they would do that if they were really intelligent. Because they would realize that one was having to use popular language and that one wasn't using strict philosophical language and therefore it wouldn't be right, it wouldn't be fair to pick one up on that language without ascertaining what you really did believe and how one expressed oneself if one was to use, say, more philosophical language. Because it's very easy to pick even a professional philosopher up on a matter of language, because language has inherent limitations, one may say, especially language used literally rather than poetically.

I'm thinking of questions like, one speaks of manifestation, what does one *mean* by manifestation, what does one mean by saying that one thing *manifests* something else? I mentioned a sort of reification of concept was involved, but that in way is indispensable. For instance, 'why does the apple fall?' Well it's on account of the law of gravitation, well you have reified something called gravitation which is not *really* separable except in thought from the act of the apple falling, from the falling of things in general. One could even also ask, 'what does one mean by *falling*?' Do you see what I mean? So one would need, perhaps to clarify those sort of issues, and perhaps reformulate one's position more precisely at least for the benefit of those who were more disciplined in their thinking and clearer in their thinking; or perhaps more *prosaic* in their thinking.

But I think, when one speaks of something manifesting something else to a greater or lesser degree it is generally understood what one means. For instance, supposing you say that Shakespeare manifests a more lyrical genius than does Mahler, well it's understood what one means. One can, perhaps, rephrase it differently, not using that sort of language, but the broad meaning remains the same.

Ratnaprabha: The reason I phrased my question in terms of one's contact with Reality, or communication with Reality, was that I was wondering if one needs to implicitly have the idea of Reality manifesting *to* somebody, if you see what I mean. So that the degrees of manifestation are to do with how easy one finds it to contact Reality through these different forms.

S: Do I speak of Reality manifesting itself or Reality manifesting to? [137]

Ratnaprabha: No, you simply speak of these different objects manifesting Reality to different degrees.

S: So what are you suggesting?

Ratnaprabha: Well, we are talking about, say a Buddha is able to manifest Reality to a completely unlimited degree to us or to any conscious being, while a rock being completely unaware is completely unable to manifest Reality.

S: No, not *completely* unable.

Ratnaprabha: Well, almost unable, relatively completely unable [Laughter] But just to speak in isolation of one thing manifesting Reality more than another thing I must say I can't understand what that would mean.

S: I am still not sure what point you are making, or what your question is.

Ratnaprabha: Well I was wondering if you have to bring in us, rather than just saying independently or objectively one thing manifests Reality more than another; that it manifests *to us*. A Buddha is better at manifesting Reality to us than a rock is but they are both equally real.

S: I think the expression you are using is ambiguous, because it can mean two things; whether we regard things in that way or that you are actually thinking in terms of say a Buddha, as it were deliberately manifesting Reality to us. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaprabha: No, I was thinking more of the former than the latter.

S: Well it's an example of a general way of thinking. I changed the term Reality, say, to life. So if one questions that sort of pattern of thinking one has to ask oneself therefore 'what does one mean by one thing manifesting another?' But that leads one into the realm of technical philosophy, which, yes, it might be well to explore, but however much one explored it, however one expressed oneself alternatively, in a more precise way; I don't think that would invalidate that general way of speaking in terms of something manifesting something else to a greater or lesser degree.

Ratnaprabha: I can understand it in *general* but I can't, maybe quite naturally, understand it in terms of Reality manifesting to greater or lesser degrees.

S: I am still not quite clear what the question is. Why there should be a special difficulty in the case of Reality.

Ratnaprabha: It seems to me that any element of Reality is no more real than any other element of Reality in itself. This may be an error.

S: Ah, but this goes back to something else I said in the lecture about the direct relation and an indirect relation. And this is all part of, or from the point of view of the *indirect* relation to Reality. In addition to [138] which there is a direct relation to Reality. Because in a sense other than that of pseudo-egalitarianism, all things are the same, but not to confound their different degrees of manifestation. In one

sense you might say if you like on the relative plane, yes, there are these different degrees of manifestation, they manifest Reality to differing extents, but in another sense, if you like, from the point of view of absolute Reality, there is no difference between them at all. Not that they all manifest equally but that there's no question of manifestation, that they are all equally that, they are all equally sunyata, if you like. Because you need a third point of view, in a way, to reconcile or to embrace these two different points of view.

It is the same difficulty that you have with the question of the relative Bodhichitta and the absolute Bodhichitta. But I doubt whether you could reformulate things at the same time more precisely from a philosophical point of view and at the same time also in a way that was generally understandable. So yes, in a sense Reality manifests, in another sense it doesn't, in a sense say if there is *only* Reality there is nothing separate from itself, so to speak, for it to manifest through. But again we have to do some sort of justice to both sides of the question, both aspects of, so to speak Reality, the relative and the absolute.

Does that go some way to clearing it up or not?

Ratnaprabha: I think I shall have just to let it sink in a bit better.

S: Perhaps you should write something about it, or explore it in writing.

All right let's leave it and let it sink in.

Tejananda: The fifth question is from Ratnaguna on approaches to Kalyana Mitrata.

I have got quite a long preamble to this question.

Our study group had a discussion on the distinction between the idea of 'the Bearer of the Archetype' on the one hand and 'the Exemplar of the Ideal' on the other; two concepts which we discussed with you on a previous seminar. Let me just check with you whether I have understood these terms correctly before proceeding.

The Bearer of the Archetype is someone who represents a spiritual ideal without necessarily embodying that ideal. (**S:** Yes) whereas the Exemplar of the Ideal actually embodies an ideal by having certain spiritual qualities or having attained a certain degree of Transcendental Wisdom, he *is* the ideal rather than represents it.

S: I think that is; to the best of my recollection this is in substance what I said.

Ratnaguna: So the question is:

Should an Order Member allow or even encourage people to see

him as a Bearer of the Archetype? That is allow or encourage people to imagine that he has certain spiritual qualities which in fact he does not possess, or should he discourage that? And I'm thinking more in terms of Kalyana Mitrata among Order Members on the [139] one hand and Order Members and Mitras on the other

S: Putting the question in that way I can't see how anybody could possibly encourage somebody else to think or to imagine that they possessed qualities that they didn't have.

Ratnaguna: Even allow, you used the word encouraged.

S: Well that depends. Not in the long run. There is also a question of tact and skilful means. Someone might have projected onto you quite heavily, quite massively. It isn't a skilful thing to do to immediately disclaim those qualities which he has projected onto you, because that *might* cause him or her to go to the opposite extreme and begin to doubt the possibility of anybody developing those qualities; do you see what I mean? But nonetheless you need to take steps to make it clear to that person that you don't in fact have those qualities, however highly you may value them and however much you may be striving to develop them. But you have got to go about it quite carefully. You don't want to disillusion that person about the spiritual life itself. It's not an easy course to take. You want to be honest, you want to have an honest communication with that person but on the other hand you don't want to rob him of what he sees as his ideals and his inspiration all at once.

Ratnaguna: There was an idea in the group of what is called positive projection, where you use somebody's projection in a skilful way so that they are somehow brought up to that ideal themselves.

S: Sometimes people can see you in a very positive light without necessarily, in so many words, attributing to you qualities that you don't possess. I think positive projection is more like that. They may not think in terms of your being the wisest and the greatest and so on, but they nevertheless see you as someone quite wonderful. In a way they don't care much whether you possess certain qualities or not, they just like you so much and think so highly of you anyway. But that is a rather different kind of thing. So perhaps it isn't quite easy to distinguish it from seeing someone as the bearer of the archetype.

For a lot of people it seems that Rajneesh is the bearer of the archetype, and he seems to encourage people to regard him in this way, judging by some of the things that he has written, which I have read; I don't think this is very wise or desirable from the purely spiritual point of view. It is also not a bad thing if people to some extent see you as you are ideally rather than as you actually are, though perhaps that isn't putting it in the best way. For instance in the case of a Mitra, well he sees you as an Order Member. So he knows, usually, that you are not perfect, but you *are* an Order Member, that definitely means something, you have *committed* yourself to something, however imperfectly you are fulfilling that commitment. So to the extent that you are committed and he isn't, though he's

fully aware of your shortcomings he does look up to you. This is not idealizing you. Do you see what I mean; it is recognizing your commitment despite the fact that you have many shortcomings which he may well see, and he sees you in a highly positive light because he sees your commitment, or sees it to some extent. So I [140] think seeing you in this way is highly positive, is *not* projective, but as it were seeing you at your best. This is what I meant seeing you in an ideal sort of way, not in an unreal way but seeing you in the light of what is best *in* you.

In fact one should try to see people in this way generally, not see them in the light of their imperfections as though the imperfections were the most important thing about them. I think nowadays people so often have a cynical attitude towards other people that it would be a pity not to encourage people to see one another, not just you as an Order Member but one another, everybody, in terms of what is best in them rather than in terms of what is worst and weakest. So this is not a matter of projection. In some ways you are being very, very objective. Unfortunately nowadays in the world it seems - well in the West anyway, or many parts of the West - people think they are being all the more objective if they are being very critical and trying to denigrate or pull down the other person. This is a really cynical attitude, quite an unskilful, quite negative attitude.

For instance, this is a bit of a side issue, but it's illustrative. Critics have drawn attention to the Homeric epithets, I am not going as much off the track as it might seem. For instance Homer has certain standard or stock epithets which he applies to certain things and people. For instance a hero; he will always describe the hero as the brave so-and-so, *even* when he is behaving in a cowardly way. Because essentially, as it were, he *is* brave, he normally *is* brave, he isn't usually cowardly. When he is behaving in a cowardly way that is quite exceptional. On the whole he *is* a brave man so even when Homer describes him as performing a cowardly action he says, 'the brave so-and-so fled from the rabble'. But the fact that he fled on that occasion doesn't undo the fact that he is one might say, on the whole, or ideally if you like, a brave man. So this is said to be very characteristic of style of Homer - he sees things in this ideal way. He doesn't gloss over the cowardly action, he describes it, but he doesn't lose sight of the fact that despite that cowardly action that man is in fact on the whole a brave man.

So in the same way, however badly an Order Member may behave he is still committed and however much one may deplore that he uses certain unskilful actions and certain weaknesses one must nonetheless give full weight to the fact that that person *nonetheless* is a committed person, and see him and his life and everything he does in the light of that basic commitment which he has. So in the same way we can look at people in general, even including people who are *not* spiritually committed. At least they are human beings. The fact that they are human beings means that certain qualities are there, however bad they may be in certain respects. However many crimes they committed there is still something there which Christians, for instance, call the image of God, you can say the reflection of Enlightenment, or even the Buddha nature; though that can lead to misunderstandings. But you try to see what they in a sense really are, though I don't really like that sort of phrase, despite at least some of the things that they do. You look to what is still best in them, however obscured, and however distorted and you never lose sight of that.

So I think Mitras can be encouraged to see Order Members [141] in this way. Not that you *assert* your commitment and say, 'well I am committed so everything I say is OK, you have to agree with me or accept what I say, I am the committed person', that doesn't necessarily follow. It *is* true that you are committed but that does *not* mean that you are always right, you may be wrong. But even when you are wrong you are *still* committed and that should still be recognized. Am I making it clear? (**Voices:** Yes)

Kulamitra: In a way that seems diametrically opposed to projection. Because I think in projection, say to use the thing of bravery and cowardice, if you project onto someone that they are brave and you *once* see them do a cowardly action then it breaks the projection and you then go to the other extreme, you identify them as they have failed you, they have disappointed you and they are totally a coward. So it seems quite the opposite of what you described really.

S: Yes, that's true. Though maybe the use of the term projection and positive projection is a bit unfortunate, but yes it certainly isn't projection in, as it were, that sense, but rather, not just seeing say the Order Member in the case of Order Members in terms of his basic fundamental commitment but seeing him as representing not just what you can become but as even representing higher states and higher stages of the path in general. But not making him the bearer of the archetype, because in that case that seems almost purely projective; you have got this very abstract, highly coloured idea of something or other, something spiritual, some spiritual ideal and you project it onto this other person without any reference at all to his actual attainments and qualities.

Clearly it is not easy, always, to divide the one from the other, one merges sometimes in the other. I think it's clear what you are trying to achieve in this respect with a Mitra, what sort of attitude you are trying to encourage in the Mitra. You shouldn't say to Mitras 'Oh I am just an ordinary bloke like you', sort of thing - no this is completely false or should be false because you are committed and that does make a tremendous difference, *whatever* your personal weaknesses or imperfections may be. In certain areas you may be no better than that particular Mitra, in fact in certain areas you may be *worse*, but nonetheless you are committed and he isn't and that makes a very, very big difference.

Ratnaguna: I suppose if you don't have a very good opinion of yourself, if you don't see yourself at your best and the Mitra does you might think that they are projecting onto you qualities which you don't have.

S: That is true. The Mitra in some ways may see you more truly than you see yourself. So this means that you must realize the tremendous importance of the fact that you've committed yourself, and in a positive sense this sets you apart - one can even go so far as to say that.

In the case of the Bodhisattva, taking the Bodhisattva as the Mahayana counterpart or Mahayana example of the committed person, many texts as far as I remember, make the point that there is a tremendous difference between one who

is a Bodhisattva and one who is not a Bodhisattva; a tremendous difference between a Bodhisattva and even one highly advanced on the Hinayana path. And the advantage is all on [142] the side of the Bodhisattva even though he may be still subject to the passions.

Chakkhupala: In the context of the discussion I actually coined the expression positive projection. I think what I had in mind was, I remember from my own experience first contacting a Centre, I didn't really have much idea of what spiritual qualities were, I saw people wearing kesas and did actually project certain things, out of ignorance really. But I developed without any basis, without knowing the people, certain impressions of what they were, what they represented, and then as I got to know them that element wasn't in any sense diminished even though I might slowly come to realize that they had frailties and weaknesses in certain ways; so I think that it was in that sense that I saw it as a positive projection.

S: Yes, it's not that you first project all sorts of positive qualities and then you are disillusioned and you see that those positive qualities aren't there. You see that it is actually possible for those same positive qualities to co-exist with weaknesses and imperfections and you have a more total, a more rounded, picture of the person concerned. And you don't undervalue the positive qualities, you don't undervalue their commitment in the case of Order Members, on account of the weaknesses and imperfections they obviously also possess.

I *think* it's Nietzsche who says that one's God is not permitted to do wrong. In other words what *you* think is wrong! God must be good in your sense of the term, he must behave himself, he must be a good God, not a naughty God, otherwise you won't worship him any more. He must be good on *your* terms. [Laughter] And the same with spiritual friends and teachers and gurus and so on, they have got to toe *your* line.

Ratnaguna: On a slightly separate point. I was wondering how open one should be with Mitras?

S: What do you *mean* by open?

Ratnaguna: Honest about oneself.

S: What do you mean by *honest*? Is it always possible in the strict sense to tell something? What is communication? Supposing a particular Mitra thinks the world of you, he thinks you are just it, he thinks you are perfect; all right, suppose you say 'look, I am very sorry but I have got such and such weakness'. Actually you will not have told him in effect that you have got that particular weakness, he won't hear it in that way, or take it in that way if he is projecting heavily onto you. He will take it as meaning that there is nothing good in you at all, that you are telling him not simply that you have got a particular weakness but that he was *totally mistaken* so far as you were concerned. So that was not what you meant to say, so you have not communicated what you intended to say. You must bear in mind how he is going to take, as far as you can see, what you tell him. So it's not a form

of words that is required, you have got to bear in mind that the meaning of what you say will have for him a connotation which *greatly* exceeds the denotation [143] of what you said, which is all, presumably, that you wanted to convey. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaguna: Yes. You've used quite extreme examples. What about, I was thinking more in terms of if you are in a community with a few Mitras. I just assumed that one should be fairly open with them, because you are living with them.

(Tape 9)

S: I think if you are living in a community with Mitras I don't think you have any alternative but to be open with them. I think they are going to find you out sooner or later anyway. Even Mitras are not fools! For instance if you are a secret drinker, they will find out sooner or later, if you have got a girlfriend that you are keeping quiet about, they'll find out about it sooner or later. So I think you don't have any choice except to be open if you are *living* with them. If you weren't living with them it *might* be a different matter, but I think even then they will find out sooner or later. But even so, you must make sure that they understand what they see of you through your openness and see it in proper perspective and that they *are* aware, for instance, that you are committed - that should be obvious through your behaviour but perhaps sometimes it isn't or perhaps the context is too limited to allow it to manifest very much. But they must be left in no doubt that there is perhaps something that they can't see fully, which we term commitment. You don't want to labour the point or insist on it too much but they ought to be able to recognize this.

Devamitra: Do you think then that under those circumstances you should be as open with Mitras you are living with as you would normally be expected to be with members of your own Chapter? For instance there may be particular transgressions, one off things, that you commit which you feel appropriate to confess before your fellow Order Members but do you think that there might be occasions when that might not be appropriate to be *that* open with the Mitras of your community?

S: Well again there are Mitras and Mitras, there are very new Mitras and there are old and experienced Mitras who may be good friends of yours. But clearly you will find it more easy to confess to, say, fellow members of your chapter and they will understand your confession better. But if you are *living* with Mitras I don't see how you can really conceal something, just from a practical point of view. Sooner or later they are going to get wind of it, so sooner or later, perhaps not so quickly as you communicate it to the fellow members of your chapter, I think you should probably get around to at least giving them some *hint* about it. With fellow members of the chapter you can go into, why did I do it, what led me to do it and how can I make sure that I don't do that sort of thing again. You don't need perhaps to go into it in that sort of way with Mitras. But if you are living with them I think you are going to find it difficult to avoid at least giving them some idea of what has happened, at least a hint. So you are open to them to the extent that it is

possible.

And again, as I said, there are Mitras and Mitras, some you can take more into confidence than others. [144]

Dharmapriya: It seems to me that one can almost draw a corollary in the case of negative projection onto one as an Order Member. A concrete case in my experience where I don't think it was because my commitment was totally invisible, but I get the feeling that they decided that there was no difference. And remarks reveal this all the time.

S: Well there may be strong ideological assumptions of the pseudo-liberal type which are quite difficult to get over.

Dharmapriya: The feeling I had was that there was similarly no point in trying to say that one oneself feels a difference, or anything like that. That would communicate nothing to the person.

S: Right, yes. I think that's a quite unfortunate position. I think people put themselves in a very unfortunate position when they adopt that attitude. It does mean that genuine communication between you is really out of the question, because they refuse to see you as you are. Or perhaps, to recognize even in theory that there might be something in you that they can't see or that they can't recognize or that they don't have themselves.

They are seeing you through their ideological spectacles. Maybe you just symbolize something for them, they don't see *you*. I don't think that someone who had that attitude could possibly be accepted as a Mitra, because how can they understand what it means to be a Mitra if they don't have some glimmering of an idea of what it means to be an Order Member. How can they be a Mitra if they don't understand at least to some extent the difference between a Mitra and an Order Member? Because they couldn't become a Mitra without understanding the difference between being a *Friend* and being a Mitra. So in principle that is similar to the difference between being an Order Member and being a Mitra. Do you see what I mean?

Dharmapriya: Yes. In one extreme case I was thinking of it is almost as if not only does he not see me, in this one instance, or other people, it is as if he is looking into a mirror and what he sees back is the qualities of himself that he doesn't like in a very very extreme form, coming out in his statements. I don't know if that reveals anything else, I haven't managed to work anything out with him.

S: Well if this is someone in Germany I think in the early days of the Movement there one is to steer a bit clear of such people. On the principle of it's the strongest who most need help, and one has to build up a nucleus and one isn't going to be able to do it at least for some years perhaps, with people of that sort. One's energy perhaps in the circumstances is better invested in more promising people.

And of course, as I said, an Order Member shouldn't indulge in such language as 'of course I'm no better than you are', or 'of course even though I'm an Order Member I'm just the same as you are really, I have got all the same sort of weaknesses', without mentioning the great differentiating factor of commitment. An Order Member shouldn't grovel in that sort of way, should be proud of being an Order Member, proud in the positive Tantric sense. And something of that should [145] communicate. Not in an aggressive arrogant way but in a way for which we don't seem to have a proper word in English, a *positive* way. Don't be apologetic. That's the opposite extreme to being arrogant.

I think in the Movement generally there is a recognition that Order Members are different from Mitras. Not that Mitras usually have many misunderstandings about Order Members, they usually see them pretty clearly in an ordinary sort of way. But nonetheless on the whole they do recognize that they are a bit different, and this is in fact as it should be.

Anyway, does that deal with all your points? (**Ratnaguna:** Yes) Just one little rider, male Order Members must be especially careful of projections coming from female Mitras. They can look up at you all starry eyed in a very special sort of way that you don't even get from men Mitras. Be very careful of that. I need say no more I think.

Tejananda: Another question from Ratnaprabha now on devas of the path.

Could you explain what the differences or similarities are between Bodhisattvas of the path, devas of the path and devas of the realm?

S: I am not sure that I have used the expression devas of the path. The Tibetans of course have this word lha which translates the word deva. They use it rather ambiguously, though even deva is used a little ambiguously in Pali. For instance in Pali, I have mentioned before, there are three kinds of devas, samutti devas, upapatti devas and visuddhi devas, I have mentioned this, haven't I? It is a classification not found in the sutras but found in the later literature. Yes, I have mentioned it but you probably haven't listened to that particular tape.

Samutti devas are for instance kings. In the Pali scriptures you will notice that kings are addressed not as your majesty which is how it is translated usually, but deva, divine one you could say, or your *sacred* majesty even, which was once used in England for the king. So deva in that sense of samutti deva are conventional gods or gods by convention; very powerful people on earth, human beings. And then upapattika devas are devas in the mythological sense, Upapattika meaning those who are spontaneously born who spontaneously appear in the Buddhist heavenly realms. Then visuddhi devas, pure devas, that is to say the aryas. So one gets that classification in Pali.

The Tibetans speak of lha - devas - in this sort of double sense, so when one translates this into English one speaks sometimes of the deities of the path corresponding to visuddhi devas in Pali, that is to say the stream entrants and so on and the Bodhisattvas; and one speaks of the gods of the round meaning the

upapattika devas of the Pali classification, in other words the gods of mythology.

So, one should be careful of the ambiguity which seems to be inherent in this word deva, or god, or lha.

Ratnaprabha: So the deities of the path are then, roughly speaking equivalent to the Bodhisattvas of the path, although covering a wider spectrum.

S: Yes, right. All those on the transcendental path, the [146] path being the transcendental path, whether one conceives of it in Hinayana or Mahayana or even Vajrayana terms. These are the deities of the path. Usually here in a Tibetan context presumably one thinks of the great Tantric divinities. Whereas the gods of the round are those gods, in the mythological sense, the gods of the various heavens all who are subject to karma, subject to the process of birth and death in accordance with their deeds.

Ratnaprabha: So it would be definitely incorrect to say that the deities of the path are beings in the devalokas who are on a spiritual path?

S: In a sense yes, but there is a coincidence, because you can get someone who is, so to speak - again there is an ambiguity here, a deva in the sense of an upapattika deva but who nonetheless possesses insight; the Anagami falls into this category. An Anagami is a deity of the path, to use the Tibetan terminology, at the same time he is a god in the mythological sense. That is why there is a certain ambiguity about what the suddha bhasas, these five pure abodes usually considered to be located at the summit of the world of form, actually are. Because they are 'inhabited' (single inverted commas) by these Anagamis. So clearly the ambiguity, or even the ambivalence is due to the fact that they are to be reckoned both as devas and as deities. Both as upapattika devas and visuddhi devas one might say. I don't know that this question has ever been properly discussed in the tradition. Maybe it has but I haven't come across any of it. What is *exactly* the status in this respect, this cosmological-cum-transcendental sense of the Anagamis. They occupy a definite realm, as I said, but clearly it is not a realm in the ordinary mythological sense, in the ordinary deva sense.

Of course there are references in, I believe, the Pali scriptures to gods of various kinds developing the dharma eye, so what is their position? In their case too it would seem that having been born in that way, as gods, having developed the dharma eye they become visuddhi devas and in their case too it would seem that the two categories overlap or coincide. That again, to the best of my knowledge, is not discussed.

Ratnaprabha: Why should the visuddhi devas be called devas at all?

S: I suppose because the term deva suggested something or someone great and superior, and the meaning was gradually differentiated in that sort of way. Rather like the term arya was, as in the case of the (*unclear*) arya. It had a biological, a racial and a spiritual significance; same with the term Arahant. Indeed these sort

of terms expressing general approbation or superiority come to be differentiated in different ways. Even the word Buddha can mean just a wise man as well as an Enlightened man in the full traditionally Buddhist sense. So deva too has these various levels of meaning, just as the term god does in English. We differentiate by using an initial capital in the case of *the* god. But we say, 'she makes a god of him', then we say, 'the gods of Greece', then we say 'the God of the Old Testament'. These are three different levels, as it [147] were. Or we even distinguish sometimes between the god of Jesus and the god of the Old Testament, again a difference of levels.

Tejananda: Just to clarify that Bhante, this means that visuddhi deva isn't necessarily equivalent to Anagamis, or that those in the pure abodes aren't...

S: Anagamis would be included, but the term visuddhi deva covers more than just Anagamis. Buddhas are visuddhi devas, all those who have attained the transcendental path, Anagamis are only one particular group of such people.

Tejananda: The next question is from Kulamitra on the altruistic element in Going for Refuge.

In the lecture Bodhisattva Ordination in the Western Buddhist Order is mentioned. Now we stress a single Going for Refuge (**S:** Right), so how can its altruistic aspects be made more explicit?

S: I touched a little upon this the other evening I think. I mentioned also the fact that in the ten precepts there was a definitely other regarding element, in fact quite obviously so. I think I have also mentioned, I think in *the Ten Pillars* itself, that the observance of the ten precepts is a necessary extension or prolongation of the act of Going for Refuge itself. So one might say that it is in those ten precepts at least to some extent that the altruistic implications of the Going for Refuge are brought out. I must also say that I think I haven't as yet fully spelled out the connection between the Going for Refuge and the observance of the ten precepts. I don't think I have fully and clearly spelled out as yet the exact way in *which* they are a continuation. I was asked a question about this on one of the Tuscanys, I think it was the one before last, and I gave a provisional answer but I didn't deal with it fully, I will probably have to do so sometime in a paper. I don't know whether anybody noticed this but the connection between the two or the way in which the Going for Refuge finds its extension or prolongation in the observance of the precepts hasn't been explained or worked out to my own satisfaction at least, there is quite a lot more needs to be said. But I think that even that isn't enough, it may therefore be necessary for us to introduce certain elements directly from the Mahayana and the Mahayana's presentation of the Bodhisattva Ideal. That is why I mentioned on another occasion that perhaps it would be a good idea to incorporate the Bodhisattva silas in the sevenfold puja from time to time. But again, something else that occurs to me, it is not just a matter of doing it with words, one can do it visually and we do have the thousand armed Avalokitesvara, and we think of the Order as embodying that; the Order is of course the spiritual community of all those who have Gone for Refuge. By means of that visual image the altruistic, the other regarding aspect of the Going for Refuge of the Order itself

is brought out very fully and clearly. So we mustn't fail to take that into consideration. But perhaps it needs to be spelled out more even verbally, yes. [148]

Kulamitra: That's the sort of feeling I had. I thought that it is obviously *implicit*, from things you already said but I am under the impression that perhaps sometimes people are ordained without actually *explicitly* understanding that and it may be taking quite some time afterwards for them to realize that.

S: In some ways it is not a bad thing, or at least not a negative thing. Because in a certain sense you have really to work on yourself quite a bit first before you can really and genuinely and usefully help others. So perhaps it isn't a bad thing that you come to realize the other-regarding aspects or implications of the spiritual life or of the Going for Refuge in particular at a slightly later stage. But certainly you shouldn't be completely unaware of them.

Kulamitra: I wondered, in the terms of the lecture you were talking about novice Bodhisattvas and I wondered whether effectively you would consider *all* Order Members to come under that sort of heading, not taking it too literally?

S: I would say even not taking it too literally, no, because they haven't even on that level explicitly made or given that sort of pledge. Do you see what I mean?
(**Kulamitra:** Yes)

Don't forget those last concluding words of the Ordination ceremony, 'for the benefit of all beings I accept this Ordination'. I included that quite deliberately, after all I did compose those verses. So it *is there*, the hint is given. And I suppose inasmuch as it comes last, that is the concluding emphasis. So perhaps more attention should be drawn to that, perhaps the elements are all there but we just have to highlight them more.

Kulamitra: Would you like to see us draw it out more? I mean over the years different aspects of Going for Refuge probably have been drawn out that weren't immediately apparent. Would you like to see us, say in these groups, making it more explicit that...

S: I think I would, because I think I see the world as being in a very bad way and as really needing the Dharma and I see it therefore as in a sense the duty, to use that unpopular term, of Order Members, those who are committed to the Three Jewels to spread the Dharma as much as they can for the benefit of all beings, or as many as they can possibly reach. So no Order Member should be left, or allow himself to be left with the impression that being an Order Member is just being committed to your own personal development in a fairly easygoing, cosy, comfortable sort of way, not giving yourself too difficult a time, a bit of meditation, a bit of study and a nice easy going life in the country preferably, maybe on the dole. Not exerting yourself too much and looking after yourself a bit spiritually, and not being too adventurous or doing too much for other people. One doesn't want to encourage *that* sort of picture of the Order Member at all. I think it is the picture

that a few people have; well I won't say they have it but traces of that picture are around in some people's minds, I sometimes think.

It's a bit like the old hippy picture of the ideal [149] spiritual life; you go off to Wales, you get your nice stone cottage and you have got own cow which you or your woman milks every day. Yes I noticed in these communes it was usually the women that did all the work and the men sat around talking about Reality [Laughter] and things like that. You know the sort of thing, or have heard about it at least.

Dharmapriya: Did you say have your own cow or woman? [Laughter]

S: No! I said *milk* your own cow, or then I corrected myself and said the woman goes and milks it you don't because you are the man, you are into the *spiritual* life, you sit around talking about Reality with your mates and the women get on with all the work, they do the cooking and cleaning and shopping and milking of cows and milking of goats and weaving cloth! [chuckling] I have seen this happening. I remember going to stay at one of these places which was run by someone called Peter Twilly, you probably haven't heard of him and certainly not met. He was very much like this, he had an utterly devoted wife called Kate and she did... [chuckling] he used to spend the day playing the piano and talking about Zen with anybody who came. Kate did all the work, she cultivated eleven acres of land, looked after the chickens and the goats, she made cheeses, she did whatever shopping was necessary, all the grain had to be pounded by hand in a stone mill; Kate did all that. She didn't like detergents to be used so she used to have to take all the washing, take it to a nearby stream and wash it all by hand and come staggering back with a bale of laundry while he was talking to visitors about Zen! [Laughter] This went on for some years until Kate rebelled, though it took her a long time to do it. Anyway a friend of mine went to see them once, an older woman who was sort of Buddhist, and she told me that while she was sitting there discussing Zen with Peter, that is Peter was talking about Zen, in came Kate staggering under a great load of washing which she had just done at the local stream and he sort of stroked his chin very thoughtfully and said 'I think I'll have to get Kate a mangle.' [Laughter] This friend of mine said she felt like hitting him at that moment and had great difficulty restraining herself. So anyway, she stuck with this for a few years and I am afraid to some extent as a result of the instigation of this other friend of mine she left Peter who very quickly remarried. [Laughter] who then emigrated to Australia. But it was a bit like that in the old days.

Devamitra: Was this the Tathata Centre?

S: Yes, it was indeed. We should have their little magazines around. Peter used to put out a little magazine. We should have them around somewhere.

But anyway that is going a bit off the track, but we don't want Order Members... I fully appreciate the wifely devotion and in fact in a sense I don't want to discourage it but I don't want male Order members to think in terms of just sitting around and talking about Zen and Reality while somebody else does the work. I think that isn't likely but some men in their weak moments rather wistfully dream

about that sort of lifestyle [Laughter] [150]

But yes, perhaps we do need to make people, perhaps from the beginning more aware of the altruistic implications of the dharma and of Going for Refuge, and the importance of spreading the Dharma. I often feel that people have *no* sense of urgency about spreading the Dharma at all, or very very few have any sense of urgency; to me it seems really extraordinary. A lot of people, even Order Members seem very self indulgent, that is how it seems to me, perhaps I am being unfair but people don't seem to be on fire with enthusiasm to spread the Dharma in whatever way they can.

Devamitra: What form does that self indulgence take?

S: Not even thinking very much in terms of spreading the Dharma but being a bit comfortable, not making too much of an effort, being quite sure they get plenty of time off and go away for holidays, have a girlfriend and all the rest of it. Not that you shouldn't look after yourself and shouldn't have holidays and rest some times, but people in most cases don't seem on fire to spread the Dharma; they don't think in those sort of terms. From that point of view I think it is a good thing for Order Members to go to India and see what the Dharma means to people there, what they do to spread it. They actually do it very, very differently because in some ways the Dharma means a lot more to them, it seems. Or at least they can see its practical benefits in so many ways. Anyway, no need perhaps to dwell on that.

I think as a result of this what I have called relative self indulgence, people aren't very outward going, you have got to be outward going if you want to spread the Dharma. I think a lot of people are perhaps a little shy or lacking in self-confidence. Again, Aid for India has helped in this respect with the door knocking campaigns, convincing people from their own experience it can be done. A lot of people had their self-confidence greatly enhanced by doing one or more door knocking campaigns.

Anyway, let's go on.

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmapriya on in which bhumi irreversibility arises.

Dharmapriya: The question is not quite that:

You define the Bodhisattva of the path as one in bhumis one to six.

(**S:** That's right.) The next level in the hierarchy is the irreversible Bodhisattva who inhabit bhumis eight or higher. How does the Bodhisattva in bhumi seven fit into *this* description of the spiritual hierarchy?

S: Yes, I pondered this for some time and the conclusion to which I came, which isn't I think fully explicit here is that that seventh bhumi seems to be a sort of transitional bhumi. That's where the process of irreversibility begins. This is the

conclusion to which I have come, but you are so to speak fully irreversible only as from the eighth bhumi. Isn't the seventh bhumi the Durangama, the far going, you are moving in the direction of irreversibility I would say, actively moving and the eighth bhumi is the Achala, the immovable, you are established then in the state of irreversibility. This is how I would look at it. [151]

So take it that in respect of non-irreversibility and irreversibility the seventh bhumi is so to speak a transitional one. I think that's the best way of putting it, that's the conclusion at which I have arrived as a result of examination of whatever texts are available.

Tejananda: Then Kulamitra has a question on irreversibility and the eighth bhumi.

Regardless of nomenclature the realization of Mahasunyata in the eighth bhumi appears to be spiritually important. If we are now beginning to think of a single spiritual path outside the historical conception of the Bodhisattva or Arahant ideals should we remain aware of this as a stage distinctly superior to the point of no return, and can you think of a less confusing name for it than irreversibility?

S: I can't say that I can at the moment. I must say on the whole I prefer, or I quite like the in a sense Hinayana term Stream Entry, which is a term used in early Buddhism as far as we know, in a sense antedating the Hinayana as such. I tend to be rather in favour of keeping this term as it belongs to what as far as we can see is original Buddhism but broadening the meaning out beyond the limits of the Hinayana in the strict or the narrow sense.

Kulamitra: Right, but I was thinking in the light of what you said the other night about the Bodhichitta also coming in at that point, at the point of no return; still it seemed looking at this that you have got the realization of the first and second sunyatas; this is the third, so perhaps it is a more distinctive experience once the Bodhichitta has already arisen and you have gone deeper again.

S: One mustn't forget that Stream Entry occurs on the development of insight and that insight can take place in various ways. It can take place by means of or via one or another of the doors of emancipation, one of which is sunyata samadhi. So one of the ways in which Stream Entry is attained is through insight into sunyata. And I think perhaps one shouldn't take too literally all these different levels or modes of sunyata which have been elaborated in the Mahayana. Do you see what I mean?

Kulamitra: Yes I do but in yesterday's lecture you seemed to suggest that those levels of sunyata at *least* could be seen as progressive degrees of penetration of reality by wisdom.

S: Well yes and no. Again, each successive stage is very often in this context and others a means or a methodology of detaching oneself from or enabling one to go

beyond a literal understanding of the so-called previous stage. Do you see what I mean? So one could say that if you have a clear understanding of sunyata and don't take it too literally you don't need that distinction between the sunyata of the conditioned and the Unconditioned on the one hand and absolute sunyata on the other. The fact that you need the notion of Mahasunyata means that you have begun to take the notion of sunyata a bit literally. But presumably in the path of Stream Entry in the real sense you don't do that, [152] so just the concept of sunyata is enough.

Kulamitra: So in the terms that the question is phrased, in terms of a path not based on historical concepts of Bodhisattva and Arahant ideal, it seems that then you are suggesting it is best just to stick to the basic difference between after and before insight.

S: Yes, one needs to know the Mahayana teaching about sunyata from a historical point of view, and perhaps it does help one to know there are four different levels of sunyata and about the thirty two different modes of sunyata to have a fuller and clearer understanding of what sunyata is. But perhaps one shouldn't take too literally the idea of there being different levels of sunyata. Clearly there is a distinction between the sunyata of the conditioned and the sunyata of the Unconditioned but provided one doesn't take the notion of sunyata itself too literally perhaps one doesn't *really* need to go beyond that.

Kulamitra: So in both the Arahant Ideal and the Bodhisattva Ideal you have got the arising of insight or the arising of the Bodhichitta and then you have got some attempt to describe what happens in between that point and Nirvana, Enlightenment whatever.

S: Assuming that to be a fixed point anyway.

Kulamitra: So in a way we are saying that it's maybe best not to try and dwell on what might be taking place after insight but just to keep that major transition in mind.

S: Right, and the major trend in mind.

Kulamitra: And the major trend but in a generalized sort of way.

S: Yes. And regard much of the Mahayana doctrinal material as sort of illustrative rather than as representing real distinctions, real grades and so on.

Kulamitra: Illustrative of that trend?

S: Yes, one could say that, yes. Or illustrative of that whole dimension.

Ratnaprabha: Could I ask a slightly supplementary question on that? When we discussed this part of the lecture and we came to the conclusion that perhaps it

was implied; and I am not quite sure if what you have said recently has superseded this but perhaps the lecture is implying that even a stream entrant or beyond might possibly be subjected to a subtle miccha ditthi of the possibility of spiritual individualism. And the lecture seemed to imply that the stage of irreversibility in the eighth bhumi represented a realization of Mahasunyata at which such a misconception would go completely, he would no longer even consider the possibility of spiritual individualism. Is there any truth in that?

S: It depends what you mean by spiritual individualism [153] which is not a term used in the Mahayana texts or the Hinayana texts. But even though has broken the fetter of sakayaditthi, self view, in becoming a stream entrant nonetheless there is a subtle 'I' sense persists, otherwise you would be completely Enlightened, and that is represented by the fetter of conceit - mana, which is broken according to the Pali scriptures only when you become an Arahant. So clearly there is a possibility of let us say subtle spiritual individualism though not necessarily of a view attached to it, even after Stream Entry. And it could be that the more advanced teachings, let us say, pertaining to sunyata, do help one in resolving that. But in that case they are clearly of concern to one only after one has become a Stream Entrant.

Tejananda: Prakasha has a question on reciting the Bodhisattva precepts.

You have suggested we might recite the Bodhisattva precepts collectively at Order events. What is the difference in significance between this collective recitation and our personal recitation of the ten precepts?

S: I can't say that I have given thought to this. But just as it were off the cuff I think I have made the point that one can't really think of oneself in the strict sense, in the narrow sense, as it were, making the Bodhisattva vow and being a Bodhisattva. It is as it were something cosmic, something archetypal, so it is as though one approaches more closely to it by means of, or via, or in the midst of, the spiritual community. So therefore I felt it was more appropriate that if one did recite or read the Bodhisattva precepts it should be within the context of the, as it were group, sevenfold puja. On the other hand I don't want to rule it out altogether for the individual, because the individual, even when he's on his own, the Order Member that is, he remains spiritually linked with other Order Members, with the rest of the Sangha, and if he is well aware of that and feels that quite strongly he may well quite appropriately read the Bodhisattva precepts in the context of his personal sevenfold puja. This is just my, as it were, provisional thinking. We clearly need to give some more attention to the matter. Perhaps we just need to make a start with the reading or the recitation of the Bodhisattva precepts in the context of an Order sevenfold puja. As I suggested perhaps on the occasion of the Order anniversary. I have in any case to just check the version I made with Dharmo Rimpoché.

Tejananda: We have now got two questions, both on the subject of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya. Separate questions, the first one is from Ratnaprabha.

This is just another question on terminology. You talk in the final section of the lecture on the Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya, but the Bodhisattvas you actually describe seem to be in Sambhogakaya form. Is this a real discrepancy?

S: I don't think it is. I think when I say Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya I mean Bodhisattvas of the Sambhogakaya.[154] Because how can one really distinguish form and no-form. In their, as it were inner being they are let's say, at one with the Dharmakaya but at the same time they as it were manifest on the Sambhogakaya level, they are both Dharmakaya *and* Sambhogakaya. For instance the Buddha himself during his earthly life time is Dharmakaya and Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. It is not that the Dharmakaya is an *alternative* kaya. In the case of the Enlightened it is the basic kaya, so to speak, so Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya are those beings who have realized the Dharmakaya but who, so to speak or in a manner of speaking, retain or continue to retain a Sambhogakaya form. The fact that they are Bodhisattvas, that they have a definite identity as Bodhisattvas means that they belong to the Sambhogakaya realm but the fact that they are Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya means that in manifesting that form, so to speak, in belonging to the Sambhogakaya realm they do not depart from the Dharmakaya realm.

I think the difficulty arises if one thinks of the Sambhogakaya as something completely distinct from the Dharmakaya. As though it is at a different level or a different plane in the literal sense. Again this is something which probably requires more thought and more explanation but that is approximately the position. If of course a Bodhisattva in addition to his Sambhogakaya assumes a *Nirmanakaya* form then he becomes an *incarnate* Bodhisattva or what the Tibetans call a Tulku. Do you see what I mean? But if he is a Tulku in the full sense he retains at least some experience of his Sambhogakaya and even his Dharmakaya status, if he is a Bodhisattva of that level.

Tejananda: The second question on the same topic is from Dharmapriya.

At the beginning of the discussion on the Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya in which you distinguish between the two sort of kinds of the Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya, the one sentence describing the first kind was unclear to me. The sentence in the verbatim transcript reads 'the first kind of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya consist of those who after Enlightenment, after becoming Buddhas retain their Bodhisattva form, though being in reality Buddhas so that they can continue working in the world.'

S: This is putting it, as it were, in quite exoteric terms. According to Tibetan tradition for instance Avalokitesvara is the form, the Sambhogakaya form, in which Sakyamuni himself continues to work in the world, he not being let us say a Hinayana type Buddha but a Mahayana type Buddha.

Dharmapriya: That answers the question, because I was going to ask does this
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refer to the period between the Nirvana and Parinirvana or also after the Parinirvana. I think you have answered it.

S: Not that Avalokitesvara is not present, in a manner of speaking, after the Buddha gains Enlightenment. Whatever in the Buddha we term Avalokitesvara is there from the moment of the Enlightenment, but at the time of the Parinirvana the physical body drops off and apart from the ultimate Enlightenment experience only the Avalokitesvara element is left and continues, *so to speak*. [155] This is the Mahayana view, putting it very broadly and crudely. Do you see what I mean?

Dharmapriya: I *think* I do Bhante. Perhaps risking being too mechanistic about it, is it as if of the three kayas, as if the Nirmanakaya disappears at the Parinirvana but the other kayas are left. (**S:** Yes) and more than one Sambhogakaya?

S: No there is supposed to be only *one* Sambhogakaya, but it has many different aspects, this is how it is usually put. Of which Avalokitesvara is one. But again one mustn't separate the aspect too literally from that of which it is an aspect.

Dharmapriya: Meaning the Dharmakaya.

S: Meaning the Sambhogakaya. But then again one mustn't separate the Sambhogakaya itself too literally from the Dharmakaya. One mustn't separate the three kayas too literally, one from another.

Virananda: I don't understand why the separation of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya into two kinds has to be made. Because it seems that one is dealing with the same Bodhisattvas.

S: In a sense one is, but I think the second type of Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya draws attention to the fact that the Sambhogakaya has those different aspects and the Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya of the first group draws attention to the fact that those particular Bodhisattvas on the realization of Enlightenment, on the attainment of the Sambhogakaya and the Dharmakaya, attain, so to speak, or manifest or appear in one or another of those particular aspects of the Sambhogakaya. So in the case of the first kind of Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya you are seeing those particular aspects of the Sambhogakaya as realized within time, and in the case of the second group of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya you are seeing those same aspects as existing, as it were out of time. So both aspects need to be indicated.

Dharmapriya: As we have been talking of the kayas here I have a vague memory that at one point you have talked of the Svabhavakakaya if I understand correctly more or less as a technical term, just a union of the kayas. Does it have any deeper meaning than that, any more relevance than that?

S: It may well have, I have not come across any explanation of that sort. But it seems to me that the idea of the Svabhavakakaya arose as a so-called fourth

kaya when the three kayas had become so differentiated that there was felt to be a need of a fourth kaya to unite them again. I would say that the solution really is to realize that they are not to be literally separated or to be kept apart rather than superimposing a fourth kaya which of course in time became too sharply distinguished from the first three. And so it goes on.

Dharmapriya: And then the other two kayas which I ran into in the Evans Wentz translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* referred to are the Adikaya and the Vajrakaya, which as far as I could see only referred to Vajrasattva, and stressed his Adibuddha nature. Have you anything to say on that? [156]

S: Well Guenther quotes somewhere a verse from Tilopa which says that the Adibuddha simply indicates the fact that Buddhahood transcends time, it is not to be taken as literally a separate kind of Buddha. The Mahasukhakaya simply draws attention to the fact that Enlightenment is quintessentially blissful.

Vajrakaya seems to be a particularly Tantric kind of Nirmanakaya attained by a siddha as a result of his specifically Tantric practices in this life itself. Vajrakaya is usually considered to be identical with the rainbow body. It is an indestructible body, which means that it isn't a material body in the ordinary literal sense at all.

Tejananda: Is the rainbow body yet another kaya?

S: One could view it as such but I think it is considered roughly equivalent to the Vajrakaya. It's called a rainbow body because it's, in a sense, an illusory body. Because the rainbow is a symbol of that which is neither real nor unreal. It doesn't actually exist, you can't grasp it but nonetheless you perceive it. So all things are said to be like this - they arise in dependence on causes and conditions and are not absolutely real. So the rainbow body is like that - it's a Nirmanakaya, it is not a body in the ordinary sense, not a gross material body. Nonetheless it arises in dependence on causes and conditions of a more subtle kind and it is perceived by other beings. And it's a Vajrakaya in a sense of being indestructible, which really means it belongs to a different level of reality.

Prakasha: Is it like a sort of subtle physical body?

S: It's sometimes looked at in that way, but it's not just a sort of subtle physical body because it's definitely Transcendental at the same time.

Tejananda: This is a specifically Tantric concept?

S: Yes it would be. Though I believe the term Vajrakaya does occur in the Mahayana sutras, I think it would be applied to the Buddha, to Sakyamuni.

Tejananda: Last question is from me with a supplementary I think, from Prakasha.

being depicted completely naked without any ornaments at all. Is this not however, rather the way Vajrasattva is depicted in Buddha or Adibuddha form, rather than Bodhisattva form?

S: I suppose if he doesn't have any ornaments or insignia you can't really distinguish between Buddha and Bodhisattva. Except perhaps through the hair, because a Buddha wouldn't have long hair or a top-knot, so yes there is still in that case a difference between the naked Vajrasattva and Vajrasattva in the Adibuddha form. The Adibuddha form would always be bald or shaven, whereas the Bodhisattva form even though it was naked would still have hair. So there would be a difference between them in that respect. This is what I assume, I have not looked into it properly in detail. I certainly remember seeing naked - usually white or brown naked figures - which did not have long hair, which were shaven headed [157] like a Buddha.

Ratnaprabha: And also have you seen some with long hair, like a Bodhisattva?

S: I believe I have, I think it is those that I am probably referring to as naked Vajrasattvas, especially when white in colour. But one would need to look into the iconography in greater detail.

Tejananda: Prakasha?

Prakasha: No, it's OK.

Dharmadhara: So Bodhisattvas can be depicted with top knots?

S: Well the word top-knot in English has two meanings in this context. One is the top-knot in the sense of the ushnisha, the protuberance on the top of a Buddha's head which is usually covered with hair. That is quite different from a Bodhisattva's top-knot which is a top-knot in the ordinary sense of a lock of hair gathered up and bound into a sort of top-knot. Those are two quite different things. Perhaps one needs to look quite carefully at the thangka figure to distinguish them.

Tejananda: Bhante, does that mean that Bodhisattvas aren't usually conceived of as having the ushnisha underneath the top-knot?

S: I should imagine not because the ushnisha is characteristic of a Buddha, and a Bodhisattva is technically not a Buddha, at least as regards his form. In his form he has to conform to the concept of a Bodhisattva, not of a Buddha.

Dharmapriya: Can I ask a supplementary question which arose out of a remark of yours about an hour and a half ago when you were referring to Mahayana sources for one of the points under discussion. Saying that you had not read them for a very long time. It wasn't clear to me whether that was just with regards to some specific type of Mahayana sources or the Mahayana literature in general, that you had not been reading much of it for a long time.

S: No, I think it was sources pertaining to that particular point. I have been reading Mahayana literature quite recently, I read quite a bit of it when I was in Tuscany last year. I have got quite a lot of new publications to read, a lot of things being published these days. Mainly from Tibetan, some very interesting things, at least they look very interesting - I hope they are. Sometimes these little works translated from the Tibetan are a bit disappointing, they don't seem very relevant, if you see what I mean. Some people in Tuscany last year didn't find quite a lot of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* very relevant, the sections which we studied. So perhaps we do eventually have to have our own textbooks. Anyway that is another quite big subject. Perhaps some of you will get around to writing them in the future, who knows. At least a few little (chatres?/sastras?) I hope will come from your pens.

Alright let's leave it there.

[158]

Tape Ten

Study Leaders Question and Answer Sessions Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal - January 1986

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dharmacharis Ratnaprabha, Virananda, Ratnaguna, Kuladeva, Tejananda, Sudhana, Susiddhi, Kulamitra, Dharmavira, Dharmapriya, Vairocana, Chakkhupala, Devamitra, Sthirananda, Saddhaloka, Tejamitra, Prakasha, Dharmadhara.

Lecture Eight: The Buddha and Bodhisattva: Eternity and Time

Tejananda: Tonight we have got eleven questions on The Buddha and the Bodhisattva, Eternity and Time. The first question is from Dharmavira and it is about adding the Five Jinas to the visualization practices.

If as part of your visualization practice you already visualise one of the five Jinas, would it be possible and acceptable to expand that meditation practice by expanding that part of the visualization into a visualization of the mandala of the five Jinas?

S: I am not sure about that. I would need to look at specific practices. But certainly in the case of some of the Bodhisattva visualization practices one does in any case at

least think of the Buddhas in general, and one can reduce that to the five Jinas and even visualize them. In some practices one does visualize them, one visualizes them as empowering the particular Bodhisattva on which you are meditating, or which you are visualizing. But I am not sure about extending your visualization of a particular Buddha in such a way as to include him as one of the five Buddhas. I would need to give that some thought. In principle it's a good idea but you need to get to it in the correct way, if you see what I mean. In the case of the Bodhisattva visualization it's quite a simple matter, rays of light go from that Bodhisattva and invokes the blessing of those five Buddhas whom you then visualize and they bless him thus consecrating him. Do you see what I mean? But at the moment I don't see quite how you would make the connection with the five Jinas in the case of visualization involving one Jina. No doubt it could be done but I would have to give some thought to it.

Tejananda: The second question is from Tejamitra on breaking the fetters.

Last night we learnt that if the sunyata concept wasn't taken too literally then effectively the other levels of sunyata aren't necessary.

S: Oh, no! I hope I didn't give that impression. It is not that there are levels but they aren't necessary, no, I hope I didn't give that impression. It's more that the teaching about the different levels and the different modes of sunyata are an

attempt to bring out the content, the spirit if you like of the sunyata teaching. So if you have some understanding of that spirit, some insight into that spirit, even perhaps some feeling for it, you don't need the help of that kind of division of sunyata into levels. That is what I was meaning.

Tejamitra: I think that is actually what I meant but I didn't express it very accurately.

S: Yes, you don't go *beyond* those levels, as if to say to yet another level. In a way you render that particular way of *looking* at sunyata, i.e. in terms of different levels of sunyata in a way superfluous.

Tejamitra: Today we were discussing breaking the fetters and gaining insight. And I became concerned that we weren't taking doctrinal lists again too literally. So the question is;

Does an insight experience at this level necessarily correspond precisely to certain fetters? [159]

S: Correspond to the breaking of certain fetters.

Tejamitra: Yes, correspond to the breaking of certain fetters.

S: Well, there are different ways of looking at insight experiences and that is one of them and it is considered quite important in Theravada Buddhism and in the Hinayana generally, and has been of course taken over by the Mahayana. In a way the breaking of the fetters provides one with a sort of standard by which one can measure oneself, one might say. Because if you are still thinking very much in terms of me, myself and I, well clearly you haven't really developed much in the way of insight, perhaps nothing at all. So one might say that the list of fetters just provides one with a means of checking up, because as insight develops one is making a transition from the conditioned to the Unconditioned, let us say. So you are loosening the ties or the fetters that bind you to the conditioned. So what are those ties, what are those fetters; well for convenience one can look at them in terms of those three fetters, or the five fetters, or the ten fetters. They are just helpful in that sort of way. They give greater precision to your effort, you are not just trying to get free from the conditioned in a broad liberal sort of way, but you are trying quite specifically to get rid of certain things, to break certain very definite fetters which tie you to the conditioned, so to speak, or which constitute your existence in the conditioned or on the conditioned level.

Of course this whole idea or concept of 'breaking fetters' just is a way of putting it. In a strict literal sense one might say that there are no fetters to be broken, you don't really distinguish the fetters that bind you to the conditioned from the conditioned itself, as experienced by you. But nonetheless they constitute a useful check list. Especially as we look at them in the FWBO, where we try to make sense of them and relate them to our actual experience, and even to express them in comparatively contemporary terms. I think perhaps in explaining them to

new people, to newcomers, one doesn't necessarily have to explain them in the traditional way. I mean I have suggested several alternative ways of explaining them - haven't I? - and one could perhaps adopt one or another of those ways. But clearly there has got to be some progress, some development beyond oneself as one at present experiences it, so you have got to as it were free yourself from the old self, and so on. You have got to have a certain stability of conviction and you have also got to become less mechanical, less inclined to just go through the motions instead of giving oneself heart and soul, so to speak, to what you are doing, to the spiritual life. So the three fetters, the first three fetters, that is to say by breaking which you become a stream entrant, do have a very definite significance; they do have a pretty direct bearing on the spiritual life, on the Going for Refuge.

It does occur to me, just in passing, that one could perhaps try to look at them in terms of Going for Refuge, how they hold you back from Going for Refuge in the effective sense, in the real sense. I think the list of the ten fetters, especially the first three fetters, is certainly one of those doctrinal lists which is still quite meaningful and quite useful to us, but no doubt needing a certain amount of, not exactly reinterpretation but maybe translation almost into a different medium, a different terminology let us say. That rather than actual reinterpretation. [160]

For instance, if you just translate, as so many scholars do, *silavrata-paramarsa* as dependence on rights and rituals well the newcomer might say 'I don't depend on rights and rituals at all, I dislike rights and rituals, I dislike the puja, so I have apparently broken that fetter, I am not bound by that.' But clearly the fetter of dependence on the religious vows and ethical observances is a much more subtle thing than that. You certainly don't break it by having a dislike of rituals including pujas. You may be very attached to your four o'clock tea drinking ritual and be quite irritated if that is upset! Or to your seven o'clock in the evening TV watching ritual; whatever it happens to be, every activity can assume a ritualistic aspect in that sort of sense. Not to speak of moral observances, we need not go into that. So I think the teaching with regard to those first three fetters is very much a part of living Buddhism, I would say. I am surprised we don't hear more about them from some other Buddhist groups and Buddhist teachers.

Tejananda: The third question is from Kulamitra and is about the static versus dynamic models of reality.

The Buddha as eternally perfect and the Bodhisattva principle manifesting in time seem to be yet another example of the static versus dynamic views of reality. (**S:** Right) If one pursues Buddhist doctrine from a philosophical point of view will one always end up with a static and a dynamic model which cannot be reconciled? Is this in fact the ultimate philosophical koan?

S: I think I have said more or less that very thing on some occasion. Because yes it would seem that we experience existence, we experience reality, if you like, through these two great modes of space and of time and Spinoza says much the same thing. I think when I read Spinoza in my teens I was very much impressed

by much of his thought, I think this is one of the things that impressed me perhaps most of all. Of course he used theistic terminology which is not to be taken seriously, in fact he was generally considered in his day and for long afterwards to be an atheist, which in a sense perhaps he was, or perhaps a non-theist. But he speaks of ultimate reality in terms of god, he says 'god is an infinite substance with infinite attributes', it doesn't sound very much like the god of the Old Testament, does it? Anyway, 'god is an infinite substance with infinite attributes', and he says that only two of these attributes are known to us - space and time. I don't remember if he actually says that we perceive existence or we perceive reality exclusively through these two modes, but certainly his teaching amounts to that, and I think Buddhism would agree with that; that we perceive reality so to speak, in a manner of speaking, through these two great modes, through these two great aspects of our experience. So we inevitably arrive either at a spatial or a temporal model of reality. But it would seem that there's no third mode, as it were, which enables us to reconcile the two. Because if we reduce the one to the other, well we have reduced the one to the other. So it would seem that reconciliation is possible only in our actual spiritual experience, above and beyond, so to speak, the level on which the contradiction, if it is a contradiction, takes place. And in that sense this great opposition, if it is an opposition, or inconsistency or incommensurability, as between space-type models of reality and time-type models of reality, does [161] constitute a sort of koan, which can be solved only by a sort of intuitive leap. In other words in terms of insight or wisdom; which is then not capable, *apparently*, of being formulated in such a way intellectually as to reconcile that previous opposition. I think this is the position.

Kulamitra: Do you think then that it is quite helpful to bear that in mind, as one examines the more ultimate doctrines of Buddhism, whether it's the Bodhisattva Ideal or the Yogachara or the Madhyamika or whatever. That, in a way it is this central communal experience that is being not exactly discussed, but that is the central sort of limiting experience which stops you being able to describe any further. Is that a sort of fruitful line of ...

S: I think it would be well to bear that in mind, and I think it would help to prevent one from falling into any kind of literalism with regard to specific philosophical formulations even those of Buddhist 'philosophy' (single inverted commas). Recently I have been giving thought to the Avatamsaka 'philosophy', again single inverted commas. I did give thought to it years and years ago but more recently I haven't until *very* recently. I haven't yet been able to see how that ties up with what we have been talking about, though I see how it ties up with quite a lot of other things, but no doubt I have to give further thought to it and see if anything then emerges.

Kulamitra: I hope you will let us know!

S: It is mainly a question of time, unfortunately one has to do these things under the mode of time. Outside that mode it's probably already done [*Laughter*], but we don't have access to that at the moment!

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmapriya on the use of terminology in this
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area, such as eternity and so on.

What do you mean when *you* use the terms eternity or outside of time, beyond time, or inasmuch as you do use it, infinity?

S: I think when I use the term Eternity with a capital E I am thinking of Reality, Ultimate Reality considered as transcending time. In a sense of course you can't see Ultimate Reality as transcending time because that is to speak of ultimate Reality in terms of space, so to speak; which is a limitation, because you can also speak of it in terms of time. But nonetheless, when I speak of Eternity with a capital E I am indicating, as it were, Ultimate Reality, especially in its transtemporal aspect.

What were the other terms you mentioned?

Dharmapriya: Just talking of beyond time, outside of time.

S: Well this in a way is contradictory, because if you speak of something as beyond time you are treating time as though time was a form of space. One is just continually brought up against the limitations of language and therefore these sorts of expressions cannot be taken literally. You either get the point or you don't. You don't get the point any better by taking such formulations very literally and on the basis of [162] a very literal understanding of them asking very literal questions. You need to just try to, as I said, see the point of such formulations through meditation or some other way. That is not to say that the formulations can't be improved or made more precise, sometimes I think that I really need one day, if I have time, to sit down and reformulate and rethink my entire terminology, which I think has been brought into existence over the years in a rather ad-hoc sort of manner and probably isn't very satisfactory or very consistent. Whether I shall be able to get around to doing it I don't know, but it will have to be done sooner or later by somebody, if not by me by somebody else. I hope it is possible to do it, I hope it isn't in the very nature of things something that it is impossible to do.

Kulamitra: I was wondering that, because you called that a limitation of language but isn't it also a limitation of the ability to actually conceptualize such things?

S: It can be that initially but even when you've conceptualized quite successfully, inasmuch as even the most successful conceptualization is not adequate to Reality, you still have to make that intuitive leap. But I think you make it all the more easily if the preceding conceptualization has been more adequately done. I think probably in the case of some of the things I have said, or even some of the things I have written they could be reworked in that sort of way, brought to a greater degree of precision and accuracy and consistency, terminologically. I think that probably is the case.

A good example of a philosopher who is very consistent in his terminology is Spinoza, whom I mentioned. He starts off with definitions and then axioms, in a geometrical sort of fashion. So you know pretty well what he means by every

single terms he uses. It does give his thought a definite precision which is not found in all philosophers. He defines in terms of a substance, accident, mode; he even later on gives definitions, quite useful definitions in many cases, of mental states.

Kulamitra: Could you say then that from a spiritual point of view philosophy's purpose is really to refine the language of these rather abstruse concepts?

S: That requires consideration, I am not sure that I would be satisfied with that as a definition of philosophy. Though no doubt it is part of the work that philosophy seeks to do. Perhaps that sort of definition of philosophy is over influenced by linguistic philosophy, dare I say? *[Laughter]* Of which perhaps you did a course in your time, or had friends who did.

The word philosophy itself is a term in question. What does one mean by philosophy, it has been understood to mean so many different things. I have spoken of Buddhist philosophy and nearly always put the word in that context in single inverted commas, because really in Buddhism there is no such thing corresponding to philosophy in the *traditional* Western sense. Though of course nowadays, very often, people who still call themselves philosophers do not use the term philosophy in the traditional Western sense, by any means, which is rather confusing. Plato, confronted by most of these people would have denied that they were philosophers. He would probably [163] have described them as Sophists in the worst sense of the term.

Dharmapriya: I had a third term on the list and that is infinity. I can't remember you using it much.

S: I must say that I have gained a new respect for the term infinity. It's not one of my favourite terms. Because in Buddhism it is associated with the concept or experience of infinite space, infinite consciousness, so it doesn't appear usually as a term for the absolute, let us say. The connection in which it appears is usually mundane, though mundane in a highly refined and sublimated sense. Though one has of course Amitabha, the Infinite light, and Amitayus, the Infinite life. But about a year ago I read a work which I have been intending to read for some time by Rene Guinol(?) a French traditionalist thinker. I'll think of the title. It is very little work, but a very basic work, a very fundamental work and he uses the word infinity for, I suppose, Ultimate Reality but he uses it in such a way that it seems a very satisfactory term indeed for Ultimate Reality. I can't go into details but I did feel that perhaps it was a better term than the absolute. He wasn't of course meaning by infinity the mathematical infinite, or anything like that.

That reminds me, I was going to read you something by Browning wasn't I. I'll go and get it before we go and read it. Just remind me in case it slips my mind.

Tejananda: Prakasha has a question on time sense in Eastern and Western religion.

S: Time sense in Eastern and Western religion; all right.

In Eastern Buddhist countries there seems marked lack of interest in chronological and historical time. Is this intrinsic to Buddhism or merely cultural? Similarly the monotheistic religions of the West are marked by a strongly historical sense of time. Is there a necessary connection between monotheism and the historical approach in the sense of time?

S: To deal with the question backwards, I don't think there's a necessary connection with monotheism as such and time or history. Rather it's a particular kind of monotheism. Some of the Greek thinkers were monotheists but they didn't develop this sort of attitude towards time and history that characterizes Judaism and Christianity and maybe Islam to a lesser extent. I think the particular type of monotheism which is involved with time and history in this way is that kind of monotheism in which god is conceived of as very much preoccupied with the world, very much preoccupied with the peoples of the world, and in particular of course with his chosen people, and concerned with their behaviour from year to year, from generation to generation. So I think it is that particular kind of monotheism which gives history its very special place in Jewish and in Christian thought, and in Islamic thought to a lesser extent. In the case of Buddhism I think I would say that Buddhism was affected to some extent by the general Indian ahistorical approach. I would say that Buddhism itself is so to speak not necessarily, not intrinsically ahistorical and I think that [164] shows itself in the fact that Buddhists, or Buddhism, as soon as it has sort of emancipated itself from Indian culture did develop definite historic interests. It was interested in tracing the history of the Sangha, the history of Buddhism itself. So we have a number of Buddhist historical works dealing with that very topic and from that it branched out into secular history. But it always considered secular history, quite rightly, as much less important than the history of the Sangha. Do you see what I mean? For instance, I think I am correct in saying that in Sanskrit there is only one historical work, any major historical work, and that is the Rajatarangini the history of the kings of Kashmir which seems to have been produced under Buddhist auspices, I think in fact the author is Buddhist. Then of course the Sinhalese produced histories of the Dharma, the Burmese produced, the Thais produced, the Tibetans produced and the Chinese who were historically minded anyway, produced lots of histories of Buddhism, historical accounts. We have translations into Tibetan of histories of Buddhism, histories of the Dharma, histories of the Sangha by Indian authors.

So clearly, though affected initially to some extent by the ahistorical climate of Indian thought, Buddhism was not in the long run over-influenced by that and did develop its own interest in history and made its own contribution to the writing of history. I think probably history is unimportant at that stage of civilization, in that stage of culture when you live in a sort of eternity, with a small e, where everything is very well established, everything very firmly established and there is just the cycle of the seasons and religious observances, and when there is actually no history, nothing substantial, nothing of importance actually changes. You don't develop a sense of history. One could say that's a higher state, a higher phase or

level of civilization.

The Egyptians, I was thinking of the Egyptians, they achieve that to some extent. There were dynastic upheavals, there were changes of dynasties, but as soon as a new dynasty arose, a new family or tribe seized power they hastened to assume the paraphernalia of the pharaohs and give themselves pharaonic titles and all the rest of it. Even the successors of Alexander did in Egypt. We think of the Ptolomies as Egyptians but in fact they weren't Egyptians at all, they were Greeks. So, yes, Egypt is a good example of this ahistorical civilization. Not that they didn't have a history but they didn't think so much in historical terms. I think perhaps the Babylonians likewise, and the Indians you could say, to a lesser extent. Because Indian history really begins ... well, to some extent it begins with Buddhism but it really begins with the Moguls, because they were historically minded, being Muslims. So from that time you get all sorts of chronicles and memoirs and autobiographies, sometimes written by emperors. Then India comes into the full light of history.

It's astonishing how little we know about India, how little we know about the great figures of Buddhist thought. I was talking about this I think in Tuscany, I asked people to realize that for instance, a favourite figure of mine, St. Jerome, was almost the exact contemporary of Nagarjuna, but how much do we know about Nagarjuna? Do we have a single real letter from Nagarjuna? We have these epistles to kings in which there are no personal details at all because they are resumes of Buddhist teaching, which are very fine, but Nagarjuna seems a thoroughly *mythological* figure, but St. Jerome isn't. [165] We have hundreds of letters I think it is, from St. Jerome and lots and lots of other writings and we can trace his career in detail, almost from day to day sometimes, because he wrote so many letters to so many people, close friends of his. And the whole period of Imperial Rome is so well known, republican Rome too in the later day, is so well documented. Think of someone like Cicero, again writing hundreds of letters, all of which we have got or we have got most of them. We can reconstruct his life from day to day, for weeks and months on end, of important periods. We have got speeches, we have got histories, not to speak of inscriptions which have been discovered. In the case of India we have got just a few inscriptions, usually. Sometimes for hundreds of years together we don't have anything, even those.

So it's very difficult for us to have a living feel for what it was like to be, say an ancient Indian Buddhist, to live in Nalanda. We get a bit of a picture from the Chinese pilgrims, they cast a few rays of bright light into what is otherwise almost impenetrable darkness. We are very grateful for them; what would we know about Nalanda if it wasn't for Hsuan Tsang and some of the other Chinese pilgrims? We would know virtually nothing at all. We would have the ruins and we would have a few inscriptions and some images, that's all. How the monks lived, what they studied, how many of them there were we probably wouldn't know.

So we can feel very much at home in past periods of European history. When I read, for instance, Roman history, when I read about Cicero for instance, or St. Jerome or Marcus Aurelius, one can feel very much at home, you can visualize exactly how they were living, what they thought, what they felt, what they said, but you can't do that with the ancient Indians. You have very little idea at all what they

were like or how they lived. You have just got their usually very impersonal works. The *Pali* scriptures are important sources of information in this sense, they are much closer to history and real life than almost any other productions of Indian literature. They are our main sources of information on all sorts of topics for that whole period; whether economics, social customs, law, politics, distribution of tribes, languages - it's our main source of information for India in general. Except of course we have Ashoka's inscriptions, another very important source of information. They are *Buddhist*, there's no parallel to them in Hinduism, so to speak. It may be that his inspiration was Persian because the Persian kings put up inscriptions of this sort. It is well known, and we know that there were connections between Ashoka and India, and Persia. We know that Persian craftsmen helped build Ashoka's palace in (*Paranagutara?*). They probably were responsible for those highly polished stone columns.

Anyway, that is all by the way; but my main point is that Buddhism does not really share the ahistorical outlook of Indian thought, Indian philosophy and religion. No doubt there is a lot more that could be said on the question, but maybe that is enough.

Tejananda: The sixth question is from Dharmadhara and is about, I think, mechanical time and anxiety.

Dharmadhara: This is a supplementary question.

It seems that there is a definite connection between mechanical time, especially since the middle ages when it was possible to measure quite accurately, and [166] anxiety. Presumably there is a connection between organic time sense and expansion of consciousness. Would you care to comment?

S: I can't say that I have given very much thought to this. I must say I have noticed myself that one's experience of time differs at different times, so to speak. For instance I noticed last year in Tuscany that those three months seemed to go - well for me they went, let us say - more quickly than any previous three months in Tuscany. The day ended almost before it had begun, it was amazing. I had quite a few things to get done in the course of that Tuscany, not all of which I was able to get done, but some of which I was able to get done, but I was really quite surprised sometimes that, well, it is still going on, the speed with which each day goes by, or week goes by. It must have something to do with one's mental state. I often find that time goes by most quickly, at present, when I'm engaged in writing. To write for three or four hours, it's sometimes just like half an hour, the time goes so quickly, presumably because one is concentrated. So it does seem that if one is concentrated, absorbed in what one is doing, and I suppose *enjoying* what one is doing, time does tend to pass more quickly. But if you are in a painful situation, obviously it seems to pass more slowly, as when you are waiting in the dentist's waiting room, or when you are in the dentist's chair, it doesn't pass quite so quickly then. So clearly there is a subjective factor involved.

It does seem that the happier you are the more quickly time seems to pass, but

what does that mean? You're interpreting the experience, so to speak, in terms of clock time, but what actually is happening when time seems to pass more quickly or more slowly? One can speak in terms of organic time rather than mechanical time or clock time, but it doesn't really help, it doesn't really throw much light on the nature of the experience so I feel that I would probably need to give some more thought to it.

Dharmadhara: What skandha would you put time sense in, would it be samjna? I gather that you said that time is a function of consciousness.

S: I must say I can't remember. I think I have said something about this; it's a concept. Presumably it comes under samjna but I would have to give it further thought and check up and consult what the Abhidharma has to say. Probably it comes under samjna. It is certainly classed as a prajñati in the Abhidharma, so you could check perhaps where prajñatis come; or prajñapti in Sanskrit, which means a concept.

But let me just say one or two more words. Yes, we are I think in the modern West, let us say, very much preoccupied with time. It might have something to do with the industrial revolution. If you are just cultivating the land as you are in a predominantly agricultural kind of civilization or society, well you need only bother with the larger rhythms of the year, the seasons, the full moons and the new moons. But if you are employing thousands of people and they are all working on the assembly lines, if time becomes money, and a lot of different functions have to be co-ordinated then time becomes more and more important. Supposing for instance work starts at eight o'clock in the morning, but to start the work everybody has to be present, well clocking-in, punctuality becomes very important. Otherwise one man's lateness holds up [167] everybody's work, let's say for the sake of argument, and that means financial loss both to the employer and also perhaps to the other employees, so time becomes important. So I suspect our current preoccupation with time, as it seems, is something to do with our modern civilization, our way of life, and probably therefore with the industrial revolution itself. Or more recently the technological revolution. But this is just a passing thought, I haven't really looked into it very thoroughly.

Dharmadhara: Do you think there will be any connection with the Christian hours, the liturgical hours?

S: One did have those all through the middle ages. Perhaps they did represent a speeding up or an enhanced awareness of time as compared, say, with the awareness that one found in a simple agricultural society. But nonetheless their hours were the canonical divisions of the day, an hour in this connection doesn't mean one twenty-fourth of the day; they were divisions of the day. The whole twenty four hour period was divided into seven sections; if I remember rightly, not of equal length. So clearly that isn't quite the same as being very minute conscious and even second conscious.

For instance, when one has races of various kinds. You hear of someone winning by point two of a second, so we cannot but be over preoccupied with time under

those sort of circumstances. We have instruments now which can register, apparently, thousandths of a second. They were lucky in the old days if they could register an *hour* accurately, that is only a few centuries ago.

Tejananda: My common or garden wristwatch does hundredths of a second which is quite a mystery for any practical purposes.

S: But it might be one day. *[Laughter]* That's progress! You could be worrying yourself sick in a few years time about your one thousandth of a second more or less.

Kulamitra: We often hear talk about the necessity of a sense of urgency. Does that imply any particular kind of *time* sense?

S: No I think it is not so much a question of time sense, though people may understand it in that way; it's more a question of your own inner feeling, your own inner wish, your own inner desire, or the intensity of that wish, the intensity of that desire to communicate the Dharma. Not that you should think 'I've got to work so many hours', or 'I've got necessarily to speak to so many people'. I am speaking really in terms of one's own desire to communicate. One's own awareness of the situation in which we live today, and the suffering perhaps of other people.

Susiddhi: Isn't it also one's awareness of the human situation, that you are born, you live for a while and then you die?

S: Yes it's that too. What I was meaning was that the situation in which we find ourselves today in a way intensifies our awareness of that more general human existential situation. Because we are faced nowadays not just by the [168] possibility, or in fact the actuality of individual death, our own individual death, but possibly the death of the human race itself. So our awareness of the possibility of the death of the human race itself can perhaps give a greater urgency in the sense I have mentioned, to our own individual efforts to develop spiritually, because they are all the more necessary. For us individually they are no more necessary than they would be under any other set of circumstances, but they are more necessary for humanity at large or our contribution to the awareness of humanity at large is all the more necessary in view of the urgent situation facing humanity at large. As I mentioned in my lecture on *Buddhism, World Peace and Nuclear War*, even if we solve the problem of nuclear war we don't solve the problem of death. We have got to die anyway. But we can certainly enhance our own awareness of the inevitability of death of us as individuals by contemplating the possibility, let us say, of nuclear war.

Tejananda: Now Ratnaprabha has a question on time in relation to the Sambhogakaya.

In the lecture you say that the archetypal figures of the Sambhogakaya occupy a time scale different than that of our ordinary waking consciousness, but not *out* of time. Could you say

some more about what you meant by this?

S: I think I was seeing the Sambhogakaya, or the Sambhogakaya realms or levels as being in a way analogous to the various Brahmaloкас of the Theravada, Pali tradition. I am not sure that is the whole story by any means though. I was on the point of saying that perhaps the Sambhogakaya inasmuch as it's intermediate between the Nirmanakaya and the Dharmakaya it's sort of intermediate between time and eternity. But perhaps that isn't very illuminating.

But clearly the Sambhogakaya is not mundane, and to that extent it can't *really* be compared with the Brahmaloкас. So in a way you have got a level which is intermediate between time and eternity. I don't know quite how one is going to put it or how one is going to put one's mind around it conceptually, so to speak. Perhaps it's another of those things I need to give further thought to. Perhaps one can think of the Sambhogakaya as that level where time and eternity are reconciled. Because the Sambhogakaya, as I mentioned I think yesterday, is not completely separate from the Dharmakaya. For instance you think of the human, historical Buddha. He was living in time, as far as we can see, but surely in his inner experience he was *beyond* time. So in a way he reconciled in his own person that dichotomy of time and the timeless. So could one not say the same thing of the Sambhogakaya? But one would have to be very careful to clarify what one was saying in that kind of way.

Kulamitra: In the lecture you did talk about, at least touching on that dimension in deep meditation and special dreams, even perhaps visionary experience.

S: I suppose it is said that for instance in such experiences you might even see, you might even hear the Buddha preaching on the transcendental vultures' peak. But when [169] you say preaching you are implying, if one takes the word literally, a succession of words and therefore time. Perhaps one can only express it in that way, but is the Buddha preaching on that level, let us say, in that sort of way. Is there not perhaps a sort of *instantaneous* communication of meaning. So perhaps one could even say that the Sambhogakaya is out of time but we, in thinking about it and speaking about it cannot really do so except in terms of visual art, except through the medium of time, or in the mode of time.

Kulamitra: Do you think it might be true then that the whole - I don't know quite what to call it, but - 'mythic' dimension of life is a dimension on which time and eternity are reconciled; or do you think that is only partially true?

S: I think one would have to look closely at what one meant by reconciled. Myth is certainly outside time in a sense, if only in the sense that it's cyclical rather than progressive. It's something which is, as it were, eternally enacted. It is acted but it is eternally acted, or eternally enacted or re-enacted. I expressed this years ago by saying 'every day is *one* day'. Actually you can experience it like this if you put your mind to it, that each day is the same day all over again but with variations. *[Laughter]* It is not really that you are going forward in time, that is just a way of thinking, just a way of looking at it. So each time you wake up it's the same day, you can actually experience it like this. As though eternity is contained in that day,

that that day includes everything. Not that this day is part of a series but this day is itself a totality, which includes everything. And every day is like that, and in that sense every day is one day. Every day you experience everything, not that you experience a bit today and a bit tomorrow, a bit more the day after; every day you experience everything.

Kulamitra: That's quite an experience.

S: Yes, but if you reflect a little you can at least have a glimpse of it, or have the experience to some extent.

Kulamitra: In a way, maybe this is a bit of an aside, but one feels like that about novels sometimes. That apparently they take place in a time sequence, but really they just seem to encapsulate the whole world of reality, which is as it were, if it's a good novel, there's a completeness, it is a whole ...

S: Yes, there it is in the book, in the volume, as it were; they exist in space as well as in time.

Anyway does that really answer the question? Or go some way towards answering it, or is there any bit left unanswered?

Ratnaprabha: Well there was nothing specific in the question, I was just hoping you would clarify a bit, which you certainly have.

S: Again it requires more thought.

Tejananda: On a slightly different tack, Susiddhi has a poetic question. [170]

What are your favourite passages in poetry about time and impermanence?

S: Oh! I give some of them in, what was it...?

Dharmapriya: Was it in *Journey to Il Convento*?

S: No, not the journey, it was *St. Jerome Revisited*. I think they must be, at least those passages I quoted there; 'time like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away', and so on, must be among my favourite passages because I remembered them and I quoted them in that paper from memory. So they clearly have stuck and must therefore be among my favourite passages. I don't say that they are necessarily the greatest *as poetry*; it is more the general sentiment, perhaps the personal association that caused them to appeal to me and have caused them to stick. For instance in the case of 'time like an ever rolling stream', well that is from 'Oh God our help in ages past', which is a hymn which is in turn a versification of a psalm. We used to sing this in school, so I must have sung it in school hundreds of times so it really stuck and it made a certain impression, which wasn't just a

Christian impression - 'Time like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away. They fly forgotten as a dream, dies at the ope' of day.' I think there are two or three versions of that last line. So it's not just the words but the tune which is a rather mournful, or perhaps I should say solemn tune; perhaps someone could sing it, I can't. Devamitra looks as though he was about to sing it.

Devamitra: I don't know it I'm afraid.

S: It is really slow and solemn, some of you must have sung it yourselves in your pre-Buddhistic days. At school, in Church.

Ratnaprabha: It goes something like [sings the tune].

S: Usually in a lower key I think, [Laughter] and a bit more slowly, a bit more solemnly. Yes, that's right.

That is I think all I can say at the moment. I think if I looked through my favourite poets or favourite volumes of poetry I could probably come up with quite a few more quotations, verses, of that sort. Because poetry is full of them. I remember in the poetry of Li po one of the three great Chinese poets there are many, many passages dealing with time and transience. There is one refrain which you find in his poetry again and again; 'though the rivers flow to the sea, but they never reverse their course', they just go on flowing to the sea. They never turn back, they just go on; time passes, youth cannot be recaptured. There is a constant theme. Probably most of you are still young enough for these sort of things, these sort of sentiments not to mean too much to you. But as you get older, etc., etc., etc., I won't go on [Laughter]. But you see what I mean.

Virananda: What about passages concerning eternity?

S: Well, 'I saw eternity the other night', I have quoted *that* in a lecture, haven't I, a very early lecture. 'Time like a dome of many coloured glass stains the white radiance of [171] eternity'. Or 'Eternal Father strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless wave. Oh hear this when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea'. Another well known hymn.

Oh dear, these things do stick, don't they! [Laughter] D.H. Lawrence wrote an essay on hymns in a man's life which is quite interesting. But it is quite a thought that if one had been brought up as a Buddhist, or in Buddhist surroundings, how wonderful it would be if passages from the sutras stuck in one's mind in that sort of way and were surrounded by all sorts of early associations. Maybe if you could remember lying in your cradle and hearing your parents chanting the sevenfold puja. [Laughter] Well, there will be, or there are even now, children growing up with this sort of experience, one hopes, in the FWBO. At least I hope they grow up with that sort of experience and not just hearing the same old telly as they are lying in their cradle. Maybe I had better check up on this, otherwise I may be living in a world of dreams.

I know of little children, sons and daughters of Order members who have been very much into puja at quite a tender age. I remember one of Vangisa's sons, his younger son, used to love to perform pujas when his father did, from a very early age, from the age of four or five. He had his own little shrine and everything. So he, as he grows up, will have those sort of associations, those sort of memories. I have little memories of my own, as some of you know. I remember seeing Buddhistic things in my grandmother's house from a very early age, ever since I can remember. I saw them first as a baby, and the recollection of those things did stick. I remember that behind her front door she had a Tibetan lama bell, and whenever I went to her house one of things I used to do was to give this a ring, I would always do this - there it was behind the door. My father told me that as a boy he had always rung it outside the door on New Year's Eve. There it was, a typical Tibetan ritual bell. I have a few associations of this sort. There were other things which she had which I well remember; a painting, one or two images. Also photographs taken by my father's stepfather in China of Chinese criminals having their heads cut off. And there the heads were on the ground in front of them, they were kneeling down with their hands tied behind their backs and their heads were on the ground. So my grandmother had a whole stack of these sort of photographs taken by my father's step father in a little cabinet. My sister and I used to look at these when we were very small children until someone realized one day what it was we were looking at. *[Laughter]* We didn't think anything of it in particular, it was just people having their heads cut off *[Laughter]* - it didn't have any particular significance to us, it was just people with their heads cut off and lying on the ground. It didn't upset us or anything like that, you know how matter of fact children are; they just had their heads cut off, there was nothing to it.

But yes, I have all these sort of associations, I was perhaps fortunate that I do have memories of this sort, fond associations of this sort. But this, no doubt, will become more and more common. I have written about these things in the unpublished chapters of my memoirs.

Tejananda: Now a question from me.

About the quote from the Vajrasatva Yoga sadhana. The 'Eh ma oh, dharma wondrous strange'. Simply, as you quoted it in the lecture is it complete and should this [172] particular text, as it comes from a sadhana, be used outside of the Order?

S: I don't remember if it is complete; I think it is complete actually. I doubt very much if it should be used in pujas outside the Order. It certainly shouldn't be used lightly by any means. It comes, as far as I remember, from the Vajrasatva sadhana which I have and which I did for a while.

In a way it does reconcile, so to speak, that the birthed and the birthless, so you could say the relative and the absolute, time and eternity, this is the gist of it, this is the thrust of it. But then it says, 'wondrous strange', perhaps strange is not a very good translation, it is something wondrous, something extraordinary, something incomprehensible, something mysterious. So you are given that warning before the actual verses occur.

Tejananda: Did you say that you yourself translated it or you did it in ...

S: No, I did the sadhana for some time, it was translated for me by somebody else.

Dharmadhara: Would it be regarded as belonging to the Anuttara Yoga?

S: I think so, if I remember rightly. Ah, just a moment, that is not quite correct, it belongs to the Mayajala corpus and tradition. It is mahayoga - yes it is Anuttara Yoga Tantra and according to the Ningmapa tradition is included under mahayoga. They sub-divide the Anuttara Yoga traditionally to maha-yoga, anu-yoga, ati-yoga so the mayajala is a subdivision of the maha-yoga. Somewhere in my notes I have a little diagram explaining or showing just where it fits in. I think that what I have said even isn't *completely* correct, it's more or less correct.

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmadhara on Dorje Chang and Padmasambhava.

One of the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava is Vajradhara, which I have heard is also an Adibuddha, another form of the Adibuddha. What is the connection between Padmasambhava and Dorje Chang, the Adibuddha and would it be that Padmasambhava is more of a manifestation of that?

S: This is what I was thinking. That would seem to be a more appropriate way to put it, unless of course - which is quite conceivable and quite understandable - one is regarding Padmasambhava himself as the all-embracing ultimate reality. One can certainly do that.

But otherwise it is very much that Padmasambhava as, let's say, Nirmanakaya is an aspect of Vajradhara who is usually regarded as an embodiment of the Dharmakaya.

Dharmadhara: Dorje Chang is often represented as in yab-yum form. Could you say something about that? [173]

S: Well Yab-yum representations, representations of Buddhas and their consorts in yab-yum are considered to belong to the Anuttara Yoga Tantra. They are not found in the so-called lower Tantras. So one can only say that if one saw Vajradhara in that form it would be envisaged in that form within that particular perspective. The meaning of it, as it were philosophically, is clear. It has got certain specific implications for Vajrayana practice also. In general philosophical terms it represents the complete union, the non-duality of Wisdom and Compassion, of wisdom and means. But of course in the Vajrayana as actually practised it means or implies a very great deal more than that. One might say that Padmasambhava is an essentially Tantric figure so when he comes to be associated with Vajradhara it is perhaps not surprising that Vajradhara is then

shown in yab-yum form.

Tejananda: Then the final two questions are not directly related to the lecture or indeed the series. We have one from Saddhaloka which concerns the picture of the medicine Buddha.

I would just like to ask you about that figure which I believe you asked to have reproduced and made available. Hardly anyone seems to know much about it and I was wondering why you felt it was good that it was more generally seen and known and what your connection with the figure is and anything else you would be able to tell us about it.

S: I am not so sure that I *asked* for it to be reproduced, I think it was more that people here wanted a wider range of thangkas, so to speak. And I had this one which someone had given me and it occurred to me that it might be a good idea to make that available, in a way to popularize that aspect of Buddhahood. Because in the Pali scriptures the Buddha is spoken of as the great physician, the great healer and that is one way of looking at the Dharma itself, as a means of healing, spiritual healing. Also I think that I also had in mind the fact that we have quite a good book in the Order library, a book which is quite easily available on the healing Buddha, so that it would be quite easy for people to find out about the healing Buddha. And of course he is historically quite important in Buddhism, he is a non-Tantric figure, so I think I must simply have felt that it would be a good idea if people were better acquainted with him. One way of becoming acquainted is through the thangka, by visual means.

I don't have any sadhana of the healing Buddha though I think in the book I mentioned there is some description of sadhana is given. I certainly have in the Order Library translations of the Sutra of the Healing Buddha - there are several.

Dharmadhara: The medicine Buddha is holding a myrobalan fruit. Have you had any contact with this, is it a common fruit in India?

S: I believe it is what they call, probably the haritaki isn't it? I believe it is, there is a popular verse, let's see if I can remember it. [quotes in Sanskrit - something like *yasma mata priya nati, tasma mati hari takī*] which means: [174] 'for him who has no loving mother haritaki is the loving mother'. It's so good for you.

Dharmadhara: Where's that from?

S: I don't know, it's Sanskrit, you hear it in India, it a popular little jingle. I believe the haritaki is in fact the myrobalan or rather the emblematic myrobalan to give its full name. You would have to check this. But yes, I believe, whether it is or not haritaki it is still used in traditional Indian medicine. It is a sort of - what shall we say - panacea.

Dharmadhara: I gather it's got a long history in Buddhism. Is it actually the top

of the Mahabodhi temple ...

S: I must say I don't really know anything about it, but the Tibetans have probably found all sorts of *extraordinary* meanings in it! *[Laughter]* But there is an actual myrobalan tree and an actual myrobalan fruit, it isn't a mythical thing like the mandarava flower. I must say I don't really know anything about it; but I am sure it would be quite easy to find out just because it is so well known in Indian traditional medicine and no doubt in Tibetan traditional medicine too. What actual virtues it has, if any, I don't know. It probably does have some curative properties or remedial properties. I don't know whether the Greeks knew it, it sounds like a Greek name, doesn't it, myrobalan.

Tejananda: Finally with regard to the next session of study on the White Lotus Sutra. We had a meeting this afternoon in which we thought it would be a good idea to start making preparations.

S: When will that be, by the way.

Susiddhi: 5th to the 14th May.

S: So what are the suggestions?

Tejananda: Well, not only go through the lectures individually to begin with, not only go through the lectures but read the White Lotus Sutra, and a question in particular is what translations do you best recommend or which translations if any?

S: Well we've got Kern from the Sanskrit. We've got Hurvitz from the Tibetan, is it? Or Sanskrit consulting the Tibetan, and then we've got Soothill and those who tried to revise him. They haven't done it very well. Oh dear, it's not easy. I think probably on the whole Hurvitz, but maybe the one in the *Threefold Lotus Sutra* which is the one based on Soothill more to get the feel of the poetry. Soothill did it really well. I did have his translation or partial translation in the original edition but I'm afraid someone borrowed it and never gave it back. It has been reprinted but I'm afraid I haven't got a copy of the reprint but I think that is the best version, though it isn't complete unfortunately.

Tejananda: You actually Soothill's better than the revised one?

S: From a poetical point of view. The revised one, I checked a few passages when I was revising *the Eternal Legacy* and found that Soothill was, in a few instances I checked, quite accurate when I consulted the Sanskrit text whereas in so-called revising him the scholars revising him had actually *departed* from the Sanskrit text and distorted the meaning, and also spoiled his language. So I was rather annoyed about that. Yes. That may not have been done very frequently but it's certainly done in some key passages I checked.

Kulamitra: What title does the Hurvitz translation come under.

S: It's the Fine Dharma of the White Lotus or something like that. White Lotus of the Fine Dharma, yes.

Tejananda: We came up with the idea of not only studying it as we have on this but actually reciting it, possibly the whole sutra, during the retreat.

S: That would be good. You could certainly do that I think. And also you can swot up on the appropriate chapter of *the Eternal Legacy*. I give a sort of summary of the whole sutra with comments and explanations - just one chapter. I think it's probably the longest chapter in the book.

There's another book in the Order Library of the lotus sutra in Chinese Buddhist art which you could look at when you come here. That will just give you another angle on it.

Dharmapriya: I believe that this Golden Mountain monastery in San Francisco or one of their names is issuing a new translation but with commentary.

S: That's true. It's really dreadful I'm afraid. I've got several volumes of it. I was hoping they'd be better but they just get bogged down in... it isn't really commentary. They just sort of bring in all sorts of material at every step and the text is lost sight of. It's not an intelligent commentary, though there is some useful information in it. And their language from a literary point of view is dreadful in all their translations. It's done by a committee. It's so wooden and mechanical, without feeling, almost as though produced by computer. In view of all the effort they're putting into it, which is really quite admirable, that's a great pity, but I think their translation's almost totally devoid of literary value. And also they've got their own English coinage for certain technical terms, and sometimes you're not sure what Sanskrit term is at the back of their particular English expression, and that doesn't help in understanding the text.

Dharmapriya: Does the same apply to their translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra?

S: To the best of my knowledge it applies to all their translations. I don't find them at all satisfactory. It's a great pity in view of the amount of *work* that goes into them. They're very sincere in their endeavours but I think rather unimaginative, not to say sometimes even unintelligent.

Kulamitra: I thought this in relation to *the Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* that maybe as people do learn Tibetan and in other cases Sanskrit, one of the most useful things they could do for us before doing a full translation would be to go back and find out what the original terms were.

S: Yes, indeed. That would be most useful.

Kulamitra: That would really clear up some of the other translations too.

S: It would. This can be very easily done by someone with just a very slight knowledge of the language. Some Order members are doing it already for themselves in the case of translations of Pali texts, because fortunately Pali texts are issued in editions in roman characters, so it's not very difficult to look up the corresponding passage in the romanized Pali and work out for yourself which technical term is actually being used in respect of a particular English translation.

Kulamitra: I was thinking that maybe we could not only do that but circularize it so that those of us who have the translations...

S: Yes, revised translations, revised in the light of the original technical terms, or having the original technical terms included in brackets after the translation. That would be very useful.

Kulamitra: Or even before that. Obviously that's a financial undertaking. At least you could have notes so that when you were reading a translation you could refer to those notes.

S: Yes when a certain translator uses the *absolute* well actually that's meant to translate Dharmakaya. That is very useful to know because there are all sorts of implications, all sorts of connotations and associations with regard to the term Dharmakaya which you certainly could not deduce from the term *absolute* even in a Buddhist context. For all you knew it might be *sunyata*. To know that it was Dharmakaya would be very helpful.

Kulamitra: In the Life and Liberation particularly the use of English I thought is very beautiful.

S: Yes, a great improvement, yes.

Kulamitra: But it's such unusual English that you just really don't know what the original...

S: No, you get a very good general idea and a good general feeling for the text and the teachings but you couldn't make that text a basis for detailed study. You would not be able to achieve sufficient precision for that to be possible. *[Pause]*

So you're already planning and looking forward to the next session! When are you actually going to start taking mitra study groups on this particular series of tapes?

_____ : Next Monday.

S: Next Monday! Oh you'll be very fresh and well prepared then.

Susiddhi: This Friday.

S: Friday, ah! No danger of your forgetting anything then! No doubt everybody's got reasonably extensive notes.

Tejananda: Can we remind you about the Browning, Bhante.

S: Oh yes, let me go and get it.

The general work I referred to by the way was, *The Multiple States of Being*. I referred to a work by Rene Guinol it was called *The Multiple States of Being*, a short work but quite difficult.

One must bear in mind that Browning's style is quite difficult and it is not always easy to grasp his meaning at first reading or hearing. But this is one of the more intelligible passages; nevertheless I think you will have to listen quite carefully.

It is from *The Ring and the Book*.

Religion used to tell humanity
She gave him warrant or denied his course.
And since the course was much to his own mind,
Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from bone
To unhusk truth, a-hiding in its hulls,
Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way,
He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,
Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all recusants,
While prim in place, Religion overlooked; [175]
And so had done till doomsday, never a sign
Nor sound of interference from *her* mouth,
But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,
Let eye give notice as if soul were there,
Muttered 'Tis a vile trick, foolish more than vile,
'Should have been counted sin, I make it so
'At any rate no more of it for me
'Nay, for I break the torture engine thus'
Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
Look round for help and see none, smile and say
'What, broken is the rack? Well done of thee!
'Did I forget to abrogate its use?
'Be the mistake in common with us both
'- One more fault our blind age shall answer for,
'Down in my book denounced though it must be,
Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means!
Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee
To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
And kick such place out, we should wait indeed.

Do you get the gist of it? That religions uses humanity like a slave to carry out her cruel behests and in the end humanity revolts and will no longer do so, then

religion pretends that she had been of his way of thinking, simply, all the time and she had just sort of forgotten to stop things like torture. But anyway it is written down in the book somewhere that that's bad so should go along with it now! [Laughter]

But that is very much the attitude of many writers on Christianity. It represents their attitude very well. It is from Book 1 lines 985 - 1112. There is a new *Penguin* edition of *The Ring and the Book*, which is the one I read. I was quite impressed by this poem which I had meant to read for years and years but never had. But what impressed me most about it apart from its poetic quality and use of language was the way in which it represented the story, or described the case of the murder of Pompilia, how it represented the truth about that from the point of view of so many people and that showed how, in a way, an incident or episode or event can be seen in so many different points of view so that in the end you are almost unable to see where the truth really lies. So from that point of view it is very, very interesting. Some of the books - I think there are twelve books - are very, very powerful indeed. Not all equally so but the whole work is quite remarkable. I found it quite well worth reading though the language and style are admittedly sometimes quite difficult.

[Tape 11]

[short break in recording] ... after a long period of neglect.

Dharmapriya: The murder of whom did you say?

S: Pompilia. it's a sixteenth murder case which Browning found a book about, I think he calls it the yellow book which contains the documents of this case in Italian and Latin and he constructed this poem on the basis of those records, and he uses the poem to explore various ethical, philosophical, artistic, even political issues, using that particular framework.

It gives, incidentally, a very good picture of Italian, [176] especially Roman, life at that period, the period of the counter-reformation.

Devamitra: Have you read anything else recently that has made a very deep impression of you?

S: Wyndham Lewis. Though I have only read one book actually by him, which was *Tarr*.

I am sorry, I usually read big thick books and when the book is a big thick book I sometimes don't have time to read it. It is not everybody's bedside book. Well, yes, in a way it *is* everybody's bedside book, or a lot of people's bedside book it would probably send a lot of people to sleep! [Laughter] But this is a well annotated edition with a good introduction. So it is probably best to read it in this edition. I don't know whether it is on sale in the LBC bookshop or the Croydon bookshop; *The Ring and the Book*.

_____ : No it isn't in the LBC bookshop.

S: It is not exactly a popular work. But yes I think it could be studied.

All right let's leave it there.

*Transcribed by persons unknown - probably participants on the seminar
Second edition checked against the original recordings by Dharmachari
Silabhadra
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