

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 [Mitrans](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna 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 Tiratna 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 [Tiratna 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

DISCLAIMER

This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS with Study Group Leaders on the Lectures.

CREATIVE SYMBOLS OF THE TANTRIC PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

PRESENT: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Ratnaprabha, Tejananda,ulananda, Kuladeva, Surata, Cittapala, Satyaraja, Priyananda, Dharmapriya, Chakkhupala, Susiddhi, Vairocana, Ratnabodhi, Abhaya, Ruchiraketu, Sarvamisra, Saddhaloka.

8 December 1987: THE TIBETAN WHEEL OF LIFE

Tejananda: Tonight we've got five questions on 'The Symbolism of the Tibetan Wheel of Life', starting with a general background question from me, which is simply: Could you recommend any suitable background reading matter for study leaders on Tantra in general?

Sangharakshita: Hm! In a way, there is almost too much material. There is nothing very unified, nothing very comprehensive. One has got translations of particular Tantric texts, and one has books on different aspects of the Tantric tradition: for instance, there were two or three books recently published on Dzogchen, which is, one might say, an aspect of Ati Yoga, which is the third and last of the three highest yanas of the Nyingmapas. A fairly old, but still useful, book is Snellgrove's *Buddhist Himalaya*, and he has recently published something even fuller and more comprehensive on Indo-Tibetan Buddhism; I don't remember its title, but I have seen it and it does seem to contain a quite thorough discussion of the Vajrayana. It may be worth looking into that. I think it is quite important to get an overall picture. One mustn't, of course, forget the appropriate sections in chapter III of the Survey; they do give a bit of general perspective. Some of the more popular things that have been put out are not really very useful.

Tejananda: Could you name any that aren't worth looking at?

S: Ha! That would be perhaps a bit invidious. I am afraid there [are] a lot of relatively new ones I have just glanced at but which have not seemed very useful. But Snellgrove is on the whole very reliable. One can easily get lost in a mass of detail. I think I have made the point, years ago, that it isn't only the Hinayana that developed, in the form of the Abhidharma, a scholasticism. The Mahayana developed a scholasticism; the Vajrayana, too, strange and paradoxical though it may seem, developed a scholasticism of its own, and some at least of the books on the Vajrayana that emanate from Tibetan sources are, one might say, highly scholastic, and don't, therefore, give a very adequate impression of or feeling for the spirit of the Vajrayana. Perhaps I'll try and look through some of the books on the subject that we have and refresh my memory, and see whether there are any that I could actually recommend apart from the two by Snellgrove that I mentioned, and possibly see [2] whether there were any I should warn you against. I warn you against Lobsang Rampa, of course! (Laughter).

Tejananda: It would be especially useful to know of any books which are in print, which one could actually get hold of.

S: All right, then. Remind me before the end of the week.

Tejananda: The second question is from Dharmapriya, about symbols.

Dharmapriya: In the talk you define or describe a symbol as something that stands for another thing, the other thing not being able to be known in any other way. In our group, we couldn't think of any example of this: i.e. for anything we could think of Enlightenment, spiritual truth etc. we could think of a conceptual representation as given by the Madhyamika or the Yogacara. Could you give an example of something that can only be represented by a symbol, or otherwise elucidate your description of a symbol in this context?

S: I looked through my notes just before I came along, and it did occur to me that there might be a question on that particular point, or perhaps that there ought to be a question on [it]. In a way, I suppose, the question is selfcontradictory; because if a symbol does represent something which cannot be communicated in any other way, you can't, as it were, compare the symbol that stands for that thing with that thing as known in some other way. So you just have the symbol. In a way, you don't know what it's a symbol of; you don't know what it stands for, because you don't know it other than through the symbol. You can give a meaning to a symbol, if you like, but in a way that is a quite different kind of activity. You can use a symbol or your understanding of a symbol or experience of a symbol as a starting point for a series of ideas, of concepts; but that is not to say that you have really exhausted, or got into touch with, even, what the symbol stands for, as I have put it. In that sense, well, almost anything is a symbol! Because everything stands for something which can't be apprehended in any other way. But, having said that, I thought I ought to make a distinction let me find the actual point, because I think there is room for some misunderstanding here. Yes, I say that 'the Tantra represents that aspect of Buddhism that is concerned not with theories and speculations, not with formal religiosity, but with direct experience of what one truly and essentially is' Well, that's clear enough. But 'This experience cannot be mediated by concepts.' When I say that it cannot be mediated by concepts, I mean, or I meant, or I should have meant, that mere concepts, just as concepts, cannot give you the experience cannot even give you a taste of the experience but the concepts can, in certain cases, be a basis for the realisation of the experience. I think that distinction has to be made. I then say that the experience can be evoked by symbols. In a way, it means that, though I have said that symbols stand for something, in a way or to some extent they don't; in a way the symbol is that particular thing, appearing under a certain set of circumstances, a certain set of conditions, in a certain mode, as it were. You could say a human being is a symbol; the figure of the Buddha is a symbol, a symbol of Enlightenment. But that doesn't mean that you have a clear, adequate idea of Enlightenment; [that] you know what Enlightenment is, and for that reason you can recognise the Buddha as being a symbol of that Enlightenment that isn't really the position at all, is it? You've got some idea of Enlightenment, you've seen or heard the word Enlightenment, so you have got [3] some idea about it, but if you open yourself to the figure of the Buddha, you get a certain experience in that way, don't you? You get an inkling of something. But that of which you get an inkling doesn't necessarily coincide with your concept of what you think is Enlightenment! That is why I say, in a way, that everything is a symbol, because every rupa is sunyata. Is that clear, or does it make things less clear? Perhaps one should try and get down to the basic question.

Dharmapriya: Well, if I have understood you correctly, I think you have answered my basic question. I have understood you to imply, more or less, that what lies behind the symbol, as it were, is something that we can maybe sketch with words; if I can sketch something about Enlightenment with words, I don't experience it, because of my level of development; whereas through a symbol of Enlightenment I can get an inkling, a foretaste, perhaps.

S: Yes, but even so you need to be as it were open to the symbol. It is not that the symbol definitely means this, that and the other and you can read off the meaning without opening yourself to the symbol. That is the difference between a symbol and a concept, to a certain extent; or, at least, one of the differences. Perhaps one shouldn't think too much in terms of symbols as symbolising something; just symbols. In other words, they are not concepts; you can't exhaust their meaning in that way. Very often they are quite concrete: they have form, they have colour, they sort of communicate something but it is not easy to put what they communicate into words. [It is] a bit like dreams sometimes a dream which leaves you with a very vivid impression, a very strong feeling of one type or another, but it's difficult to say what, it's difficult to put it into terms of concepts. Or do you feel perhaps that the whole language, as it were, of symbols and symbolism just is misleading, that one ought to find some other way of putting the matter?

Dharmapriya: No, but, Bhante, the reason I raised this question is that just a couple of days ago I was listening to your lecture on 'Symbolism in Tibetan Buddhist Art', and there you have also said, 'A symbol is not a sign, but you have more or less defined a symbol as something representing another phenomenon on a different mode of being.'

S: Yes, on a different level, I think I sometimes say.

Dharmapriya: And I could understand that far better than this lecture

S: Yes, which implies a sort of theory of correspondences, doesn't it, in the hermetic sense?

Dharmapriya: And in that sense I found the whole concept of symbol very useful.

S: Perhaps one should take a simple example of a symbol like, say, the lotus flower and let one's mind dwell on it, and ask oneself: what am I experiencing? What is this lotus flower? In a sense, what does it mean? because, clearly, it is not just a flower, it is not just a botanical specimen. It conveys something, gives me a certain feeling, which goes beyond the purely botanical parameters, one might say. And therefore one calls it a symbol. Perhaps one needs to ask oneself why one attaches this particular label to certain things; what is it that makes, say, the lotus flower a symbol? How is it that it is not just a flower in the botanical sense? What makes it a symbol? What extra quality does it have? How [4] does it become a symbol? Clearly, it isn't a symbol in nature, as it were well, in a sense it isn't. But, again, is it that, in a purely subjective, projective sort of way, one invests the innocent lotus with all sorts of qualities which it does not actually possess. Is it that, or is it something more than that, or at least other than that? (Pause). So when one thinks of a lotus as a symbol, presumably one is seeing the lotus as sort of illumined by some other, perhaps higher, dimension of reality; it stands for something which is not otherwise apprehended. To go back to The Perfection of Wisdom, you don't really experience the sunyata except through rupa. It is not that you experience rupa and rupa guides you to sunyata and leaves you there, and you then dispense with rupa and have just sunyata. It isn't really like that, is it? So, in that sense, anything can be a symbol in the sense that anything of the material world can as it were be invested with those qualities, or seen as possessing those qualities, which make it a symbol rather than just a fact. A symbol is an object which is somehow seen or felt or experienced as possessing some sort of heightened significance, though what it is you find difficult to reduce to concepts or to words in the conceptual sense.

Abhaya: So, Bhante, does this mean that it is the subjective, so to speak, element that you project on to what is normally only an ordinary thing? It is the individual conscious operating on that object that makes it a symbol?

S: Well, no, I have said that it can't really in a sense be reduced to that, because I mentioned the possibility not just of investing with qualities but seeing qualities that are there. One has to ask oneself, I have suggested, what one is actually doing: is one simply investing the innocent lotus with qualities that it doesn't actually have, which are merely projected on to it, or whether actually you are seeing something which is there but which you don't usually see? If you see rupa as sunyata, are you as it were projecting sunyata on to the rupa, or are you seeing the rupa rather as it really is?

Kulananda: Are you saying that there is a state of mind in which all experience is symbolic experience, and that seeing all experience as symbolic is more real?

S: One could certainly put it in that way, yes. I use the expression 'heightened significance'. If you see things as possessing a heightened significance, a significance which is difficult if not impossible to reduce to conceptual terms, then you are as it were seeing things symbolically. When I say a symbol is not a sign, I mean it is not that you have got this particular material thing and it sort of matches that particular nonmaterial thing, and sort of guides you to it. Correspondence doesn't mean quite that. It is not that, say, the lotus flower symbolises something which is actually quite other than a lotus flower and could have been symbolised by something quite different; it is rather that what the lotus flower symbolises, or what we speak of as being symbolised by the lotus flower, is in fact a deeper dimension, so to speak, of the lotus flower itself; so that when you see the lotus as a symbol, you are just seeing the lotus in a deeper and truer way. But, as I said, perhaps one should just ask oneself what happens when, for you, something is a symbol? One uses that sort of language, so what is a symbol, or what is it that makes something a symbol for one? Perhaps one needs to examine one's actual experience, because I gave the example of the lotus; well, everyone would agree that a lotus is symbolical of something or other, but do they actually experience it in that way? When does one experience something as a symbol? So [6] one has to distinguish, perhaps, between what one personally experiences as a symbol or in a symbolical manner, and what one recognises as conventionally regarded as a symbol. A symbol is not a sort of inadequate copy of something existing quite separately on some higher plane. Sometimes it is thought of like that, but I think that isn't really the case. That comes close to making the symbol just a sign. Perhaps one should pursue this analogy of a symbol and what it symbolises, and rupa and sunyata. Does that help at all?

: Could you say a bit more about that, please, Bhante?

S: Oh dear. I think it really needs reflecting on. Maybe I have said enough, if not too much. Because it is a question of so to speak contacting one's own feeling, as we say, about whatever it is that you speak of as a symbol; otherwise 'symbol' itself becomes just a concept, doesn't it? 'Oh, that's a symbol. Oh yes, we know all about that, it symbolises suchandsuch.' But you are not really treating, in that case, it would seem, a symbol as a symbol. It has become, maybe not a concept, but a sort of counter which you just manipulate.

Kulananda: Is it not possible to understand things as being symbolic without seeing them as being significant? In other words, when I use a word to a chair, I understand that I am

making a symbolic statement at a certain level because there is nothing really there. This is not to say that the chair is in any way significant, which would seem to contradict the idea of seeing the lotus as a symbol. In a way, one can see material objects as symbols for

S: Well, it raises the question of what you mean by 'significant'. When one says that a symbol is significant or conveys significance, one means that there is something there other than the form or the colour or sound which is communicated through that form, that colour, but which at the same time seems inseparable from that form and that colour. So one also therefore speaks of that object as being symbolical.

Kulananda: Then what does one mean by saying that one approaches sunyata via rupa, if one is not talking about highly significant symbolic events?

S: Well, when one speaks of rupa and sunyata, obviously from the Perfection of Wisdom point of view you are speaking of them as nondifferent, so you can't get at sunyata apart from rupa. I say that, rather than that you can't get at rupa apart from sunyata because we start from rupa, or what we think of as rupa, so therefore for us the question is to get from rupa to sunyata not that they are two things, but that sunyata is the sort of deeper dimension of rupa. So we are in contact with rupa, though what we are in contact with isn't really rupa! if you see what I mean so we have to get from rupa to sunyata, not the other way around.

Kulananda: So are you saying that, in terms of the experience of sunyata, all events are significant?

S: Oh, yes, indeed. Oh yes; if one could but see it. Because inasmuch as all rupas are sunyata, whenever you are in contact with rupa you are in contact with sunyata, and therefore, yes, everything that happens, everything you see whether it is a tree or the sky or the clouds are symbolical, one might say. But it is [6] not that 'This means this, and that means that,' and not that you can sort of make a list and check off one against its opposite number, but that everything is imbued with significance.

Kulananda: Is everything imbued with significance of the same order, or are there different degrees of significance from that point of view?

S: Well, ultimately, no difference of degree. But you may well, of course, experience, in a sense, things as having different degrees of significance or different degrees of intensity of significance, the significance being ultimately, in that case, one and the same significance. Some things it is easier to see as significant than others, for various subjective reasons you know, it is perhaps more easy to see a beautiful sunset as significant than an ash heap.

Kulananda: This would seem to tie in with what you have been saying about personal myth in the past.

S: Maybe, yes. But I think that when one deals with these 'Creative Symbols of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment', one has to be careful that one doesn't think, 'Here are the symbols, we've got the Wheel of Life, we've got the lotus and all the rest', [and] just really approach these so-called symbols in a purely mental, even intellectual way. Do you see what I am getting at? Maybe they are not as yet symbols for you at all.

Dharmapriya: I have noticed often, when you talk about the symbols in lectures, for example in the 'White Lotus' series as well, you make the point that one cannot explain a symbol, and then you go on, as it were, to give yes, I would tend to say a meaning, to the symbol; which I personally find very useful, because when I look at the object again for example, the Tibetan Wheel of Life I actually experience, feel, a little bit more of it, as if I had been brought a little bit closer, something has been cleared. For example, when you talk of the significance of what is in the hand of Avalokiteshvara in each of the Six Realms, it strikes me through this and other experiences that an intellectual elucidation of a symbol does help one to experience it a bit.

S: But then, of course, what does one mean by that elucidation?

Dharmapriya: Well, in the case of the Buddha figure, the Avalokiteshvara figure, in the Six Realms, I think you elucidate the two signs in the human realm [by] saying that these are the traditional insignia of the religious life in India; and that is an example of what I mean by elucidation.

S: In a way, of course, one is explaining symbols by symbols. You are helping to round out the symbol by making it more concrete. It is like having a semiprecious stone and you cut it, you facet it. So when I mentioned the begging bowl and the staff of the mendicant, clearly one is describing symbols. So you are as it were introducing subsidiary symbols, to a great extent, at least. And in that way, the original symbol is made more meaningful. It is refracted. But one has to beware of explaining symbols in a purely conceptual way.

Ratnaprabha: Would it not be possible to describe concepts as having mainly the characteristics that you have been ascribing to symbols, since all concepts are ultimately derived also from sense experience, and presumably refer to one's own as it were symbolic experiences? [7]

S: I have gone into that, haven't I, speaking of metaphor on various occasions? Yes, this is quite right. But very often, when we use a word that has this sort of origin and therefore is essentially metaphorical, and to that extent symbolical, we are not aware of that. We have rarefied it to such an extent that it is actually for us just a concept. We are not aware of all those material and metaphorical and symbolical associations. For instance, if we say 'understand' we 'understand' something we don't think at the same time of 'standing under', which is what the word literally means; it is in a way a spatial term. That meaning, or that sort of experience, is not present to us. We don't even think of it when we use the word 'understand'.

Ratnaprabha: So what does go on, when we are using a word like 'understand', if it is not as it were at least ultimately a reference back to actual sensual experience? Is it that we don't understand what we are doing at all?

S: We don't, actually; because we are using the word to as it were point to something that we can't point to in any other way. But since we can't point to it in any other way, as I said at the beginning in other words, we can't really compare pointing through symbols, or concepts which were once symbols, and pointing in some other way. So it is quite a strange process. Like the word 'Enlightenment'. Well, we all know that it contains the word 'light' forget about the Sanskrit original. So we have all got some sort of idea that 'light' represents

what we call an intellectual understanding which is, of course, an expression with roots in the material world. But if we want to try to explain, or try to investigate the accuracy of that expression 'Enlightenment', what can we say well, it isn't literally light that we experience when we become Enlightened, but then what it is it? We don't have any other independent language, as it were, except some other really basically metaphorical expression. So what is actually happening, as it were, what are we doing? We are not really describing anything at all not on that other level which we are supposed to be describing; or even if we are, we can't know on the intellectual level that we are describing it; perhaps we are describing it, but we can't know that.

Kulananda: We know that no description is exhaustive that we can

S: We don't really well, we know that, but in a way that is beside the point; or perhaps it is even actually wrong, because 'exhaustive' suggests that you have described something but not everything. Whereas I am really saying that you haven't, in a sense, described anything at all. Or, if you have, you can't know that you have described it; if by 'knowing' you are referring to some alternative method of explanation which you can then compare with the original one.

Ratnaprabha: Could it in a way be that one is in a sense playing a language game and one is bringing together words in certain ways that correspond to learnt patterns that people will as it were accept as meaningful, but that just occasionally one manages to bring together a network of words that themselves form a symbol, and once that has happened one's understanding is deepened?

S: I think one could put it in that way, because I do sometimes find, or do feel, when people ask questions, that it is actually a language game; they are not really asking a question. And when they do ask a question, it is because all the words have come together in that particular symbolical way which you have mentioned; and therefore some real communication has taken place. [8] For instance, you have got a simple question like 'What is Enlightenment?' Well, Enlightenment means understanding Reality'; so people might hear questions like that and they might frame a question on the same model: 'What is Enlightenment? Is Enlightenment understanding things as they really are?' Well, they are just varying the phrase; the question, in a way, doesn't mean anything, but they have heard questions of that particular pattern, so they think up a slightly different alternative pattern and they think they have asked a question. But very often you can tell, from the way that they ask it, that it is not a question for them at all; they are just ringing the changes on some particular word pattern that they have heard or read about. And lots of questions are like that. I am not talking about this evening's questions, but in a general way I have noticed that. And the person will ask the question with an air of asking a very intelligent question, but you know, actually you can see quite clearly it is a completely vacuous question, there is no meaning at all; especially for that particular person. It might have a meaning for somebody else, but it certainly doesn't have for that particular person.

Dharmapriya: Are we saying that the question is meaningful when it has resonance resonance is symbolic?

S: Yes. Of course, this is a highly metaphorical expression, but yes, one could say that, yes. In a way, that is another way of saying, 'There is the significance.' One can tell the difference, very often, quite easily. Resonance is a metaphor pertaining to sound, which is a bit like

mantra, and significance, you could say, corresponds more to form. But sometimes you do experience a state of mind in which everything has significance everything; everything you see has significance. Not that the significance is reducible to a conceptual meaning; it just has significance. I am not sure if it is Keats or Shelley that uses the expression 'huge cloudy symbols of a high romance'. I think it is Keats, isn't it? Yes. Well, perhaps that conveys something of it. But you have to be very careful, as I said, not to take 'lotus' and 'vajra' as sort of symbols in themselves to take them cold and treat them as symbols in a purely mental sort of way; it has got to be felt, for want of a better expression.

Kulananda: Bhante, can you say that the path of the spiritual life is about trying to find more significance, more resonance, in our daily lives?

S: Find, or see? Yes, one could say that, yes. When you can do that, [there is] never a dull moment! Some mystics or meditators speak of seeing literally everything as lit up from within, everything glowing with light; well, they are referring to some such experience. Light, significance, meaning, inner depth, symbolism it all really amounts, I think, to the same thing, or much the same thing, at the different levels, degrees.

Cittapala: Does what you were saying about language I [can't] get this out are there sort of groupings of words which are actually more true in a real sense than other groupings ?

S: Ah, well, I used to give an example from Keats the first line of Endymion. There is a story, I don't know whether it is true, but this illustrates the point, anyway, that Keats wrote first of all: 'A thing of beauty is a constant joy.' Then he thought, 'No, that's not right; no.' And then he wrote: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' which was right. So you could say that 'A thing of beauty is a constant joy' and 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' would be exactly the same thing, or as near as makes no difference. But the one has resonance and the other doesn't; the one is as it were mantric, you could say, the other isn't, by some mysterious law of the combination of words and sounds. But do you feel that? Or [9] are you one of those people who say, 'What's the difference? It's exactly the same?' 'A thing of beauty is a constant joy' or 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' do you really actually feel the difference?

Ratnaprabha: There's a metrical difference.

S: There's a metrical difference. That's part of the word arrangement, isn't it the different sound of the consonants and vowels; the rhythm; the fact that one version ends in a monosyllable, the other in a disyllable? So one combination of words evokes significance, you could say, whereas the other doesn't. So it is not a question of conveying meaning in the conceptual sense. But I think the main point that emerges from this whole discussion perhaps we have gone into the question sufficiently is that you can't really divide things into symbols and nonsymbols. Things become symbols under different conditions, especially when you see what one can only describe as the deeper significance of that particular thing, that particular material object. It does seem, perhaps, that there are certain things which are easier to see in this way, like the lotus. I mean why not a daisy? Why the lotus? Why not a daisy or even a dandelion? Well, some people saw the dandelion in highly symbolical terms; D. H. Lawrence seems to have done that.

Cittapala: But could you go so far as to say that the lotus is more real, in a way, than no, that's not right

S: One can't say that a lotus is more real than a dandelion, or that it necessarily in itself possesses more significance, but it may, for various subjective or cultural reasons, be easier for people to see the significance of a lotus than the significance of a dandelion. There may be, in a way, some objective reason; because the lotus does grow out of the mud in a way that, say, the dandelion does not. So it does become a symbol for purity. But you have to be very careful that it doesn't just become a sign for purity, as it were, and that the association isn't just an intellectual [one] that you actually feel the purity of the lotus flower. Most of you haven't even seen a lotus flower, so I suppose that is rather difficult, actually. I suppose you could have a good try imagining one! But you could have the same sort of experience with any other beautiful, especially white, flower which you happened to see when you were out early in the morning when it had a few drops of dew on it; it might give you the same sort of experience that the lotus traditionally gives, the lotus as symbol. But I think what I was going to say, to sort of sum it up, was that it is not so much that a symbol is a particular thing, but it is a particular thing seen under certain circumstances or in a particular way. So, in that sense, anything can be a symbol, in principle.

Vairocana: Could it be, Bhante, that some sounds and some energies are more archetypal than others so that for now you put more significance on to them?

S: This introduces another very ambiguous and controversial word into the discussion! I take them as all belonging to the same order 'archetypal', 'symbolical', 'mythic'.

Vairocana: It seems like something like a lotus somehow appears to be more archetypal than, say, a daisy or something else. [10]

S: You could parody famous words and say that everything is symbolical but some things are more symbolical than others! Anyway, perhaps we had better leave it there. What else have we?

Tejananda: The third question is from Ratnaprabha, and it is on the use of the term Tantra.

Ratnaprabha: I sent the draft of my book to Vajrabodhi, who has been working in Japan ..., and he suggested that I should drop the use of the term 'Tantric Buddhism'. He said that, in Japan, 'the Tantra' was only ever used to refer to Hindu schools, and people would never understand it as having any relation to Buddhism. And he said that there they would always talk about 'esoteric' Buddhism when they were speaking of the Vajrayana, rather than of 'Tantric' Buddhism. I have come across some similar misunderstandings, even in this country, when people are unable to distinguish between the Hindu Tantra and the Buddhist Tantra.

S: The word Tantra is, of course, a Buddhist word as much as a Hindu word. For instance, the word sutra is used extensively in Hinduism. There is a vast sutra literature in Hinduism; but in Hinduism sutra has quite a different meaning. A sutra means an aphorism, so you've got the Brahma Sutras, the aphorisms on Brahma, also known as the Vedanta Sutras, the aphorisms on

The Vedanta. You've got Yoga Sutras, the sutras on Yoga, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. You've got Kama Sutras, the aphorisms on the subject of sex. So if you were to follow the principle that Vajrabodhi suggests, you would have to stop calling Buddhist sutras sutras, too; because the term sutra is used by Hindus. Shastra is used by Hindus and Buddhists. That is inevitable when they use a common language, in this case Sanskrit. I mean the Tibetans use the expression Tantra again and again; they speak of the Tantrayana. But to come back to this question of 'esoteric': where do the Japanese get this expression 'esoteric school' from? Originally, of course, the distinction in India was between the Paramitayana and the Mantrayana. The Paramitayana is the yana of the six paramitas. The Mantrayana is the yana of the repetition of mantra, and the Mahayana was originally divided into these two. That was in the earlier stage. Then the Mantrayana came to be subdivided into Vajrayana, Sahajayana and so on, as I have explained in the Survey. But those later developments which became the Anuttara Yoga Tantra in Tibet did not go to China and Japan, in most cases; so in China, and then in Japan, what we call Tantric Buddhism was referred to as the Mantra school, as distinct from the Paramita school; it was the mantra school of the Mahayana. And mantra was translated into Chinese as 'secret word', so it became 'the school of the secret word', i.e. the secret school, i.e. the esoteric school. That is how Japanese Buddhism arrives at this expression, or Japanese writing in English. So that cannot be regarded as equivalent to Tantrayana, if you regard as Tantrayana as including not just the Mantrayana but the Vajrayana and Sahajayana and so on, all these as it were later Tantric developments. Sometimes, of course, Vajrayana is taken not quite correctly but as near as makes no difference as equivalent to Tantrayana. Perhaps one could use that expression; because that expression, Vajrayana, is not found in Hinduism. So one could perhaps speak, if one thought that 'Tantra' created confusion, of Vajrayana Buddhism. But it is always open to one to refer to 'the Buddhist Tantra', not just to 'the Tantra'. [11]

Anyway, is that more or less clear?

Ratnaprabha: I think so, yes, thank you.

S: So what the Japanese refer to as 'esoteric Buddhism' or the esoteric school corresponds to what Tibetans call the lower Tantra. What Tibetans call the higher Tantra, that is the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, comprising Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga, of the Nyingmapas, is not found, it would seem, in Japan. So 'esoteric school' does not really correspond to Tantric Buddhism in the Tibetan sense. So if you were to use 'esoteric Buddhism' to cover Tantric Buddhism in the Tibetan sense, you would be misrepresenting Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. None the less, it is worth considering whether the expression just 'the Tantra' doesn't mislead, especially if it is used in a general book which doesn't discuss Buddhism very comprehensively. Sometimes in books written by Chinese or Japanese scholars they speak of 'the school of secrets'. I forget the Chinese for that: I think it's mi something or other. If you want, you can find out from Takakusu's Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, where he goes into all the different schools.

: Who was the author of that, Bhante?

S: Takakusu. Quite an old Japanese scholar well, he died years ago but the book has been reprinted and we do have it in the Order Library.

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmapriya on the red, black and yellow seeds.

S: If Dharmapriya doesn't ask it, I've got a little point to make on these seeds.

Dharmapriya: I'll see if I can ask it first. What I had prepared was: Although you describe the three kinds of seeds in general as potentialities for good, for evil and for Enlightenment respectively, when you come to describe the seeds realm by realm in the context of the individual realms the account suggests that the red seeds are not so much potentials as rather existing happiness, and that the black seeds represent existing unhappiness rather than being potentials; and that only really the yellow seeds are potentials, for gaining Enlightenment.

S: Well, the red and the black seeds can't be potentials for gaining Enlightenment. But perhaps the language of potentiality is misleading here. It is a question of a relative predominance of those seeds in particular realms; in fact, I think I use that expression, don't I? relative predominance? For instance, if you speak of a certain realm, or there being in a certain realm a relative predominance of red seeds, you mean that the conditions in that realm are such that normally people are likely to perform skilful actions to that extent. It is not that they actually or necessarily do in all cases, so in that sense there is an element of potentiality; but that there is a greater likelihood of them performing, say, skilful actions to that extent or in that proportion, in that particular realm.

Dharmapriya: An example brought by Ratnaprabha was the god realms, where the overwhelming predominance of seeds is the red seeds, but I believe the point Ratnaprabha made was that they actually have a dominating motive of pride. It's more the situation that they enjoy the fruit of past good actions than that they are actually performing good actions, so it suggests that they don't have that much potential for performing good actions. [12]

S: This way of speaking of things comes from Chinese tradition. As far as I remember, the red seeds did represent good or positive actions actually performed. I suppose one could consider even the godstate of happiness and delight as in a way being volitional. It is not that they were simply passively enjoying. Just as in meditation, experiences of bliss and so on are volitions due to one's concentration. I know that we do often speak of the gods as simply reaping the fruit of past actions, but perhaps one should not take that too strictly or too narrowly. But certainly, rightly or wrongly, the Chinese tradition seems to envisage the gods as being able to perform skilful actions, or that their having a very definite tendency towards performing skilful actions, and no tendency at all really to gain Enlightenment, and very, very few isn't it? I forget the details

Dharmapriya: Black seeds, very few black seeds. No black seeds.

S: No black seeds. The Chinese tradition, in this way, is just trying to compare the different realms. I don't know how far, or how literally, one can press this or pursue this. Some important points do emerge, just taking that tradition of the seeds quite literally. There is one of those I am just going to mention which, it seems, hasn't been raised.

Dharmapriya: I had a slight supplement to that question, which was: Can one draw any correlations between these seeds and the seeds spoken of in the Yogacara, the alaya?

S: It may be that there is some connection. I must say, I haven't really thought about it or tried to work it out, but the fact that the word 'seed' is used is perhaps suggestive of some such connection; especially as the seeds deposited in the alaya are mentioned in *The Awakening of Faith*, which is a very popular and wellknown work in China anyway. I don't know what is the original source of this teaching about the seeds. There is a diagram in one of those old books on Chinese Buddhism in the Order Library. When Ananda I think it was Ananda drew a diagram which used to be used, there was some mistake in that, you may remember. So there is a reproduction of an original old Chinese diagram in one of those big thick books on Chinese Buddhism, an old book; so you could make a copy of that, if you wanted.

Ratnaprabha: So, Bhante, what was the mistake you were just referring to?

S: I think it was in the actual proportions of seeds in a particular realm.

Ratnaprabha: [Did it cause] a mistake in what you said in the lecture?

S: No, what I said in the lecture corresponded with the original diagram, but Ananda's modernised version didn't. So there is a discrepancy between my lecture and his diagram, but that is because of the mistake in his diagram.

Ratnaprabha: The diagram in the old Dharmachakra Tapes catalogue?

S: Right, yes. I can't even remember the details now. I kept trying to get it corrected, but somehow it never happened. I think in the end I just gave up.

Ratnaprabha: It has vanished from the new catalogue.

S: Anyway, let's take up that point I mentioned. It was with regard to the asura realm. In a way, I am surprised that you all missed this or at least, maybe it [13]

was clear and you didn't think it worth pursuing. It is not so much that it wasn't clear, but I wanted to underline the point or draw attention specially to it, the world or state of the Titans, the asuras: twothirds black seed, onethird red seed; and just one single yellow seed. I give an explanation of that somewhere, don't I? Now, where's that? Yes, I say: 'asuras have the smallest potentiality for Buddhahood.' 'Seed' does represent a potentiality again, one mustn't take it too literally. It means that the conditions of asura life are such, the asuras themselves are such, that it is very unlikely that in that asura state they will reach Enlightenment. They are much more likely to commit simply skilful or simply unskilful, especially unskilful, actions. But my comment here is: 'Enlightenment is most difficult to gain for those in a competitive, aggressive, warlike state of mind.' Yes? wanted to say something about that, because I have been concerned for some time with this question of competitiveness, extreme competitiveness in a rather negative sense, especially among male Order Members. It seems very strong in certain quarters, if I may say so. Do you see what I am getting at? I think it is worth reminding oneself that the competitive, aggressive, warlike state of mind is one in which one is very, very unlikely to make any progress towards

Enlightenment. It is almost the antithesis. Did anyone take note of this, or was any note of this taken, or the point underlined? Or was it just obvious?

Kulananda: We discussed this in our group with regard to what appeared to be a contradiction; because you seemed earlier to be saying that hatred and perfect wisdom had close affinities, and the asura realm is a realm of hatred, and it was possible to channel the energy of hatred into intellectual channels and thereby provide perfect wisdom. It seems to be making it sound easier in that place than you were making it sound at a later stage. We discussed

S: Well, I have sometimes said that there are two kinds of competitiveness: one which is healthy and positive and the other which is negative and quite destructive. I have spoken of healthy competitiveness as that competitiveness which uses the competitive spirit as a means of getting oneself to do more, to do better, but without any antagonistic feeling towards the other person that you are competing with. You are just using him, as it were, your competitiveness with him, to get the most, to get the best, out of yourself. But if in the end he wins you don't mind, because even though he has won you have none the less got the best out of yourself, and that is what you are mainly concerned with. But the asuras are more concerned with actual victory, aren't they? So they aren't competitive in that sort of way. And in the case of hatred, I am sort of following the general Buddhist tradition as represented, for instance, by Dr. Conze, who points out that I think I mentioned this in the talk just as hatred wishes to destroy its object, so wisdom wants to destroy its object, which is phenomenal existence itself. This obviously is hatred of a very refined type; it is hatred, perhaps, only metaphorically. It is not that you experience the emotion of hatred at that time, but your mind is directed towards as it were the destruction of samsara. It is a metaphysical hatred, you might say, rather than a psychological one, though with a certain analogy to or resemblance between the two, at least superficially. ut here the competitiveness of the asuras is just completely opposed to any sort of spiritual life, it is a negative competitiveness, it is aimed at victory, it is aimed at conquest, at doing the other person down; not just using your competitiveness with the other person in a playful way, so to speak, to get yourself to do more, regardless of whether in the end you win or you lose. I have seen, or perhaps I have more recently become aware of, the competitiveness that goes on, [14] even within the Order, as between certain individuals. So this cannot be a very positive situation with regard to making spiritual progress; the two seem to be quite antithetical. was thinking that this point needed to be emphasised or underlined, inasmuch as there does seem to be rather more competitiveness, in the negative, asura, sense, and rather less cooperativeness in some sections of the men's wing of the Order, let me say, than one might have expected, or had a right to expect, even.

Cittapala: Is there any particular avenue through which that competitiveness expresses itself?

S: Well, when it is there it seems to express itself through all avenues, even through talking, through joking. It doesn't necessarily express itself in just going and punching the other person, though even that has happened, I am afraid. Perhaps it manifests most in just a reluctance to cooperate, and the fact that people men especially have difficulty in cooperating, or it doesn't come very naturally, or they don't take very kindly to it. They sort of do it, but with no real enthusiasm. Cooperation in the full sense does not take place when you have got someone who is definitely top dog and chief tailwagger, and the others are all just following in his wake. That is not cooperation in the full sense. Cooperation in the full

sense is when people take an equal share of responsibility and decisions emerge in a quite natural way as a result of discussion and arriving at a consensus: decisions which people then quite spontaneously adopt and which they are prepared to stick to.

Tejananda: Presumably there is a very close correlation between what you are speaking of and love mode/power mode?

S: Yes, right.

Tejananda: Is the asura mode power mode par excellence?

S: Yes. For instance, recently I have mentioned this before, perhaps but at Guhyaloka this year the people on the retreat studied my talk on 'Authority and the Individual in the New Society'. You know the talk, probably? And we had questions and discussion on it afterwards. I pointed out that virtually all the questions concerned power and the power mode. There wasn't actually a single question on love, the love mode; though I think one question did actually mention the love mode incidentally. I found this quite significant that people were more concerned about the power mode, and especially about other people not operating in accordance with the power mode where they were concerned. They seemed very concerned to fight off, as it were, any attempt on the part of other people to use the power mode in relation to them, very conscious of that, but not at all conscious, as far as that particular series of discussions went, of the need for them to operate more in accordance with the love mode. It is as though for them the real issue was stopping others operating in accordance with the power mode, not themselves learning to operate in accordance with the love mode. I found this quite significant. This is exaggerating, but it was almost as though operating in accordance with the love mode meant stopping other people operating in accordance with the power mode where you were concerned! You see the difference?

Voices: Yes. Hm.

Kulananda: Bhante, something I have come across recently is observing younger male Order Members coming into a sense of their own potency, and seeming to feel the [15] need to have their own 'territory' within which to express their 'potency'. Does one need as it were to give people the space to do this, to let that phase as it were run out, or should one perhaps try to suggest that that way of functioning is not necessarily skilful?

S: I think probably it is a phase that people need to go through, assuming they haven't gone through it before; not using that as an excuse for just staying with that mode of functioning. Because even animals are often territorial, aren't they? Even birds. I was reading very recently somewhere that yes, it had been discovered, if that is the right word, by American psychologists that there were three things which human beings absolutely needed: one was identity, the last one was security oh yes, identity, stimulation and security. Security, at a pinch, could be dispensed with, but not the other two, and the sense of identity included having your own territory. So I think this is probably quite important. But then you can see it in a different way. Having your territory could be understood to mean having an area within which you were boss; but it could also be understood as having an area for which you were responsible, which would be rather different. Even a Buddha has territory in that sense: a Buddhaland, as I have said, is the area of a particular Buddha's responsibilities, his field of responsibility. It is not the area within which he is boss! He is not God, he is only the

Buddha! if you see what I mean. herefore, in the case of the young Order Member, it ought to be that he wants his own area of responsibility, not that he wants an area where he can be boss. I think, to be fair, that in most cases it is more a question of people wanting to be given a definite responsibility or an area of responsibility; not an area within which they can be boss. Though some people, with a weaker sense of individuality, might think of it as having an area within which nobody could boss them again, it's fear of other people exercising power over you. Not that you do very much within that little area, but at least you are free from other people trying to do anything to you or to boss you. o, yes, perhaps one needs to allow these young Order Members, whoever they are, to have their own area of responsibility, but emphasising that it is a responsibility, it is not that they are just their own bosses within that area; that whoever else happens to be within that area with them is under their control it is not that. Obviously, you cannot cooperate with others until you are really an individual, and perhaps to be an individual you have to pass through this stage of having your own territory, your own area, of being responsible within that, for that. But, of course, a little Hitler is still a Hitler! I have met lots of little Hitlers in my time, especially in the army. They were very little indeed, but they were still Hitlers. ut I did feel the need to underline this question of competitiveness. I don't mean that all the men in the Order should suddenly emasculate themselves, whether literally or metaphorically, but that to put it more positively they should be much more careful to strive for cooperation and to cooperate with others. I am sure everybody is aware of this in principle, in theory; but I am sure that a lot greater effort could actually be made, and we could be much more successful in this area. Be more willing to go along with the other person; not always have very strong views about very small things. Very often, very bitter disputes do arise over very trivial things, and the dispute isn't really about whether you do this or whether you do that; it is whether I have my way or you have your way; whether I'm stronger than you, or even whether I'm boss. It's more like that. So be very slow to take a stand, except on a real matter of principle, if you feel it necessary. In some sort of trivial matter, it doesn't matter whether you do it this [16] way or that. If the other person feels a bit strongly, well, just go along with that; why make an argument of it? Why make an issue of it? Very often it isn't worth it. But unfortunately, Mara often whispers, or the asura element in one whispers: 'Why should I do what he wants? Why shouldn't he do what I want? Why should I always be following him? Why should he always get his own way?' Well, it's better to let him have his own way, if that is what it really is. But if it happens too much or too often, just have a general talk with him about it, but don't just take a very strong stand with regard to some particular trivial issue. So whether it is a centre, whether it is a coop, whether it is a community, cooperation is absolutely essential. You can't really get by without it. The more of it the better, and the more wholehearted it is the better, the more warmth there is in it the better. nyway, let's pass on. I think there is another question, isn't there?

Tejananda: Yes, just one more. The final question is from Ratnaprabha, and it concerns devas, humans and artistic creativity.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture, when you are describing the devaloka as sort of a particular condition that human beings can dwell in, you define it partly in terms of artistic enjoyment.

S: There are, of course, specific classes of devas who are described in those sort of terms those who enjoy their own creations and those who enjoy the creations of others. The latter are said to be on a higher level than the former. I am still trying to find out why this should be so. I have no help from traditional sources at all! So I am not being untraditional in

talking of at least some of the devas in this way.

Ratnaprabha: The question is more to do with not so much devas in the literal sense, but human beings who are occupying devalike states.

S: In the sense of being creative?

Ratnaprabha: Well, in the sense of being predominantly interested in artistic or aesthetic enjoyment. When we discussed this we were not quite clear whether this meant the kind of artistic enjoyment in which one is as it were a consumer or in which one is a producer, and this has relevance to the question.

S: I would say that probably this is just off the top of my head the enjoyment of the producer, the creator, is much more intense.

Ratnaprabha: Well, can one associate artistic creativity with humans who are in this devaloka kind of state, or is the human loka kind of state more appropriate, since artists seem to benefit from a wide range of experience, by suffering and conflict as well as concentration and inspiration?

S: Artists benefiting from suffering and conflict? I am really not sure about this. I wonder. It is said about people in general, isn't it, that you do benefit from a bit of suffering. It does you good! But you would have to look at all the artists, painters, musicians, poets: I think it is very difficult to generalise. Did Blake suffer very much? How does one estimate, how does one compare suffering? Blake suffered very much at the hands of Hayley, let us say, but is that suffering [17] comparable, say, too the suffering that Milton experienced as a result of his blindness? Or that who was it? Lorca, the Spanish poet, experienced when he was shot? How does one compare, and therefore how does one estimate the part played by the suffering in the life, the work, the creativity of the poet? Would Milton have been a less good poet, or less creative, if he had not gone blind? Well, there are certain beautiful passages in Paradise Lost that we would not have had, two or three, but there might have been compensations.

Ratnaprabha: In the discussion, we couldn't really think of any definite, or rather hearsay, examples of the lives of artists which seemed to have been predominantly characterised by ease and enjoyment and delight and so on; although most artists seem to have had these in bursts. But they also seem to have had times of great hardship, struggle, conflict, suffering and so on.

S: Well, 'Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight!', eh? But why? Very often it is the fault of society, nothing to do with the artist.

Ratnaprabha: But perhaps there are other people who do experience a great deal of devalike enjoyments but who do not seem to be very creative as artists. So we wondered whether, perhaps, artistic creativity at least, in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood seems to require a great mixture of experience rather than predominantly devalike experience, and is therefore more of a human loka rather than a devaloka.

S: Also we have to ask ourselves whether we are not, say, reading the experience of an artist of some kind in the light of our own experience. For instance, if we see that someone was

very poor and perhaps even didn't have enough to eat, we would think, 'He must be suffering.' But perhaps he wasn't; perhaps he was so immersed in his creative work that he wasn't suffering in the way that we would suffer in that sort of situation.

Ratnaprabha: Yes, I was thinking about Michelangelo hanging upside down painting the fresco. Perhaps he had a really bad back, but while he was actually doing it maybe he was just very blissful.

S: But even if he had a bad back, that was incidental, and presumably the frescoes would have been just as wonderful if he had had the advantage of every modern contrivance! I would say that sometimes, beyond a certain point, it goes in the opposite direction: that too much suffering can dull the edge of somebody's work.

Dharmapriya: I am thinking of the passage from *The Notebook of Marie-Laurits Briggen*(?) that you quote in *The Religion of Art*. I can't remember it offhand, but in it Rilke is describing all the various experience you need to absorb before writing poetry.

S: Yes, richness of experience. But he doesn't emphasise suffering particularly, does he?

Dharmapriya: But it seems to be a bit what Ratnaprabha says: quite a mixed experience on many different levels; certainly not all devaloka level, by any means.

S: Well, it has been held it was held, I believe, in the time of the Renaissance that the poet needed to be a very learned man. To some extent, that is true; it is true, for instance, about the novelist. I was thinking this recently; reading a certain modern novel, I think it was a novel by Saul Bellow, I couldn't help being struck by the amount of knowledge of different aspects of life he showed. So if [18] you were going to write a novel about modern life, you probably would need to know quite a lot about different aspects of modern life. Supposing your hero was a businessman, which would be very likely: you would have to describe his business, it would have to come into the story, at least in an unobtrusive way. So if he were, say what shall I say? give me an example: what sort of businessman? I don't know much about business. Import-export. Well, at least you would have to know what went on in that sort of field. You would need to have that sort of knowledge. Or if, for instance, you took your hero off on holiday somewhere on the Riviera, you would need to know what the Riviera was like. And supposing you described him as going and seeing certain ancient ruins; you would need to know about that. So you need to be a quite wellinformed person, it seems to me, to write a novel, if it's going to be a vivid presentation of life of some kind or other, under certain specific conditions not just a sort of romance which might have happened anywhere. I was going to say 'in Barbara Cartland fashion', but I believe she sketches in her backgrounds quite vividly, if not always very accurately! At least there are plenty of red velvet curtains and white marble columns and troops of servants hovering around!

Ratnaprabha: But doesn't it seem that many of the great artists, at least, required more than just a varied and rich experience of different kinds of life, but they also seem to have had experiences of loss and falling in love and this kind of thing.

S: They had them, but did they really need them?

Ratnaprabha: They seem to have used them in that way

S: One can use anything, can't one? Every rupa is sunyata, so you can see sunyata in any rupa.

Ratnaprabha: But to suggest that they didn't need them wouldn't that require one to find examples of artists who did produce great work apparently without experiences of loss or conflict ?

S: But since loss and conflict are inseparable from most human experience, you are unlikely to find such examples. But that does not mean, therefore, that experiences of that sort are an integral part of literary or artistic creation itself. We just don't know, because it would be very difficult to find a poet who had never suffered bereavement or at least a stomachache or toothache, at the very least. There do seem to have been creative people who were very happy, but they seem to have been religious people rather than others. I am thinking of Fra Angelico, who certainly didn't go through great emotional ups and downs, but was a mystically inclined person, deeply pious. Blake was another: Blake seems to have been always well, especially towards the end of his life very happy. I believe in his thirties he did experience some states of depression, but normally it seems he was a very buoyant, happy person, despite his in a way difficult conditions, certainly his poverty and lack of recognition. He seems to have been one of the happiest of all the creative people.

Ratnaprabha: I think one possibility we raised was that artists are capable of great intensity of experience, and so it is not so much important that they should be in devalike states all the time in order to be artistically creative, but just that they should experience very intensely; their awareness should be heightened in some way whether of pleasant or of unpleasant experiences. [19]

S: I think perhaps we mustn't necessarily think of the devas as living a very relaxed sort of life. We mustn't forget that they do correspond well, the higher devas at least to the dhyanas, so therefore they are presumably in correspondingly intense states. But I wonder. It comes, to me, rather too close to saying that suffering is good for the artist and he ought to thank society for illtreating him. No, I think probably that suffering is so inseparable from human existence you really can't say, strictly speaking, whether suffering is an integral part of the creative process or not. I think we do have at least some artists who seem to have had a relatively sufferingfree existence, and who were none the less highly creative. Perhaps in human life one is more likely to experience states of intense suffering than states of intense joy conditioned existence being what it is. How many poets, for instance, have expressed intense joy successfully? There's Shelley, hasn't he? Shakespeare, perhaps. Some of the mystical poets Crashaw; Smart. hat did this arise out of, and what is the basic question?

Ratnaprabha: In a way, it was wondering whether the kind of artistic enjoyment that characterises human beings who occupy predominantly godlike states was simply a consumer kind of aesthetic enjoyment rather than the creativity of an artist.

S: Let's have that again?

Ratnaprabha: It was wondering whether the kind of artistic or aesthetic enjoyment that you describe as referring to the kind of human being who is in a predominantly devalike state was more of the consumer kind of artistic or aesthetic enjoyment rather than of actual creativity, since so many artists seem to have at least we, or I, thought very mixed lives in terms of sometimes being very inspired but at other times having a hard time in various ways.

S: Well, there are devas and devas, aren't there? There are the lower devas and the higher devas. I mentioned that distinction between devas who enjoy their creations and those who enjoy the creations of others. I wasn't able to account for the fact that the consumer seems to be placed above the creator; that needs further going into. But I think perhaps the states represented by the devas, or just the deva states, are somewhat more intense than we think of them as being. I have recently been a bit critical of the mere consumer of artistic products, but none the less people can have a very powerful experience in that way. I think one has to be careful it doesn't become too self-indulgent. In *The Religion of Art*, I do refer to Tennyson's poem of *The Palace of Art*, don't I? I think it can end up, very often, with one just wanting to enjoy pleasurable experiences of a comparatively refined nature, but to enjoy them just in a self-indulgent way; which means that in the end you almost lose your capacity for any higher artistic enjoyment. I think that one can think of the devas as being as it were creative, but as creative under conditions perhaps more favourable than those that creative human beings very often find themselves in. It is true, yes, the artist can turn pain and suffering into something worth while, but usually some time after the event you know, 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' and all that. I haven't yet heard of anyone writing a sonnet when being burned at the stake!

Ratnaprabha: Sometimes when starving in a garret they write them. [20]

S: (laughs) 'Lines written when I was starving in a garret' no, I mean, maybe. It is usually the well-fed poets that write about starving in garrets or write years and years later. I think Ariosto is an example of a happy poet, perhaps. Chaucer; we don't know what disappointments Chaucer had he must have had some. Spenser, too, seems to have been of a very happy disposition. Shakespeare was notorious for being easy to get on with, wasn't he? But Spenser had some very painful experiences at the end of his life, but I think he had written most of *The Fairie Queene* before that, anyway. The experiences connected with being in love are perhaps of a different order. It has been said that it is remarkable how little really good love poetry there is, though lots and lots of it has been written. Someone did write once, I forget where, that the only really good love poetry in English was that written by Shakespeare and that written by John Donne, and nobody else came anywhere near them. The basic question really is the extent to which suffering actually helps spark off, at least, the creative process, and the extent to which it is merely incidental, as though the poet would really be better off without it. It is really quite difficult to say. Because we are not in the position of being able to perform an experiment, are we?

Kulananda: You said something recently, Bhante, which really shook me

S: I thought you were unshockable!

Kulananda: which was that you thought perhaps you were thinking about the idea that for the artist the work of art was a way in which he could deal with his psychological illhealth.

S: Well, that is certainly true of some artists, I think. That is what I speak of, in a narrower sense, as sort of therapeutic art. Goethe said he shed his sicknesses in his writings. He said it with special reference to his *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. He was very surprised that people went on treating him as though he were still Young Werther when he had grown out of it years, if not decades, before; he had got rid of that particular sickness by expressing it in the form of that work of fiction.

Kulananda: I wonder if one can't think of something perhaps unbalanced in the artist until he has expressed himself, as a means of achieving a state of balance.

S: I think it can be a means of selfknowledge, because you objectify something, you bring it up from the depths, as it were; you turn it into an object which as it were stands in front of you, you have brought it out into the open. It seems you should know yourself better for having done that. One would just have to ask oneself what happens when you write a poem good, bad, or indifferent what happens? Very often you don't know what you are writing. Maybe a line comes into your head and it won't go away, so you think: 'Oh well, I'll write it down and try to produce a second one,' and OK, a second one comes and then maybe a third and a fourth, quite rapidly; then you have got a little verse; so yes, you somehow feel there is a little thread of connection; this verse that has sort of come to you is sort of linked with some other verses which are way down in your subconscious mind. But the fact that one verse has come up means that it is tugging on this little string that connects it with the other verses and is having to bring them up, too. Maybe eventually they come up. You don't know what the poem is going to be about. You only discover that as the verses emerge, sometimes. You don't think, 'I'll pen now a sonnet on love,' or 'I think I'll write a little ode to the spring.' It doesn't always happen like that. Sometimes it does. But Housman [21] has described that process, hasn't he? in what was that little book of his on poetry? A. E. Housman: *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. He described exactly how he came to write a particular poem. If I remember rightly, the first verse came to him very easily, and the others came after some time, and the last one he had to work really hard on. Where did we start from?

Tejananda: Suffering and creativity.

S: Yes.

Ratnaprabha: Therapeutic art.

S: Yes, therapeutic art. So if you have got some inner sickness, or what can be seen as such, expressing it in the form of a work of art does perhaps help in some cases. Rightly or wrongly, I see Francis Bacon's paintings as an example of therapeutic art. It is as though he has been sick all over the canvas, so to speak. You see what I mean?

: Perhaps one wouldn't want to suggest that the [ceiling] of the Sistine Chapel was therapeutic art or is there a sense in which one could say that?

S: Well, it raises the question of what is health, doesn't it? But no doubt it gave Michelangelo, one imagines, a deep inner satisfaction to be able to externalise his particular

vision in that way. Maybe in doing that he made it clearer to himself. So it is a means of selfknowledge; creativity is a means of selfknowledge. But I certainly did not mean to say that all art was therapeutic except in a very lofty sense of the term therapeutic. When I have spoken of art as therapeutic, it has not been in that sense. Could you speak, for instance, of the writing of Paradise Lost as having had a therapeutic effect on Milton? Well, it would be absurd, wouldn't it? Though he must have been very pleased when he had finished it.

: Unless one could say that Milton had a problem in not knowing about the ways of God with regard to man, and maybe he felt he did have to justify them to man and to himself.

S: Perhaps he did.

: And maybe it was a problem until it was expressed.

S: But the solution of a problem cannot necessarily be spoken of as therapeutic; it depends on the level of the problem. It sort of goes beyond therapy, both the problem and the solution to the problem go beyond therapy. The Book of Job states a problem, but it doesn't give the impression of being sort of therapeutic!

Dharmapriya: Perhaps taking it back to what lay near the root of Ratnaprabha's question, when you talk of the asuras, or human beings in an asura like state you make specific references to politicians, businessmen, trade unionists; would you make a similar correlation to a human being in a devalike state as an artist, or would you think of another occupation, another type?

S: I don't think I could, really; no. It seems to come the nearest. [22]

Dharmapriya: Do you think it fits the glove as exactly as politician, businessman, financier would for asura, or is it just there is no better example?

S: Well, the asura is much closer to our normal experience. We don't know very much about devas, but we know quite a lot about asuras, you could say. But it is the way I think of devas it may be just my personal association but then, if one was to regard different classes or types of persons as representing the realms, you would still have to find a class or realm of people representing the devas. Some people might think that the idle rich the devas, that they were living in a devalike realm, but that association would not occur to me. I would find it difficult to think of the life of the idle rich as being in any way sort of devalike or heavenly or celestial.

Dharmapriya: Recently I read The Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda, and I asked the question about him; he seems to have been born into a very happy human family, the people all had spiritual inclinations, and so from the earliest age he was as it were led in this direction. He seems to have had a life with a lot of dhyana experience in it. I wondered if, let's say, the very positive brahmin family as much as a brahmin family can be positive one could describe as a deva milieu.

S: In a way, perhaps. It depends whether one's emphasis is on just the happiness.

Kulananda: Yes, in this regard, Bhante, you were talking right at the beginning of our

discussions tonight about the idea that there was perhaps something volitional in the devas' experience. Could you expand a little?

S: Well, inasmuch as it is the objective counterpart of dhyanic experience; and dhyana is explained in the Buddhist tradition as consisting in states of very intense positive volition. This is why the dhyanas are weighty skilful karma, because the volitions involved in them are of great intensity. So, if the deva worlds are the objective counterpart of the subjective states that we call dhyanas, one would expect them too to be states of intense positive volition; unless one has somehow got the correspondence wrong. Do you see what I mean?

Dharmapriya: So one can enjoy a volition as well as enjoying the consequence of the volition?

S: Oh yes; in fact, probably one could say that the enjoyment of the volition is even greater, because happiness is a state of expression, as it were; it is an act, rather than something that just happens to you. This just occurs to me: you could say that pleasure happened to you but that happiness was something you did, or it was a result or accompaniment of an activity. Often, I know, the devas are spoken of in passive terms as just receiving, but maybe we can't take that too literally. The devas are said to be capable of some skilful volitions, but whatever skilful volitions they are capable of must be relatively positive and skilful and quite intense. Perhaps we have got the devas wrong, as it were; perhaps even some of the descriptions in the Pali Canon are a bit misleading, from our point of view anyway. Perhaps we just think of the devas as leading a pleasant life of leisure.

Cittapala: If that intensity of volition is of a creative order, how is it that they have such a little opportunity or propensity or potentiality to move towards Buddhahood? [23]

S: Well, I suppose the arts can become ends in themselves, even considered creatively, not just in terms of enjoyment. Maybe the good is the enemy of the best.

: Are you suggesting, Bhante, that there can be skilful volitions which as it were circle rather than spiral?

S: Hm; well, it's like an overpreoccupation with positive mental states in the form of meditation. You just want to be a yogi; you want to enjoy samathatype experience, you don't want to try to develop vipassana. It could be analogous to that. It could be that the devas are absorbed in very blissful states; they are, at least in some cases, volitional states of great intensity; but none the less, they as it were go round and round in that circle, with no wish to go beyond. remember in this connection a description of the different orders of angels I forget who it was by but the description was in a way quite extraordinary, because it described the angels in very dynamic terms, using the imagery of fire to a great extent; not just light, but fire, seeing the angels as very fiery creatures. You don't usually think of them in that sort of way; you usually think of them as rather meek and gentle and holy, and all that. anyway, the original question was about the suffering of the artist?

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: I don't think it is proven that it is an integral part of the artist's creativity, though admittedly all suffering that doesn't go beyond a certain point can be transmuted into a work

of art. But we are not in a position to make an experiment of comparing two poets, one that we allow to suffer in the ordinary human way, and the other that we completely isolate from all such experiences. So we don't really know, though there seem to be certain probabilities. I suppose a certain amount of pain at least can be incorporated into the artist's creativity. It is difficult to say that it is actually responsible for it or contributes to it, but it can certainly be incorporated or transmuted. We also know that too much pain and suffering will silence the artist altogether. What was the practical bearing of this question? Why was it a question?

Ratnaprabha: I don't think it was to do with any suggestion that one should deliberately seek out suffering in order to be more creative, but that one should not necessarily expect creativity to come from those who were at least, in the way I have understood it most devalike people, in this rather uncomplicated life of ease, and that people who have had a hard life in some ways can often produce very worthwhile things later on; and whether their hard life was necessary for this or not, it certainly doesn't seem to prevent it, and often

S: Yes, this is what I am saying.

Ratnaprabha: that hardness of life is incorporated in their artistic achievement.

S: Of course, we don't have many devalike human beings, do we?

Ratnaprabha: No.

S: So therefore the proportion of devalike artists that is to say, very happy artists would be very small indeed, wouldn't it? We just have a few, perhaps. [24] But another thing that occurred to me was that it depends very much on the way that we look at art, in the widest sense. One could imagine a devalike being who creates because he has a vision of something even higher in the scale of existence, and is inspired by that, not by the ordinary sort of human sufferings and difficulties. So at least it is possible to envisage that sort of creativity, isn't it? In other words, we are assuming that usually the poet or the artist takes ordinary human experience, including its suffering, as his sort of raw material; but is that even always the case? That may be the case usually nowadays. Could we not think of another kind of artist in a more devalike experience of joy, but with his eyes fixed on some higher sphere of existence, and creating out of his experience of that? This is the way Plotinus, by the way, speaks of the creative process.

Ratnabodhi: If one has this awareness of this higher state of being, does that not itself imply a dissatisfaction with one's normal lower state?

S: In a sense, it does, but you may not necessarily experience that as an actual state of discomfort. In fact, you may be so absorbed in the higher vision that you don't notice your present state at all. Dr. Johnson has a remark about devotional poetry being virtually impossible, because when you are in that state you are in a state where words as it were fail you. Not everybody would agree with that, but he has something to say to that effect. You can be inspired by a joyful experience; you can be inspired by some sort of higher spiritual vision. Much of Dante is of that type, isn't it, especially in the Paradiso? But you can argue that there is some dissatisfaction, otherwise the artist wouldn't create, because he creates something new or brings out something new, so that suggests that there was a sort of lack. But you need not look at it like that. Plotinus says, in effect, that Reality is essentially

creative, so to the extent that you are in touch with Reality you are creative. You don't create out of a sense of lack on your own part, as it were, but your creativity is the expression of the creativity of that Reality to which you have ascended. So in a way the higher you go, the more creative you become though not necessarily creative in the narrowly artistic sense. So Plotinus doesn't see creativity as an expression of lack, but rather as an expression of abundance. So can you not, by having a higher experience or experience of some higher reality, become as it were more abundant and just create out of that sense of abundance, not as a sort of compensation for a lack? Maybe this reflects two quite different conceptions of the creative person, but perhaps the second I have mentioned is, so to speak, of a higher type, creating out of an experience of abundance rather than as a compensation.

Cittapala: To what extent would the Buddhist concept of dukkha be relevant here, inasmuch as it seems that until knowledge and vision of things as they really are arises, dukkha is an implicit part of one's experience all the way through?

S: Well, dukkha remains a part of one's experience even after Enlightenment, doesn't it, but it is only physical dukkha. I think dukkha can be transcended, in the complete sense, only momentarily in human life.

Cittapala: Wouldn't that imply, then, that there would be an element of frustration, at least,

S: Yes, but that wouldn't imply necessarily that your artistic product was in compensation for that, or the fact that you were an artist was a means of compensating. But in a way, perhaps, one might say that one should aim at creating out of abundance and not creating out of a sense of lack. Maybe one feels that with a poet, say, like Shakespeare, to take the extreme example. Well, maybe there was a [25] need for a play, because he needed the money! but just in terms of artistic creativity itself he seemed to create out of a sense of abundance and fullness.

Abhaya: With many modern poets, you have the feeling that they are definitely creating out of a sense of lack.

S: Mm. And, of course, the creating out of a sense of abundance doesn't represent just a sort of fluency. It is much more than that, it goes deeper than that. So you could put this in more general terms: a lot of the things that we do are not expressions of our abundance but just of our poverty; they are compensations. We very often do them not just because we are happy and happiness overflows into activity but because we are feeling bored and we want to do something to relieve the boredom.

Chakkhupala: Bhante, can I come back to an earlier point? When you were speaking of the devas as acting from quite intense volitions they act skilfully through intense volitions or with a strong volition I really can't square that with the idea of them being in something of a culdesac. That kind of skilful act with intense volition seems to have an element of selftranscendence in it.

S: Well, in a way; but in a way almost every act does. But then I did refer to the yogi and the mere meditator, as it were. The states that he is absorbed in are very blissful states, and according to the Abhidharma at least they are states of intense volition; but he is stuck there, he doesn't go any further. So the same can happen, it seems, with the artist.

Chakkhupala: But from what you were saying about taking more than you was it Plotinus? that the creativity of the artist is in relation to something above him

S: Well, I am not aiming as it were to be consistent; I am as it were just airing various ideas. But there does seem to be some element of truth in all of these points, but it doesn't seem easy to fit them all together into a coherent scheme. I am sure there are some artists who do create out of this higher vision, just as there are people who are happy and whose activities are the expression of that happiness and their abundance, even; whereas others engage in various activities, maybe successfully, with a certain amount of satisfaction but more by way of a compensation, out of a sense of lack. Like seems to have created out of a sense of abundance exuberance; but he said exuberance is beauty, didn't he? One can't imagine Blake's creative activity as being compensatory; or Mozart's. One has one's doubts about Beethoven; but we won't go into that!

Dharmapriya: You mentioned an artist creating out of a higher vision: how high does the vision have to be? Because, in a sense, the deva realms go quite high. Is it not possible that an artist can be creating out of a vision, but it is still locked within these realms?

S: When I said vision, though I used the term a bit loosely, I was thinking of something with an element of the Transcendental in it, something genuinely spiritual.

Dharmapriya: Could one not think then a step further, and simply say that, yes, the deva realms are a culdesac if you do not have this vision or, in a sense, if you haven't Gone for Refuge? [26]

S: Well, there are deva realms which are not culdesacs for certain people: that is to say, for the anagamis. They are said to dwell in the srodavasa(?) those five realms at the peak of the rupaloka; but in what sense are they in them and in what sense are they not in them? They are making spiritual progress. At the same time they are in the devaloka. So it seems that here the deva realms and what one might call the realms of significance, the Transcendental realms, have come together.

Dharmapriya: But, taking it a bit further, you have made the point, in a sense, that we should cultivate samatha, we should cultivate dhyana experience as the necessary springboard for Transcendental experience obviously not as a culdesac. And presumably the big difference is the Going for Refuge. Or would you see as another big difference right views, or something else?

S: Well, that would all be included in Going for Refuge, because one Goes for Refuge to the Dharma, which implies Right View. But one can imagine a situation in which someone does take up the practice of meditation, doesn't hear a word about Reality or about Insight, and imagines that those blissful states are it, and remains absorbed in them. It is as though you do, at least in some cases, need to be almost told that there is something else, something higher. Just as you need to be told that there is something like meditation, to begin with, or that it is possible to experience a really positive state of mind. Some people have never heard that such a thing is possible. That is why some people, as we know, are quite taken aback by the very positive results of the little bit of meditation that they do on their first retreat, or at

their first meditation class. It seems out of all proportion to them, which in a sense so out of all proportion to the effort they put in. Anyway, perhaps we should bring the discussion to a close, and leave it there; not with any definite conclusions, but with something to think about. Questions do not always produce answers; they sometimes just produce further questions, which in some ways is more interesting. OK, better carry on tomorrow, then. [27]

9 December 1987: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE STUPA

Tejananda: Tonight we've got eight questions on 'The Tantric Symbolism of the Stupa'. The first one is from Ratnaprabha about the significance of the Parinirvana.

Ratnaprabha: When we discussed the Buddha's Parinirvana, I think we understood why the disciples should have considered it so important, and why it should have been celebrated since. But we were not quite sure why it seemed to be given so much importance as an occasion in the Buddha's life, as it were, which was as significant as the Going Forth and the Enlightenment and the First Teaching and so on as if it were a kind of breakthrough, or something like that. So why is it emphasised so much and referred to as if it was a Parinirvana, or as some kind of an Enlightenment in a sense?

S: Well, in the first place, Buddhism does distinguish between what is called upadisesanirvana and anupadisesanirvana(?). Anupadisesanirvana is also called khandanirvana(?). But it is at the same time made clear that there is no real difference in content between the two experiences. So whether one experiences Nirvana still attached to the body or, in a sense, still connected to the body, or as disconnected from the body, as one does at the time of death or after death, the content of the experience remains whatever it is, or is not, or both, or neither. That is the first point. But you are right that, of course, the Parinirvana is reckoned as one of the great events in the Buddha's life, in a manner of speaking. In fact, it can be put even more strongly than you have put it, because in the MahaparinibbanaSutta there is a passage in which the Buddha and Ananda are presented with robes of cloth of gold, and the Buddha's complexion becomes extremely bright, and he says I am not quoting the exact words something to the effect that it is only twice in his lifetime that his complexion becomes so bright: when he gains Enlightenment and when he is about to enter Parinirvana. That, in a way, underlines the significance of the Parinirvana more than ever, because it is one of the two great events in that case. But one could say: what was in it for the Buddha? It would seem that there was nothing in it for the Buddha, because the experience remained the same; but what about the disciples? For them it must have been a very different matter. After all, when the Buddha gained Enlightenment there was nobody around; the Enlightenment had no witnesses, as far as we know certainly none are mentioned, except perhaps devas. But, at the time of the Parinirvana, of course, there were many people present though Mrs. Rhys Davids has some doubts about that, but at least that is certainly the traditional account: that there were many people, many disciples, present. So perhaps that fact gives the Parinirvana a special significance, in a way: not from the point of view of the Buddha but certainly from the point of view of the world, as it were. It is rather difficult to imagine the Parinirvana having any very special significance for the Buddha himself in a sense, any significance at all, inasmuch as it simply represented the dropping off

of the physical body. [28] There is a quite interesting discussion in Cicero I think it is in the so-called Debates in Tusculum where he discusses the question of whether the virtuous man can be perfectly happy, even though he is undergoing physical suffering, even though he is being tortured. And he seems at one point to incline to the view that he can, that being the Stoic view, though he seems to have had reservations about it. But, in the case of the Buddha, you might say: did it make any difference to his experience, actually no longer having to carry around a physical body with him? In a sense, yes; in a sense, no. We know that the Buddha continued to experience bodily pain, because he does say, I think in the Parinibbana Sutta itself, that the only time when he is free from bodily pain is when he withdraws into samadhi, into a dhyana state, in which there is no bodily sensation. But does that make any difference to the Enlightenment experience itself? Can you experience the state of Enlightenment, let us say, fully whatever that may mean while still being in bodily pain? This is, in principle, the same sort of question that Cicero was discussing. It would seem to be rather strange that here you are, on the one hand Enlightened but on the other hand experiencing bodily pain. o, in a sense, could you not say that an experience of Enlightenment in connection with which you were not experiencing bodily pain was an improvement, in a way, in a manner of speaking, on an experience in connection with which you were experiencing bodily pain? Sometimes one might have had an experience analogous to that. Supposing you are meditating but at the same time you have got a slight toothache. On the one hand, there is a very positive experience coming from the meditation; on the other hand, there is the rather unpleasant experience coming from the toothache. So what is happening? Is the pain coming from the toothache actually getting in the way of your experience of the positive state of meditation? It is not really very easy to sort it out, is it? ut so far as one can see and certainly according to tradition the content of the Nirvana experience, so far as the Buddha himself is concerned, is the same; and it would seem, therefore, that the Parinirvana was an event for his disciples rather than for the Buddha. You can't even really strictly speak of the Parinirvana as an event in the Buddha's life; it represented the termination of that life from the standpoint of his physical existence even, perhaps, in a sense, his psychophysical existence.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, what about the friendships of the Buddha? In a sense, I can't see how, say, his friendship with Ananda continued after his death, after his Parinirvana. Could that have played any role?

S: Well, Ananda seems to have been very sorry to lose the Buddha, but the Buddha doesn't give any signs of being sorry to lose Ananda! In fact, he has to console Ananda and encourage him. Ananda doesn't have to console or encourage the Buddha, clearly. On the one hand, it is difficult to think of an Enlightened person as being somehow inhuman; but on the other hand one can see quite clearly that the Enlightened person is not subject to human frailties and attachments.

Dharmapriya: But would you consider, in this sense, then, that his friendship with Ananda was a human attachment or a frailty? I would have thought it was truly positive.

S: Oh no, I think one couldn't have seen it in those terms at all. After all, Ananda was, at the very least, according to tradition, a Stream Entrant, so there couldn't have been much of even ordinary human attachment in Ananda's friendship for the Buddha. He certainly must have transcended the grosser forms of such [29] attachment. And the main reason why he was sorry to lose the Buddha was that he had still so much to do; so the motive still was spiritual,

you could say.

Ratnaprabha: It sometimes seems, from reading the Pali Canon, that people had the idea of Enlightenment primarily as a release from the endless round of birth and death, and that in some sense, therefore, the final Nirvana was as it were the final victory of the Buddha in which he finally escaped from this dreadful endless round.

S: But, even so, the difference between that and the original attainment of Enlightenment at Buddhagaya from the Buddha's point of view, at least was very, very slight. Perhaps one reason why the Parinirvana has come to be invested with so much significance is that it is associated with death; and sometimes the point is made that the Parinirvana shows that even someone as Enlightened as the Buddha still has to die, in the ordinary human sense. Even he is not exempt from that. So that gives the occasion a certain solemnity, as it were. The fact of death is brought home to one in a particularly solemn manner, that even the Buddha, the Enlightened One, has to undergo the process of physical dissolution. The Vajrayana might have something else to say about that, but that is another story or rather, that is another yana! But as far as I remember I think I have commented on this already as you go round the Buddhist sacred places, there is definitely a different atmosphere in each one. There is not so much of an atmosphere I would say, though I have only visited the place once in Lumbini; but as regards the other three that is to say, Sarnath, Buddhagaya and Kusinara there is a very definite difference of atmosphere. Sarnath is very peaceful, and Buddhagaya you could say is very powerful and vibrant, and Kusinara is very solemn and serene. Has anybody been to all three of these? Some of you might have gone to one or two?

Voices: Mm.

S: I suppose one ought to say that at Lumbini there is an atmosphere of joy, but I can't recollect that there actually was; because, when I visited it, it was still in a very desolate condition indeed; very neglected, ruinous. Anyway, there are plans afoot to revive it all sorts of large buildings are going to be put up in the neighbourhood. I am not sure how I feel about that. Is that sufficient on that?

Ratnaprabha: Yes, thank you.

Tejananda: Now Sarvamitra has a question about sources.

Sarvamitra: You mentioned the story when the Buddha showed how to build a stupa over his remains. Do you remember where this story originated?

S: I refer to 'Tibetan sources', don't I? I am afraid it is some years ago since I gave these lectures 15 years ago. I really can't remember. It might have been in an account of the Buddha's life which was given by Ksama de Croci (?), the Hungarian explorer and scholar. I might have found it there. I don't think it is in Pali sources; I think it was Tibetan. Tibetan sources, of course, will have been translated from the Sanskrit. It might have been in Rockyel(?)'s Life of the Buddha, which we don't have in the Order Library but which is based on Tibetan sources. [30] I should perhaps mention that a book was published not very long ago on the stupa and its symbolism a new book and as far as I remember we do have a copy of that in the Order Library. And that little book by Lama Govinda has been reprinted.

Tejananda: The third question is from Priyananda about the stupa visualisation practice.

Priyananda: Do you see the stupa visualisation practice being brought more into use and having a more definite place in the Movement's system of meditation, as it seemed to have previously?

S: Previously in the Movement?

Priyananda: Yes.

S: I am not very au fait with the ups and downs of the popularity of this particular practice in the Movement. It is very difficult to keep track. You are referring just to the visualisation?

Priyananda: Yes, the visualisation of the stupa.

S: Perhaps I ought to know, but I really don't know what the present state of affairs is. I think it is certainly a very good and very useful exercise, because it familiarises one with visualisation. You can start in a very simple way. It is much easier to visualise a stupa, or at least the constituent parts of the stupa, than it is to visualise a form, with a face and arms and legs and jewels and so on. So I have tended to regard it, very often, as a sort of introduction to the practice of visualising Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If one wishes, one can just stay, for instance, with that square yellow base, or with the pure white moon disc, as long as one likes, to familiarise oneself with the technique, so to speak, of visualising in that way. And then, of course, it is a useful reminder of the Six Element practice which we do in any case on the eve of ordination. But has anyone anything to say on the subject of the popularity or otherwise of the visualisation of the stupa?

Abhaya: It seems not to be practised very much these days, as far as I can tell.

S: And it was practised more before?

Abhaya: In the early days it was, yes. In the last five years or so it doesn't seem to have been practised much at all.

S: Any ideas? Part of general neglect of meditation? Or lack of attention on the part of Vajraloka?

Ratnaprabha: As I understand it, it is no longer taught to Mitras until they are quite close to ordination. In former times, it was taught to Mitras quite regularly, and when I first became a Mitra it was the practice that was always done at the Mitra class.

S: Ah. [31]

Ratnaprabha: This is no longer, as I understand it, the case although I may be wrong

S: Anyone else have any comments?

Vairocana: I think, Bhante, [when we] brought up the question of doing visualisation practice as such, of the stupa, visualisation of Sakyamuni came up one time you said you were not

too keen on it because you felt that some people were just looking for new experiences because their meditation was getting a bit dull

S: That's right, yes.

Vairocana: and it hasn't really been taught since then.

S: But it is as though people have gone to the other extreme. It is not that serious Mitras who have done, say, the Mindfulness of Breathing and the metta bhavana for some years and who are perhaps thinking of ordination should not do that particular practice. But perhaps a practical difficulty is that it is difficult to teach it to some people and not to others. Sometimes people are a little sort of possessive [and say] it is almost like mother or father giving one child a sweetie and not the other. Some people are afraid to look at it in that sort of way. Perhaps Vajraloka needs to give this some attention, and maybe have even stupa visualisation retreats for Order Members, of course, and Mitras who either have asked for ordination or who have been Mitras for some time and have done quite a bit of meditation practice.

Dharmapriya: That makes it sound as though it is really quite important, this practice that we are missing out on something by not doing it.

S: Well, yes and no. I would not encourage anybody to take it up who had neglected the Mindfulness of Breathing and the metta bhavana; but, in the case, say, of a Mitra, as I mentioned, who was well established in those practices, who had been meditating for some years and who was probably thinking of ordination or had even asked, it would be quite appropriate to introduce that sort of person to the stupa visualisation practice. There may be certain practical difficulties, but they would have to be considered and overcome. Perhaps the opinion of the Vajraloka team could be sought. Or could it be that around the centres there are not really any Order Members sufficiently familiar with the practice to be able to teach it?

Voices (thoughtfully): Hm.

S: Has anyone had the experience of teaching it?

Voices: Yes.

S: Ah, two oldtimers.

Vairocana: No, no. (Laughter). What happened was that when I first I reintroduced those practices because I thought they had gone out. And then it came to me that maybe you weren't too happy about it. So then I stopped for a while.

S: But only not happy in the sense that I have mentioned. [32]

Dharmapriya: We don't teach it in Germany, among other reasons, [because] neither Dharmaloka nor I do the practice.

S: Right. Well, clearly one should do it or have done it for some period. It is not a very

difficult practice to teach; in some ways it is one of the easiest. It's right, then.

Tejananda: The fourth question is from Dharmapriya about the space element.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, in the talk you say that space, akasa, is more real than the first four elements, in a manner of speaking. Is the reason that space is more real simply that it is an unconditioned dharma, and if so why is space an unconditioned dharma? What makes it unconditioned?

S: I think actually we can drop the whole idea of space being an unconditioned dharma. I think it doesn't really accord with Buddhist philosophy as a whole. I think it is generally agreed that space and time are not things objectively existing but modes of our perception of things. The Buddha himself clearly says I forget exactly where, you would have to look it up that space is a *panyati*(?), a concept. Space is, one could say, more real in the sense of being more fundamental, more basic. You can't really have the other four elements without space not in the sense that space is a sort of box into which they fit, or which contains them, but that space is a fundamental condition for your experience of those four elements. Suppose you think of earth: could there be an experience of earth which didn't involve somehow the experience of space?

Dharmapriya: I can't see experience of earth, of solidity, without space but more in the Newtonian sense. I understood you to say that akasa is not space in the Newtonian sense, more a kind of inner space.

S: Aha, but then that brings you to the question: when you perceive those elements, what do you perceive, what do you experience? I have touched on this a little in the talk, haven't I? I speak of the objective content of the perceptual situation. I did talk a bit about space in the sense of akasa at Guhyaloka; it was mainly in connection with the first arupa dhyana, because I pointed out that there couldn't be space in the sense in which we ordinarily perceive it. Well, yes and no: perhaps I shouldn't really go into this, it may be a little bit of a side track, but I will briefly summarise. When you enter the first arupa dhyana, there is no sense perception; therefore there is no perception of rupa in the gross physical sense. So the experience of space is an experience of arupa; the experience of the first of the arupa dhyanas is an experience of arupa. Because, in the previous dhyanas, you experience rupa; it is not with regard to the so-called objective material world, but it is an inner world isn't it? You experience perhaps visions of devas and so on. But suppose all those disappear, then what are you left with? You are not left with ordinary space; the space which is infinity, which constitutes the first arupa dhyana, is not space that you experience in the kamaloka with your eyes wide open. It is the space that is left when the rupas of the rupaloka disappear, so that is a sort of inner space in a deeper and more subtle sense. But, in principle, one could say that all space experience is like that. If you take the experience of space by itself, it is an experience of what is left over when the forms which as it were [3] usually occupy space, whether material or nonmaterial, are no longer there. So you are closer as it were to the mind itself, inasmuch as space and time are modes of perception, rather than objects that you perceive. Do you see what I am getting at?

Dharmapriya: I think so.

S: So in that sense space is more real more real in the sense that the modes under which we

perceive things are more real than are the things perceived under those modes. But, as I said at the beginning, the whole idea of akasa as unconditioned dharma is, or was, a bit of a blind alley as it were. Not all schools, of course, agreed with that notion. It doesn't seem in accordance with the Buddha's own teaching. It seems to be a product of scholasticism. You find it only in the Abhidharma of the Sarvastivadins.

Tejananda: What does condition space?

S: Presumably it is mind in an even deeper sense. If time and space are modes of perception, that refers one back to the mind itself: that, when your mind is in a certain state or a certain condition, then you perceive things under the form of time and space. So the mind itself, as we may say, is a still more basic reality.

Kulananda: Bhante, if you say that, then what do you mean by 'perceive'? In other words, if there is nothing to be perceived, what is the act of perceiving?

S: Ah, when one says there is nothing to be perceived, or when one says there is perception, what is one saying? One does not imply there is an object 'out there'. What one is talking about is as I have said, I think, before an awareness, or if you like a consciousness, within which two poles can be differentiated: a perceiving pole and as it were a perceived pole. It is not that here are you, the perceiving self, and out there quite separate there is the perceived object, with a sort of gulf of empty space in between. That is not the situation at all. But when you perceive well, you just perceive; you don't perceive anything, you just perceive. But in that experience of perception there is an element which is not under your control. If, say, part of your perceptual experience is, say, your own hand so, yes, you say: 'Let me move my hand' yes, and it moves. So that is under your control, to some extent. But there are all sorts of other things well, not things other contents of your perception which are completely outside you which are not under your (or what you experience as you and your) control; so that is the objective content. But it is not that there is an object which is perceived, because that raises all sorts of questions [like] how perception is possible.

Kulananda: I suppose what I am driving at is I understand all that is the question: if space is a mode of perceiving, and time is a mode of perceiving, are there modes of perceiving which don't include space?

S: Well, again, it depends how narrowly or how broadly you define perception itself. But if there was such a mode of perception, you couldn't really say anything about it, because in order to say something about it you have to make it an object and therefore perceive it.

Kulananda: Yes, the language which would include space. So that space is necessary to perception? [34]

S: But the statement itself suggests that space is a thing. So one should really put it in some other way. When the mind functions in a particular way, i.e. perceiving, as we would say, things under the mode of time and space, then our perception takes place within those limitations. think it is a question of reflecting on the nature of one's experience. You don't experience an object; you can posit, if you like, an object behind your experience, but you don't ever experience an object apart from your experience of it; or, in the case of a material object, experience it as it exists, as it were, outside space and time. Anyway, where did all

that start from?

Dharmapriya: The increased reality of space in contrast to the mahabhutas.

S: Yes, but a little after that? I suppose it is really the subjectivity of time, as we say.

Ratnaprabha: When you were talking just now about the objective content of the perceptual situation, you seemed to be implying that its main characteristic was that it was outside your control, and this was how you distinguish it from the subjective content. Am I correct in saying that that is what you were saying?

S: That is a rough and ready way, but it is not the primary way. Because, in your actual perception or [what] you experience as given, there is this what I call the so-called subjective and the so-called objective pole. That is inseparable from the experience itself. You don't have, for instance, just a blank experience of yourself as the perceiver and then, as it were, pop! in front of it comes an object which you perceive. You never experience subject without object or object without subject. But, if that is difficult to appreciate, one thing that can help you to do that is just reflecting that one sign, at least, of the object is that it is something which is outside your control, outside the control of the subject. So that suggests something different, something other, something the opposite of subject i.e. object.

Ratnaprabha: You gave the example of a part of the human body, which [is] rather a borderline case.

S: Yes, indeed, it is in between. So it in a way underlines their inseparability. Because you can say how is it that subjectivity is connected with this hand but it is not connected with that body over there? It is very odd, if you reflect upon it, isn't it? So there is a difference.

Tejananda: Bhante, surely your body is only under your control to a certain degree. You can't control

S: Yes, I did mention that, didn't I? 'To some extent', because if your body, your hand, is wounded, you can't say 'Let my hand be whole'. It is only under your control to a degree.

Ratnaprabha: So if I look at what I consider to be an external object, like a chair, it definitely is not under my control, or at least very little.

S: Not under the direct control of your mind

Ratnaprabha: My mind, right. [35]

S: except, perhaps, through telekinesis!

Ratnaprabha: But then if I look at my hand, in some ways the experience I get is very similar to the experience I get looking at, for example, a wax hand which was placed in front of me, which is definitely So, in that sense, it does seem to be on the objective pole of my experience. But yet it is under my control.

S: But you could say another intermediate stage: supposing it went dead, as it were, you got

cramp or something. You could even look at it, not realising you had cramp, thinking it was somebody else's hand! Could you not? But this whole question of association of so-called mind with so-called object is very mysterious. It becomes more mysterious if you think of the two as, as it were, quite separate. But you can't really think of them that way, and the expression seems to be that space and time, the modes under which you perceive things, are forms of the mind's perception, and not themselves things. I think one needs to reflect a bit on the facts of that sort of situation just sort of experience oneself perceiving and ask oneself what is happening. Especially when you look at your hand: well, this hand seems to be under my control to some extent, but those bodies out there are not; they seem to be sort of freefloating, as it were. I don't have any direct perception of their mind; I can only infer their minds through their appearance and their movements, which are analogous to the movements which I seem to make. There is no direct contact with their minds at all, except perhaps in certain rare moments of communication or telepathy, perhaps. So there is a sort of 'in here' and a sort of 'out there'. Our experience seems characterised by that; it seems inseparable from a being 'in here' and a being 'out there' at the same time, both always hanging together. Anyway, we had better perhaps close it here, otherwise it will start something positively Heideggerian.

: Could I come back to a point you mentioned? When you were speaking of the experience of the arupaloka arupa dhyana experience it is an experience in which there is an absence, even of subtle form. Could that

S: Subtle form in the sense of form as it exists in the rupaloka.

: Would it be going too far to say that there is an absence of, in some way, what we normally consider to be the objective content of perception, or rather that the object of your perception is then the mode of perception itself in some way?

S: Yes, I think that puts it quite neatly. Because you think space is infinite, according to the texts. You have the [concept] of space as infinite. So, in a sense, space is your object.

: But it seems, that situation, very close, to the cittamatra, the Yogacara point of view, that when you realise the emptiness of the object

S: Well, the next stage is, of course, the consciousness of the infinity of consciousness itself. It is as though mind or consciousness is doubling back on itself, and one or another of its modes is becoming its object. Usually you are not aware of the mode; you are aware of the objects which you perceive under that mode. But when there is no content in that way, you are not perceiving, so to speak, any thing [36]

Side 2

.... the mode of perception left, that mode itself becomes your object or, you could say, its own object, in an increasingly more subtle manner.

: So our experience of perception or consciousness is usually one where the perception is in fact mediated by an object?

S: Yes, indeed.

: So when that object is no longer there, the experience is unmediated?

S: Well, I could give an example perhaps not a very good one but you could look at the world through spectacles; but supposing you don't have anything to look at through your spectacles, you could then take the spectacles off and look at the spectacles themselves. It is a little like that. So, in this sense, as I said, the perception of space is more real than the perception of so-called objects under the form or under the mode of space. You have got back closer to the mind itself, so to that extent you are one step nearer reality.

: But you wouldn't go so far as to say that that was an experience of reality?

S: Not Ultimate Reality, no, because, after all, in traditional Buddhist terms, that is only the first arupa dhyana.

: Yes, I think I was referring to I have heard on occasions you have been questioning the whole basis of the arupa dhyana experience, whether perhaps it did partake of Transcendental rather than the mundane

S: I think that is what shall I say? a popularised version of something I might have said!

: Yes, very likely!

S: But I think the progression, in a way, is quite clear from the perception of so-called things in such a way that you are not aware of the mode by which you perceive them, to a sort of dropping of the content of perception and focusing on perception as a mode of the mind's experience of things itself. I say 'experience of things', but that is by way of a concession to ordinary language. OK.

Tejananda: The next question is from Sarvamitra a short one.

Sarvamitra: You said it was not possible to deal with all Tantric elements in the symbolism of the stupa. You said that you would have to omit one or two. I was wondering what elements you omitted.

S: I think this was 15 years ago, but I think one of them was the connection of the bija mantras with the different elements: things of that sort. Each element has its own bija for instance, fire has the bija RAM. I don't remember the others. Govinda's book, The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism, gives them all. I think it was things of that sort I had in mind. I don't say very much about the chakras, do I? the chakras as correlated with the elements. I do mention the correspondence between the human body and the stupa as consisting of five [37] elements. I think I do just mention the chakras, but I don't go into them at all. That is, as it were, Tantric, to use that term.

Dharmapriya: In Germany there are quite a few people doing chakra meditations, including

those on the fringes, and some not quite on the fringes, of the FWBO you can get chakra meditation cassettes, and follow them through and they seem to have quite varied experiences. Some people feel they can only afford to do them once a week because they set free too much energy; some people find them quite liberating. Have you had any experience with chakra meditations yourself?

S: I can't say that I have had. I tended to avoid such things in India; perhaps because I didn't feel I was lacking in energy! Maybe we should introduce them in the FWBO! (laughter) especially coops! A morning chakra meditation that would set them up for the day, wouldn't it? ut, from all that I gathered, the effects could sometimes be quite dramatic; and, in the case of Tibetan Buddhism, as I think I have mentioned before, the general practice seems to have been to have worked, so to speak, only with the upper chakras, especially the heart, the throat and the forehead corresponding, of course, to body, speech and mind not with the lower chakras except in the context perhaps of the anuyoga(?) of the AnuttaraYoga Tantra. But one always got the impression that these things were not for playing around with. Hindus often seem quite fond of chakratype, kundalinitype, meditation. One certainly did hear of things going wrong for certain people. But I wouldn't discourage a properly prepared Order Member from exploring this particular field, at least to some extent. He, or she for that matter, would need to be very emotionally positive and balanced, and with a good basis in mindfulness and metta, at the very least: a rather firm, solid, not to say even stolid, disposition! The more erratic sort of flighty, mobile people I think should not take up that sort of practice.

Tejananda: The next question is from me, about rupa as the objective content. In the lecture, with regard to rupa as the objective content of perception situation, you say that we can distinguish two elements in the perceptual situation: 1) what we contribute to it; 2) something that that experience seems to be an experience of, unknown and as yet unidentified. I am particularly interested in the words 'as yet': could you explain when one does identify it, and how?

S: Well, just to give a very simple example. Suppose in the distance you see just a patch of green. You may not be sure to begin with whether that patch of green is a person in a green dress or green suit, or a tree or bush. (Pause. Laughter). That is a simple example, isn't it?

Tejananda: That is identifying well, I suppose it is identifying what it appears to be to you; but I thought you were getting at what it actually is.

S: This is the case in the example I gave. But, obviously, there were degrees of that kind of thing, degrees of reality; because, for instance, you may see a certain object, say a human body, as beautiful or subha, but when Insight develops you may see it as it really is, as asubha, especially if you do the asubhabhavana. So when you see it as subha, you see it as coloured by your own desires and cravings; when those are removed you see it quite differently. But, of course, [38] from a Buddhist point of view, when you see as it were ultimately, or see things as they really are, you see that there is no 'thing'; there is no object. This is the whole point of the cittamatra teaching, isn't it? You see that the whole universe is MindOnly.

Dharmapriya: So when you are talking of the objective content in the perceptual situation, you are talking then of a level of Reality not as deep as cittamatra?

S: Oh yes, certainly. Yes, it is a sort of commonsense level, one might say. It is even also the level or plane of archetypal experience, as in the rupadhyanas. If you do consider the arupadhyanas as, let us say, mundane, the same process is repeated there; the same type of experience, but in a still more refined form.

Tejananda: Maybe I am quite confused here and mixing up something which is not talking about the same thing at all; but I was reading that, according to one Mahayana view, the arahant sees or rather realises emptiness and knows the nature of things as they are in themselves; but the fully Enlightened Buddha, according to this distinction, not only does that but goes further and actually perceives things as they really are where the arahant does not.

S: Well, this is all based on the fact that a distinction is made between the Enlightenment of the Buddha and the Enlightenment of the arahant, and that seems to be a later development, as far as I can make out, because in what seem to be the earliest of the Pali texts, the arahants attained the same bodhi or the same sambodhi that the Buddha himself attained, the only difference being that he attained it without a teacher and they attained it with a teacher and with the help of his instruction.

Tejananda: But do you think there is any actual meaning in the two levels which are attributed to the arahant and the Buddha respectively?

S: Well, it is always possible to speak in terms of grades of reality and therefore grades in the experience. Even in the Pali Canon, what seem to be among the earlier parts there is a distinction at least between the Stream Entrant and the OnceReturner, the NonReturner and the arahant. So, logically, if you posit another higher level which is represented by the Buddha, you can do that; but then it does seem that in the very early days of Buddhism no such distinction was made whether you called it the Enlightenment of the arahant or of the Buddha, it represented the same ultimate level. But the principle of degrees of Reality, and therefore degrees in the realisation of Reality, are recognised throughout, in any case. So perhaps one could say that that Mahayana distinction has a basis in reality only to the extent that for the Mahayana the arahant represents a stage or state lower than he seems to have represented in the days of the Buddha himself.

Dharmapriya: What you are saying would imply, then, that the passage in the Pali Canon in which, I believe it is Sariputra, comes to the Buddha and says he is the greatest of the Buddhas of the past, the present and the future, and the Buddha challenges him by basically getting him to admit that the nature of the Buddha is incomprehensible to him that has always struck me as a statement by Sariputra that a Buddha is somehow incomprehensible because he is more developed.

S: True, you have that statement; but then you have others in which the Buddha does make it clear that what he has realised the arahants have realised. For instance, when he sent out the first arahants: 'I am free from all bonds, human [39] and divine. You also are free from all bonds, human and divine.' That is pretty plain, isn't it? He is putting their realisation on a par with his own. So it is not easy to reconcile these. One would assume, on the basis of common sense, that the tendency as time went on would be to put the Buddha on the higher level rather than to put him on the same level.

Dharmapriya: But I am right in supposing that in the time of the Buddha himself, he was treated with more honour than the arahants that the arahants treated him with considerable honour?

S: Yes, he was their teacher, and the Indian tradition is that one respects one's teacher; it is very strong. In Buddhist countries even today, sometimes the disciple will be more learned or more experienced or more Enlightened even than the teacher, but he will still continue to respect the teacher, at least outwardly, or to show him all respect; he will still, in a sense, consider him as his teacher, even though, in a sense, he may be teaching him! But he was his teacher. So that tradition is very strong in India and in the East in Buddhism. And there is the fact that, yes, even though you are Enlightened, your Enlightenment came from someone's instruction, so even when you yourself are Enlightened and in a sense on a par with him, you so to speak remain grateful to him, otherwise you wouldn't be Enlightened as he is Enlightened; so you express that gratitude. You could say the Enlightened person goes beyond gratitude, but that is perhaps to have a rather onesided view of Enlightenment!

Kuladeva: That gratitude taken, why else then did the Buddha say that he would not even hand over the Order to Maudgalyayana and Sariputra together, if their attainment was the same as the Buddha's? What other reason could there possibly be?

S: Well, you could say that the Buddha could not but lead the Order inasmuch as he was the first to gain Enlightenment, and others gained Enlightenment under his instruction; but the position of the disciples was quite different. And in any case they were Enlightened, and presumably they could all lead themselves.

Kuladeva: Then there were also two examples, as I understand it, when the Buddha actually admonished Sariputra, after he had become an arahant. There was one occasion when he taught somebody, a dying disciple; he took him into the brahma viharas but not to Enlightenment.

S: But this raises the whole question of what were the brahma viharas, and whether the understanding of the brahma viharas was debased in the course of time.

Kuladeva: But the Buddha thought, at least in the Pali Canon it is in the Middle Length Sayings that this person was capable of attaining arahantship, but Sariputra was admonished by the Buddha for only taking him as far as the brahma viharas.

S: This of course raises the question of whether one can take that as being quite literally an exchange between the Buddha and Sariputra, or whether it didn't represent a subsequent editing of material, at a time when perhaps the whole idea of brahmaloka had, as I say, deteriorated. Because in the Digha Nikaya there was a reference to amatangaram(?)brahmaloka, the immortal brahmaloka, and the amata is a synonym for Nibbana. [40] There are other puzzling passages. There is another passage in which the Buddha sees a whole group of people coming bhikkhus among them Devadatta, and he refers to them all as arahants; so in what sense is he using the word there? Otherwise, if you take it literally, you have to ask how could an arahant attempt to murder the Buddha?ut I think, taking

Kuladeva: Are you therefore saying that because there is another occasion when the Buddha

admonished Sariputra

S: Well, there are seven altogether. There is a little article by I. B. Horner she lists and discusses all of the Buddha's admonitions to Sariputta. You could say that, not to speak of an arahant, even the Buddha himself could have deserved admonition, because think of that time when he taught an unsuitable meditation to monks who committed suicide. In a way, he did much the same sort of thing, in a negative way rather than a positive way, that Sariputta did taking that story at its face value in the case of that dying householder. Sariputta didn't, according to that story, give him the teaching that he needed and could have used; the Buddha similarly gave those bhikkhus an unsuitable teaching, as a result of which they committed suicide. So could you not imagine someone else, or even Sariputta perhaps, coming along and saying: 'Look, Bhante' or whatever he used to say 'you should not have done that; that was a mistake'? So this raises the question of the nature of Enlightenment, and whether Enlightenment necessarily involves a full knowledge of the minds of unEnlightened human beings. Apparently it doesn't. So in that case, again taking the story literally, the Buddha had no more reason to rebuke Sariputta, or as much reason to rebuke, as Sariputta would have had to rebuke the Buddha, or not rebuke him, had he come across that particular incident.

Dharmapriya: As far as I know, that goes against the tradition as passed down, because the tradition as passed down does see the Buddha as omniscient. According to Joshi in *Discerning the Buddha*, the Mahayana tradition is of complete omniscience, the sees all.

S: Oh yes, definitely. But the Buddha clearly repudiates, in the Pali Canon, omniscience in the Jaina sense. The Jina the founder of Jainism who was the Buddha's contemporary, is supposed, at least according to the Pali Canon, to have claimed omniscience in the sense that, if he looked at a tree, he could tell exactly how many leaves there were on it. The Buddha rejects that sort of omniscience. The Buddha claims to be omniscient with regard to the Goal and the Path orally speaking. But one could say that that would be in principle, because he could not be omniscient with regard to the application of that Path to the actual needs of people, because he clearly failed in the case of those particular bhikkhus that I mentioned again assuming that one takes this story as authentic and one cannot imagine disciples afterwards inventing such a story, because it goes against the Buddha in a way; so that is a point in favour of its actual historicity. I think it is a quite important point that even the Buddha, as it would seem, cannot fathom the depths of the unEnlightened person's mind; he cannot know what the unEnlightened person is going to do; he does not know absolutely how he is going to take the Teaching. So even if we teach Buddhism itself as sincerely as we can, and meditation and the right path, we cannot be certain it is going to do people good. We cannot be certain that they will react to it or respond to it in a way that will be beneficial to them. Usually, of course, they will; and quite often, of [41] course, we don't teach it so powerfully that even if it has a bad effect it has a very bad effect; but we can't be sure. We don't know. We can hope, and we can act as sincerely as we may, but we can't be sure, we can't be absolutely sure, in any given case, that we are helping rather than harming.

Dharmapriya: So, in a sense, in a practical point, here, Bhante because I have been challenged occasionally over the last few years that I have to have responsibility for what happens to the people to whom I teach meditation so to a certain extent

S: Well, yes and no; because you have got to teach it as well as you can. But even if you

teach it as well as you can and still something goes wrong, in a way you have responsibility. But how you interpret that, or how that works out in practical terms, can only be told by your own conscience. You may not be morally responsible. You may be responsible in the way of the cause-effect relationship in another way, because you may teach to the best of your knowledge and ability, you may have informed yourself in every reasonable way; you could have taken, say, all possible precautions, [being] completely mindful; but at the same time something goes wrong, and you cannot then be blamed morally, but you may recognise that, mechanically speaking, as it were, what happened to that person was your responsibility but it wasn't a moral responsibility, it wouldn't be a moral responsibility if you had done everything that you possibly could. Of course, you could always argue that you should have made an extra effort and got a bit more Enlightened before you actually started teaching! So much, therefore, depends upon mental state and intention, which is again what the Mahayana very often stresses. So the rightness of your mental state cannot be determined by the nature of the results you produce, but only by the nature of the mental state itself, in terms of skilfulness and unskilfulness. You may, say, give a lecture which does an immense amount of good to a lot of people; but it could be that your mind was rather disturbed at the time, actually, did they but know it. On the other hand, you could give a not particularly good talk, as a talk, which didn't do much good, but none the less your mind was in a very positive state. But your main responsibility is towards your own mental state. That doesn't include taking steps to be responsible for the effect of your words on others, because that mindfulness itself is part of your own mental state. But you can't be infallible with regard to other people. So if you fail with regard to other people if you teach them very sincerely, whether it is meditation or yoga or whatever and none the less they don't seem to be helped or things don't seem to go right, you need not blame yourself, if you have in fact done your best, in the full sense, in that situation including preparing yourself for that situation. Because if you could predict what a given person's reaction would be on the basis of your knowledge, it implies a certain mechanicalness in them. You can only predict the mechanical. You can't really predict with a human being, except to the extent that they are mechanical; and, of course, human beings are, to a great extent. You can predict of certain people that, if you prepare, say, a really nice meal for them, they will be pretty pleased. But it could be that just at that particular time something has gone wrong, and when they see the good meal that you have prepared for them they just react in a completely unexpected and uncharacteristic manner. You can't be sure of that. Even the Pavlovian dog does not invariably salivate! So it is important, in a way, to recognise that, beyond the conditioning, there is that element, if not of human freedom, at least of indeterminacy and therefore [42] unpredictability. Sometimes you can be very disconcerted when someone reacts or responds in an unexpected way; can't you? even in quite ordinary human situations.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, did I understand you to say that the Mahayana view of the Buddha was that he was able to predict fully people's actions?

S: The Mahayana does seem to have increasingly tended to regard the Buddha as omniscient in the full sense in a sense that really can't be squared with the account that the Buddha seems to give of himself in the Pali Canon. I take the Pali Canon as being on the whole somewhat nearer the facts of history than at least some of the more colourful Mahayana sutras. Whatever their value, it is not usually that of historicity or closeness to the facts of history. Shall we pass on, then? How many now?

Tejananda: Two more to go. The next one is from me as well. It is a question about

initiation, and it has two connected parts. I will read them both together and then separately, if you like. You spoke in the talk in terms of a need for Tantric initiation in so far as this facilitates the transformation of one's psychophysical energies. (a) Is this what we actually receive at ordination? (b) Where, if anywhere, does the initiation, in the context of the WBO Going for Refuge, fit into the system that you mentioned in the tape? Is it a little wangkur or a wangkur, or neither?

S: Don't forget this talk was given 15 years ago, and I have brought things together, in a sense, to a greater degree than I had at that time. I have spoken mainly in terms of the Going for Refuge, and at the moment I am writing a paper on this topic to read at the Order anniversary next year. So you are well aware that, in a sense, I reduce, say, the arising of the Bodhicitta to Going for Refuge that you are well aware of the Bodhicitta being the altruistic dimension, so to speak, of Going for Refuge. But, all right, in those terms, what about the Tantric initiation? So I don't regard the Going for Refuge to be introductory to the arising of the Bodhicitta, then the arising of the Bodhicitta to be introductory to the abhiseka the wangkur. In the same way that I regard the arising of the Bodhicitta as an aspect of Going for Refuge, I regard the wangkur also as an aspect of Going for Refuge; because Going for Refuge is the fundamental, the basic, the definitive Buddhist act; it is all contained there; it has all, in a way, grown out of that or been elaborated from that in one way or another. So you could say that the abhiseka represents the tremendous energy inherent in the act of Going for Refuge itself. It is not something that you get as an extra sort of goodie, in addition to Going for Refuge or after you have Gone for Refuge. Do you see what I mean? Therefore, I would say, also this takes it a step further that, if you have genuinely Gone for Refuge, you are qualified to practise the Vajrayana or what is termed the Vajrayana, the Vajrayana practices, assuming your Going for Refuge is sufficiently decisive and sufficiently deep. After all, we must not forget that in the Buddha's day there were no abhisekas; though the substance of abhiseka, so to speak, must have been there, apparently inherent in the act of Going for Refuge itself, which clearly liberates a lot of energy. Do you see what I am getting at? [43]

Tejananda: Such as when a person met the Buddha individually and the effect just of what he was on them?

S: Right, yes. Well, it is not so much the effect of what the Buddha was on them, though that certainly is there, as the fact that, by the act of Going for Refuge in response to seeing the Buddha or hearing his Teaching, energy was liberated. It is not that the Buddha literally handed energy over to them; this is the sort of impression you get from hearing about lamas and initiations nowadays. It is very significant that people are very attracted by the idea of power being given power and sometimes you hear people say: 'I am very glad I got suchandsuch initiation from suchandsuch lama; he belongs to a very powerful lineage!' It is really quite ridiculous, and the fact that the word power occurs so frequently, and the way that people pronounce it, tells you quite a lot. It has nothing to do with anything spiritual, it is just power that they are after. o, even when I speak in terms of energy, it is spiritual energy, it is not energy in the ordinary sense that you can utilise in terms of power or for the sake of power or in pursuit of power.

Abhaya: Can I check your wording there? Did you say that the abhiseka refers to the actual energy inherent in the Going for Refuge itself?

S: It is your own Going for Refuge. Your own Going for Refuge releases energy. Of course, the Buddha, so to speak, has his own energy, or the Teaching has its own energy, in the sense of producing an impact on you. But I would say that the energy that you experience is the energy that arises in the course of your response itself; it is your energy. (This is speaking, of course, on the level of duality.)

Abhaya: And do you see this inherent energy as being produced, or expended, over a period of time from the Going for Refuge, or ?

S: It is as though you tap a sort of inexhaustible source within yourself. It is not that you have got a sort of block of energy and you keep it with you, you preserve it.

Abhaya: Do you mean that at ordination, at the Going for Refuge, a little sort of door is opened through which energy

S: No, I wouldn't quite put it in that way, because the actual ceremony of Going for Refuge is the culmination of a process that has been going on, in the case of some people, a very long time. There is a buildup, and due to the very special circumstances the fact that it is a retreat, and you are just there for the sake of ordination, and you have been doing more meditation, your thoughts are concentrated, the whole process comes to a culmination and you experience it all you experience your Going for Refuge itself, especially in that sort of ritual context, in what is a more intense manner than usual.

Abhaya: Could I speak about my own experience? We were talking about this in the group this morning, and we went round the circle and people were talking about their experiences at the private ordination; and I had to confess that my experience was that I was rather nervous and maybe a bit sort of concerned to get the ritual right, and a bit tense, maybe, and I felt that it was a heightened experience but I could not say that I felt that release of energy which some [44]

people seemed to [experience] immediately. But I have experienced it more in terms of a seed being implanted which eventually bears fruit.

S: Well, clearly, different people do experience in different ways. I think I have mentioned in the lecture itself that some people do experience at the time of abhiseka an energy actually coming from the teacher to them. When I was in Kalimpong, I had a number of Tantric initiations, but I did have that experience once, with one particular teacher; and it is definitely the actual experience is that the energy comes like a sort of ray, like a sort of beam, from him to you. But I would not say that that is literally what happens. I would say that is your as it were onthespot interpretation of the experience. I would not say that he sort of hands over to you a quantum of energy; it is more, I would say, that he activates the impact of his energyfull personality activates the energy in you, so that it is your energy, primarily, that you experience.

Abhaya: So are you saying that that actually happens every time a private ordination takes place that energy is activated, no matter what the experience of the individual ordinand may seem to be?

S: Yes, depending, of course, on the manner and the spirit in which he or she approaches it.

Yes, certainly.

Abhaya: Depending on the manner in which he or she approaches it but supposing he or she approaches it in a

S: Obviously, I notice that different people do approach it in very different ways. Some, as you say you were, are a bit nervous, a bit concerned to get it all right, not make any mistakes, even not to make a fool of themselves! Others are clearly adopting a rather selfconscious nonchalant manner. This does happen, as it were to show that they are not at all nervous and they have got everything under control, and it is not all that unusual an experience! (Laughter). Sometimes you do get that. But inasmuch as the whole thing does represent the culminating phase of a process that has been going on for a long time, there is a certain intensity about it, and very often the sense of energy being liberated because you have made a public statement, haven't you? You have brought your inner feeling as it were out into the open, and that in itself can be a sort of liberating experience. A liberating experience means an experience of enhanced energy. I think the point I am mainly concerned to make is that, whatever the experience may be, it is not that, however you actually feel, it is not that literally a quantum of energy is passed over to you in almost a sort of material manner. Though, yes, one can have that sort of experience. I had that experience with well, you have it on all sorts of occasions. I was going to say I had an experience once of meeting someone in Calcutta it was an American, a sort of faith healer; and, as soon as he set eyes on me, he said: 'Ah! You need energy! You are run down!' He grabbed me by the arm and closed his eyes and was apparently pumping energy into me; and I actually felt his energy flowing into me. I also felt it was a very grubby energy! It felt just like having a lot of dirty old dishwater pumped into me. That is exactly how I felt. And it took, I remember, about three weeks for that dirty old energy to get out of my system! But there is a difference between experiencing someone's energy and feeling it impinging on you, and feeling your own energy that arises in response, as something quite different. [45]

Kulananda: What we don't seem to be including here is the idea of the introduction to the yidam in this regard.

Side 3

Is Going for Refuge to the yidam mediated by the guru?

S: You could say that, because the yidam does in the Vajrayana represent the Dharma. Guru represents Buddha; deva that is to say, the yidam represents the Dharma; and the Dakinis and Dharmapalas who are not usually physically present, in the Tantric sense, at least represent the Sangha. You could say that they are basically the friends, the codisciples, with whom you practise or in whose company you practise, and who have therefore a stimulating effect upon you. Yes, you could say that the introduction of the yidam is a more as it were personalised form of Going for Refuge to the Dharma. It is the Going for Refuge to the

Dharma in Tantric form which, as I think I have explained somewhere else, is Going for Refuge in a more as it were experiential way. Going for Refuge with that part or aspect of the Dharma which particularly concerns you, where you are able to latch on.

Kulananda: Bhante, would you be happy with the idea that, through the mediation of the guru at that time, as it were the yidam begins to come halfway? the Dharma

S: I think we have to be careful how we use the word mediation. I think I did say once that one of my own teachers did say, in connection with an abhiseka, that the guru introduces the yidam, the guru as it were says to the disciple, 'This is Tara' or 'This is Manjusri' performs a ceremony of introduction and then says, as it were, to Tara or Manjusri, 'This is disciple Soandso.' So they are introduced to each other, a connection is made between them. They are not just told about each other, as happens when the Dharma is presented perhaps in more abstract, as it were philosophical, terms; there is an actual connection established between the disciple and that particular aspect of the Dharma, as embodied in that particular form or figure whether Compassion, Wisdom, or whatever. Maybe it is better to think of the guru in this context not as a mediator but as master of ceremonies, introducer. 'Mediator' has overtones of the one and only mediator, if you see what I mean; Jesus Christ is the mediator, a priest is a mediator. One doesn't want to introduce or suggest anything of that sort. So, yes, a gobetween, if you like; an introducer.

: Matchmaker.

S: A matchmaker; except the matchmaker is not necessarily present. But the master of ceremonies or introducer what is a proper word for introducer? Do we have one? Well, anyway, he or she is always present at the time.

Tejananda: Bhante, in the Manjughosasutti(?) sadhana, it refers to the bestowal of science I think that is the phrase as the introduction practice. Is this different from what you are talking about?

S: I can't remember. The word here would be vidya, which is not science in the way that we usually understand it just knowledge, but knowledge in the spiritual sense. But not 'bestower' in the literal sense; you don't bestow knowledge literally, do you, even though there is a sort of transmission? Because even if I explain something and you understand it, I have not given you my understanding in [46] the sense that I no longer have it myself. It is like a flame being lit from another flame.

Tejananda: Somebody in my group was saying that you have been talking recently about the introduction of the visualisation practice in terms of a communication in which somebody who has a strong experience of that practice is conveying it through their experience to the person who is being introduced to the practice.

S: You can't really convey your experience. You can stimulate somebody. They can resonate to your experience but they have to appropriate it themselves by an act of their own will, so to speak. You can't literally give it. If you could, why should not the Enlightened Ones just go round giving people Enlightenment? Clearly, some cooperation from your side is required, even if it is the Buddha who is giving the teaching.

Tejananda: Final question, also from me. It is about the higher Tantras. It would seem that, in the Tibetan Vajrayana, it is said that one can only gain full Buddhahood through the practice of Anuttara Yoga Tantra, and that the mulatantras are insufficient; for example, to quote Jeffrey Hopkins, who seems to be speaking in this example on behalf of the Tibetan approach: 'Certain Nyingmapa texts state the possibility of achieving Buddhahood through the three lower Tantras within one lifetime. Nevertheless, the Nyingmapas actually do not practise these except as preliminary to their techniques of highest Yoga Tantra. They are not dismayed by the contradictions involved in saying that Buddhahood is possible through the lower Tantras, because such is said in the texts. They maintain it as true, but in terms of actual practice, it is disregarded.' a) Could you comment on this? There is another question. Maybe you could comment on that?

S: Well, in principle I have already answered it, because I have said, in so many words it may not be quite in so many words but I can say it now that the abhiseka is an aspect of Going for Refuge. So it is through your Going for Refuge that you gain Enlightenment; your Going for Refuge represents that movement from the conditioned to the Unconditioned to the ariyapariyesana, as distinct from the anariyapariyesana, that the Buddha speaks about in the Majjhima Nikaya. Usually it is said by the Nyingmapas, I believe, or at least it was said to me, that one can gain Enlightenment through the lower Tantras in, I think, 12 lifetimes, but that if you want to gain it in one lifetime you have to have recourse to the higher Tantras, the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. This is what I was told. I am not sure what his sources are. Probably both our sources are correct! as far as the tradition goes. But I think personally it is a question of deepening one's Going for Refuge. You know, I have distinguished between the provisional and the effective and the real; I think this is really reducing the whole matter to its essentials. I don't think we should be misled by all these allegedly higher stages and more advanced teachings and more esoteric practices. They all should be related to the Going for Refuge.

Dharmapriya: What you are saying sounds to me like you are saying, 'They are wrong; you don't actually need these higher yoga practices.' [47]

S: No, I wouldn't go so far as to say that, because I do see them as being ultimately aspects of Going for Refuge do you see what I mean? or developments of Going for Refuge. But you have to see them in that sort of perspective.

Dharmapriya: Are you thereby saying that they are necessary but only after one has developed one's Going for Refuge to a certain extent, or that they can be substituted for it as one possible way of

S: No, not quite. One is using two different languages at the same time. It is not that you Go for Refuge to the extent you can and then you have to have recourse to some other practice; it is that after having Gone for Refuge up to a certain point you just have to deepen your Refuge still more; but you may take the help of certain methods or practices to deepen that Going for Refuge, but what you are basically doing is deepening your Going for Refuge. You haven't transcended the Going for Refuge, because the Going for Refuge extends over all stages. This is what I am saying.

Dharmapriya: But would you say, then, that it is possible, having deepened one's Going for Refuge, just to use the basic practices that you have given us to take it even further and

further and further

S: Oh yes. This is quite clear from what we see happening in the Pali Canon itself. I think, if you are not careful, the more elaborate practices can get in the way, and the allegedly higher practices can get in the way. Because you tend to think less and less in terms of the real fundamentals of the spiritual life. You become a bit of a virtuoso, as it were.

Dharmapriya: It does sound to me, from what you are saying, that keeping the Going for Refuge as the primary object of focus, these higher yogas are not necessary then if you manage to deepen your Going for Refuge without them.

S: Oh yes, but some people may find some of the practices which are reckoned as part of the higher Tantras useful in the actual deepening of their Going for Refuge. That may well be. I wouldn't like to exclude that possibility. But I am very suspicious of people who just brush aside Going for Refuge and even the arising of the Bodhicitta and even the lower Tantras because it is the higher Tantras that are where it's really at! and even look down on other Buddhists who haven't got those initiations; even ask someone: 'What initiations have you got?' with the clear expectation of you not having as high initiations as they have had. It is really quite deplorable and quite against the spirit of Going for Refuge and the spirit of the spiritual life, the spirit of Buddhism itself. Always be suspicious when someone starts asking you straight off what initiations you have had. It is just competitiveness. It is the same thing in the Theravada when they [say] you are just a miserable upasaka in their eyes and you haven't risen to that lofty level of being a bhikkhu! It is just losing touch with real fundamentals. I am sure, in the Tantras, whether lower or higher, there are many practices which are very useful at all sorts of levels, but they are useful as deepening the basic and fundamental and definitive act of Going for Refuge.

Tejananda: You have effectively answered the second part of my question, which was: [48] b) do you think the actual practices of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra or analogous systems such as Dzogchen are ever likely to be relevant or even necessary to the spiritual development of people in the WBO?

S: They could be. Hopefully there are going to be thousands of Order Members with all sorts of needs and approaches and it is very likely that some practices can help them; but they must be able to relate them directly to the Going for Refuge. They mustn't constitute a sort of getting away from it or a distraction from it. We do find even humble things like hatha yoga helpful, don't we, because they help keep us in good physical shape and able more effectively, it would seem, to lead a spiritual life and Go for Refuge? Sometimes even psychotherapy may help. These are not spiritual disciplines at all, but they may help remove certain obstacles or impediments.

: How would one know or find out whether one of these ?

S: I suppose you would just have to consult more experienced people. You might have even to experiment a bit yourself, if it was a new field, a new area. I don't exclude that, if it is done properly and cautiously.

Kuladeva: Bhante, bearing in mind that generally in the Western Buddhist Order we just receive an 'initiation' at the time of Going for Refuge, and that in tradition initiations are

bestowed or received at different times, is there some value in receiving an initiation more than once for instance, if one wants to take up another practice?

S: Again, it depends on whether you see the initiation as adding to your Going for Refuge or as contained within it. In principle, I would say Tantric initiations are contained within Going for Refuge. Obviously, Tibetans would not see it like that.

Kuladeva: So therefore it only needs to be done at the time of Going for Refuge?

S: I would say that the Going for Refuge is the single allsufficing 'Tantric initiation'. But supposing I am just speaking hypothetically an Order Member wanted to practise a certain Tantric meditation, perhaps of the higher Tantras: perhaps he could only get the explanation of that from a particular lama, and the lama, doing things in accordance with his tradition, would want to give an abhiseka, would think of that as going far beyond the Going for Refuge and the arising of the Bodhicitta; well, one might have as it were to take it on his terms, but interpreting in accordance with one's own terms, not taking it oneself with a feeling that one was going beyond the Going for Refuge but that one was deepening one's experience of Going for Refuge.

Kuladeva: Does this mean, therefore, that you have changed your mind since the time when you were in Kalimpong receiving initiations from different teachers

S: At that time I did tend to think of the yantras as successive, though I had again, this is something I am writing about at the moment I had seen the possibility of their being what I called telescoped. But at that time I was still as it were thinking things over, and as it were learning about the Vajrayana. Since then I have had many years in which to think these things over and come to certain conclusions. I was never in a hurry to come to conclusions, so when I learned these things I just tried to understand them as they were actually taught; I wasn't in a hurry to start as it were interpreting in my own way. But these are the conclusions I have come to in the course of the last 20, 25 years or so. I [49] have seen more and more everything contained within the Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge was the seed. In a way, of course, it is also the fruit. But I don't see the arising of the Bodhicitta or the abhiseka as going beyond the Going for Refuge, but only as revealing different aspects of it more fully and more clearly; and that is to be expected that, at the very beginning, when you just get the bare fundamentals, which are sufficient; as time goes on, as so many people Go for Refuge, people with so many different needs and so many different approaches, clearly there will be more and more elaboration, and that elaboration will enrich the concept of Going for Refuge. But, if you are not careful, they end up smothering it and concealing it rather than revealing it.

Saddhaloka: Bhante, would you see a place for perhaps a more formalised or even ritualised as it were reGoing for Refuge, perhaps at a deeper level, so that it is not something done once in a ceremonial way ?

S: That is not easy, because at present, when people Go for Refuge, when they are ordained, we take it that that is an effective Going for Refuge, and I think it usually is, at least at that time. People can't always sustain it, but certainly they do effectively Go for Refuge. So the next stage is the real Going for Refuge, but it is not so easy to be sure that someone has really Gone for Refuge, because that amounts to Stream Entry; so would you have a sort of Stream Entry ordination? Would that be feasible?

Saddhaloka: I was thinking more in the line of just a parallel to the Mitra reaffirmation.

S: Anyway, you have a reaffirmation every time you repeat the Refuges and Precepts.

Saddhaloka: But I was thinking of something a bit more formalised and ceremonialised, which does seem to have quite a strong psychological effect.

S: But in chapters people can certainly do that; I would encourage that that, in the chapter if you like, at the beginning of every chapter meeting, or, if you liked again, every month or once a year, the chapter could have its own very special and solemn and ceremonial reaffirmation ceremony, with the seniormost person, or most suitable person, present, conducting the proceedings. I say that because it wouldn't be possible for me to be everywhere at once that particular siddhi doesn't seem to have appeared, yet! so it couldn't be done in that way.

Priyananda: Perhaps it could occur on the Order anniversary each year. Would you go so far as to say that?

S: Well, yes, in a way it does happen like that, doesn't it, though we haven't thought of it precisely in those terms? But I think you must be very careful not to get away from the fact that you are Going for Refuge all the time, and it is not that you just Go for Refuge on special occasions and at the very least you Go for Refuge and take the Precepts whenever you actually recite them; that is a reminder every time. It is not that you let your ordination slide for a few months or for a whole year, and then on a special day you just sort of do it all over again! Do you see what I mean? It is not like confession in the good old Catholic church. I think it is more a question of sort of upgrading one's usual recitation of the Refuges and Precepts. That doesn't as it were exclude a possible reaffirmation [50 ceremony once a month or once a year, but I think one should think in terms of just taking the Going for Refuge and recitation of Precepts more seriously, perhaps, than sometimes is the case. For instance, one thing that could be done is that people could go around just reporting in about the success that they were having with the Precepts say, take one every week: first of all the abstention from violence: well, how successful have I been this week? Just report in. Have I had actual recourse to force in any way? Have I operated in accordance with the power mode in any way, grossly or subtly? This sort of keeps one up to scratch with regard to the observance of the Precepts. When you come on to those speech Precepts, I am sure you will have something to confess; it is almost inevitable, isn't it, that you have deviated a little, a little bit, from the truth were a little bit rough, a little bit harsh, in speech, a little bit impatient? It does happen sometimes doesn't it? Don't you occasionally let out that odd expletive? Again it happens, doesn't it? Or a little bit of tittle-tattle? So there is sure to be something to brush up on, or improve. o that could be something that one did, rather than just depending on a nice sort of ceremonial Going for Refuge and taking of Precepts, while you were still not really seriously trying to put those Precepts into practice. I am not saying you should not have a ceremonial Going for Refuge or reaffirmation, but it mustn't take the place of the actual attempt to practise those things. And when it comes to micchaditthis, well! One has to confess, no doubt, all sorts of mental confusions and not getting things quite straight doesn't one? Or at least little areas of unclarity? as this ever been done in any chapter just going through the Precepts? I have an idea it has been done.

Abhaya: In Manchester we have done something like that with the Precepts.

S: Perhaps there should be more discussion of the implications of the Refuges themselves. nyway is that all?

Tejananda: That's all.

S: Well, it's a good note to end on, isn't it?

Cittapala: Oh, just one small question, Bhante. In that reaffirmation ceremony, would the form follow very much the same form as the actual public ordination ceremony?

S: I haven't really thought about it, but just as it were off the cuff there is no reason why it shouldn't that is to say, you could have a whole day, even, especially with an annual event. You could have the Six Element Practice, you could have the metta bhavana, and then you could have a very serious recitation in call and response of the Refuges and Precepts; and then do the practice that you got at the time of your private ordination that would be a very good sort of recap of the whole occasion.

Cittapala: There wouldn't be any sort of going over the actual verses which we took, either in the private ordination or the public ordination? [51]

S: I must say I haven't thought about that. I am not so sure that that would be a good idea. No my offthecuff response to that is: stick, as it were, with the fruits. There couldn't be a real reenactment unless I was actually there, so you are just left with your side, as it were, what concerns you. So, yes, I would say do it in the way that I outlined. OK, then. [52]

10 December: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE VAJRA

Tejananda: Tonight we have nine questions on the symbolism of the Thunderbolt, starting with one from Dharmapriya about catastrophe.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, near the beginning of the lecture you describe the Three Jewels, and in your description of the Dharma jewel you say, more or less, that the Dharma is the truth that leads one, with or without catastrophe, to the goal. The reference to catastrophe caught the attention of several of us within our group. We wondered if it merely referred to ordinarily severe difficulties on the Path. Is this the case, or does your reference to catastrophe indicate something altogether different?

S: I can't remember! I must have used the word catastrophe for a particular reason. Let me look in my notes to see whether I really planned to say that or whether it just sort of slipped in. Whereabouts is it?

Dharmapriya: It is fairly early. You have discussed a lot about man's interest in natural phenomena, precious stones, and it is the first concrete reference to precious stones.

S: Ah, right.

Ratnaprabha: You say the Three Jewels were put across as precious, beautiful things, and then you talk about the Dharma jewel; when you describe the Dharma jewel this comes in. (pause)

S: I don't think it's in the notes. I refer to all the different jewels the whole world of light and colour used to decorate myths and legends about jewels

Dharmapriya: It's after the myths and legends.

S: find it in Buddhism, find it from the earliest times at the very heart of Buddhism; Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; spoken of as the Three Jewels; so why Three Jewels? It looks as though that was a little aside. Possibly I was concerned to jolt the audience out of complacency suggesting, perhaps, that the fact that one was following the spiritual path did not necessarily mean that life would be free from difficulties, or even from catastrophes. I think it must have been something of that sort. What exactly did I say, according to your notes?

Dharmapriya: As close as I got, it was: you said what the Buddha was, the Dharma, the Sangha, and in the context of the Dharma it was something like 'the true Path that leads one, with or without catastrophe, to the Goal.'

S: Yes, that must have but otherwise I might have felt, or probably did feel, that it all sounded too smooth and easy. It was like a little warning, as it were: it could be difficult even there could be a catastrophe, whether directly stemming from your actual practice of the Dharma or just something happening in your life itself; it wasn't necessarily a smooth and easy process. I may well have been looking round at my audience, and I might have seen smiles of complacency on their faces, as though they knew all about it, and it was quite a straightforward [53] business just practising the Dharma and following the Path. Because, in those days it was '72 there was still quite a lingering influence of the hippie movement, and spiritual life was associated with a good deal of hedonism, one might say! It was all a question of 'Be here now' that was a very favourite book then, wasn't it? Those who were around in those days, the few who were, may remember that. So, yes, it was just a little aside, probably just for that reason.

Tejananda: The second question is from Abhaya on breaking through.

Abhaya: There is a strong emphasis in the lecture on breaking through

S: Perhaps in view of the fact that the subject of the lecture is the Vajra, the Dharmadhara, that is inevitable. It goes along with that sort of imagery, that sort of conception. Anyway.

Abhaya: on the powerful force of the vajra, producing a shattering experience. We hear very little in the Movement in the Order, even of such shattering, powerful experiences. I was wondering why the spiritual practices we do seem to work relatively more slowly. For breaking through social and psychological conditioning what you have referred to elsewhere as 'unfinished business' we seem to be resorting, in more extreme cases, to the more psychological techniques such as rebirthing, which seem to perform the more apparently

'vajric' function for people. Would you like to comment?

S: Go through it bit by bit.

Abhaya: 'There is strong emphasis in the lecture on breaking through, smashing through, on the powerful force of the vajra, producing a shattering experience.'

S: Ah, the experience of shattering rather than the shattering experience.

Abhaya: The experience of shattering?

S: Yes. I mean it is not so much that the experience itself is shattering, when one speaks of breaking through or shattering barriers, but that the experience, which can be very joyful, is one of breaking through and shattering though it may also be a shattering experience.

Abhaya: Well, I go on to refer to it as a shattering experience. 'We hear very little in the movement in the Order, even of such 'well, strong breaking through or powerful, shattering experiences.

S: They do sometimes occur. People do sometimes have them.

Abhaya: I was thinking of Ratnajita, a few years ago, who had one seemingly such experience. But they do seem to be the exception rather than the rule. So 'I was wondering why the spiritual practices we do seem to work so much more slowly.'

S: Ah, 'the spiritual practice we do seems to work so much more slowly'. Well, that is true, but I would say that it is probably due to the way in which we do the practice. If you meditate, say, for half an hour a day or an hour a day, regularly, over a period of years, the results will be rather slow in coming; they will come quite gradually. But supposing you do ten hours' meditation, or even 20 hours' meditation, a day, and keep that up over a considerable period, you can [54] expect something more dramatic in the way of results. So I think it is not so much the kind of meditation, or the kind of practice in general, we do; it is a question of the intensity with which we do them. And I think people tend not to do whatever practice they are doing in a very intense manner. I think, more often than not, they tend to take things quite easily. Rightly or wrongly, we don't have many extremists in this respect in the Movement. It may be the English aren't given to extremism; maybe we will get a bit of extremism in the Movement when we spread in Spain or South America or something like that!

Abhaya: But that hasn't particularly bothered you, or you just think: 'Well, that's the way it is'?

S: It is not so much 'That's the way it is,' it is a question of 'That's the way people are'. I would like to see more intensity. Sometimes, in certain areas, there is intensity, but it is, I am afraid, as far as my knowledge goes, the exception rather than the rule. Also, of course, sometimes intensity can be misdirected, or can produce a sharp reaction we know that, too. o, yes, it is not so much a question of the method or the technique; it is more a question of the amount of energy we put into that particular practice. There was a bit more, wasn't there?

Abhaya: Yes. 'For breaking through social and psychological conditioning what you have referred to elsewhere as unfinished business we seem to be resorting in more extreme cases, to the more psychological techniques such as rebirthing, which seem to perform the more apparently vajric functions for people.'

S: I would say that was rather a misuse of the word 'vajric' or at least it should go in single inverted commas.

Abhaya: Well, I had put it in inverted commas.

S: Yes; because the breaking through that is associated with the vajra is a breaking through of illusion, or breaking through into Reality, whereas the psychotherapies, useful as they often are, do not break through in that way, as far as one knows. I think that, when people have recourse to therapies, to psychotherapies, it is as though for the time being, or at least to some extent or in certain respects, they have given up the prospect or the immediate prospect of breaking through in the vajric sense, and are as it were going back a bit in their spiritual lives, possibly with a view to getting certain things, certain obstacles, out of the way so that they may be in a better position to break through in a purely vajric sense. But I certainly would not say that what they were unable to do using vajric methods they are able to do using psychotherapeutic methods; I don't think the two kinds of method are really the same at all. That is not to say that psychotherapeutic measures may not be helpful, but they are helpful on another, as it were a preliminary, level.

Abhaya: But was it, Bhante just to pursue the point a little did you think originally, or before you started encouraging the use of such methods in the Movement, which you have done recently now that there are qualified Order Members did you originally feel that the meditation practice, and the spiritual practice in general, would fulfil that function, and therefore it is just recently that you thought 'It is not doing so ' ? [55]

S: I wouldn't say that I encourage such practices, even so. I think it is more that I sort of tolerate them, because sometimes people feel that they would be very useful; I still think it is rather a pity that people don't, in some cases or in some ways, have more faith, so to speak, in the traditional methods, especially in meditation. But this may be, to some extent, due to the fact that in my own history I didn't have these psychological problems. I find them sometimes quite difficult to understand. I only practised meditation and ethics and reflected on the Dharma; I never had anything to do with psychotherapy or anything of that sort. So I tend to regard them as being, in at least some cases, perhaps many cases, a bit of a sidetrack. ut, yes, I sort of do recognise it in the case of some people. They come into the FWBO in such a mess that there is some psychological tidying up or sorting out to be done before they can really get on with things like meditation. So I mean that is broadly my position in relation to these things, the various psychotherapies. To some extent it is the same with, say, hatha yoga: yes, it contributes to your general wellbeing, but what bearing it really has directly, what direct bearing on the process of your progress towards Enlightenment, is quite another matter. But I think an unhealthy person can make spiritual progress; the hatha yogis may not agree, but it does seem possible.

Dharmapriya: Dharmapriya speaking (laughter).

S: There are lots of people bursting with health, whether as a result of the practice of hatha

yoga or otherwise; but who don't seem, strange to say, to be anywhere near Enlightenment!

Dharmapriya: You don't agree, then, with Iyengar's assertion that hatha yoga and raja yoga

S: Well, I deliberately say hatha yoga. I am not speaking of raja yoga, which is something rather different.

Dharmapriya: So then you wouldn't see hatha yoga as a form of raja yoga?

S: Oh no, I wouldn't relate them in that way at all. The general Indian tradition, as far as I understand it, is that hatha yoga is a sort of introduction to raja yoga; it forms a basis or a foundation for it. Though teachers do differ as to the amount of attention you need to give to hatha yoga, the amount of experience you need to have of it, before you go on to practise raja yoga. Some would spend perhaps a few weeks on hatha yoga and the rest of your life for raja yoga; others would spend so much time on hatha yoga that raja yoga was to all intents and purposes forgotten. But I think, in principle, the one is an introduction to the other. So perhaps it is a little bit like that with psychotherapy: in the case of those who do need that preliminary sorting out, the sorting out can go on so long that you don't ever really get into the practice of meditation. But, on the other hand, with people who use it perhaps more intelligently, a little preliminary psychotherapeutic sorting out and then getting on with meditation more intensively could be quite appropriate. I think I view psychotherapies as useful. I am speaking especially of Order Members and Mitras in the case of those persons who have, for one reason or [56]

another, to backtrack a bit in their spiritual life before they can again go forward.

Dharmapriya: Can I ask a question about your reference to intensity or lack of intensity ?

S: Yes, let me just say something first, though. I think it is really quite rarely that your psychological problems are so great and so intense. I am speaking here of Order Members and Mitras that you are just not able to go forward in the sense of practising meditation regularly and more and more intensively, before you have had some recourse to psychotherapy. It may be the case with people who come to us very newly and who are on the fringes of the Movement, but it would be rather surprising in the case of an Order Member or even a more experienced Mitra. Anyway.

Dharmapriya: I was a bit surprised at your reference that you feel that intensity is lacking perhaps not in general, but I immediately thought of, say, the people in Vajraloka, who, especially before the new programme in Vajraloka, were generally doing six or seven or ten hours of meditation a day; and people in various cooperatives where they are doing, say, ten hours of work in a very intense way every day; and they don't seem to bring fruits in the direction of Insight any faster.

S: Say that again; I think it requires analysis.

Dharmapriya: Well, I thought immediately of two examples where it seems to me that people are practising with intensity, such as Vajraloka meditation practice with intensity or certain coops work with intensity. I think of the old FBS or of the coop in Croydon. Nevertheless, there doesn't seem to be any breaking through in the vajric sense there, or at least no dramatic

S: Hm, but I mean to break through in the vajric sense you must practise intensively something pertaining to Insight; and certainly Insight can arise within a work situation, even within a coop situation, but you need to reflect upon what you are doing; you need to develop Insight into what you are doing, or you need to look very closely and very deeply at the situations, even problems even catastrophes that actually arise. Simply working hard and putting a lot of energy into what you are doing, day after day and week after week and month after month does not by itself lead to breaking through, because there isn't any element of Insight. That is really the point. So perhaps it should be said that there is an ambiguity in the use of the word 'intense' or 'intensely'. You are not necessarily working intensely if you are just sort of slogging away, day after day and week after week. When I use the word 'intense' or 'intensely', I mean to suggest that you are really wholehearted and enthusiastic, really throwing yourself into whatever it happens to be that you are doing: that you are involved in it passionately, even, one might say. Passion seems rather lacking in Britain, or at least in England. Well, that is a great big generalisation, but I think you know what I mean. It is true that, if you work hard and intensively, or intensely in the sense that I have mentioned, you can gather all your energies together, but you don't, just by doing that, break through in the vajric sense of achieving Insight. For that to be possible, a certain type of reflection has to supervene upon your intense activity. [57] Let me give you an example. This is the sort of example that comes to me because Kulananda is sitting opposite me. Supposing you are going after some really big order as Kulananda used to! some really fat order. Let us say, for the sake of argument, it is £20,000, or even, say, £100,000, and you are really going all out after that order; and all your mental activities are bound up with that, you are doing everything possible just to get that order, you leave no stone unturned, and maybe for weeks and weeks together all your energies are going into that and you are on the point of success, the very brink of success, and you are so pleased and happy that this big deal is going to come off and then suddenly it is all off. So you watch your mind very carefully at that point and say 'No! I am not going to be disappointed. I am not going to be upset. I am not going to be disturbed. This is what life is like. This is what happens. I am going to maintain equanimity' you know, treat the two impostors, in Kipling's language, triumph and disaster, just the same. You can then develop Insight. That is an occasion, that is an opportunity, for developing Insight, an opportunity for a breakthrough. But that breakthrough is not just because of the intensity, but on account of the Insight that supervenes upon that intensity in that situation of disappointment. And that is quite another matter. So you can develop Insight, you can break through in that way, in all sorts of situations; but, clearly, if you have been after a £20,000, £100,000, order and just on the brink of success, it is going to be a bigger disappointment, and therefore potentially a greater opportunity for developing Insight, than if it was just a little £500 order. Obviously, any situation also in which you come close to death is an opportunity for developing Insight; it is an opportunity for a breakthrough, is a potentially vajric situation. If you are in the hands, so to speak, of a skilled psychotherapist who has definitely a Transcendental dimension to his work and that doesn't happen, I think, very often he may be able to lead you into a situation, say, of recognising something about yourself which can give you an opportunity of a breakthrough; but I think it is only if there is definitely a Transcendental background to that person's work. Otherwise it just becomes an insight with a small i, with perhaps relatively minor repercussions or relatively minor value for you though still quite worthwhile as helping to prepare the ground for eventually something more genuinely vajric. Does that throw some light? So I think, if you are working with great intensity, you are more likely to encounter, even to create, situations in which it is possible for there to be a pronounced breakthrough. But if you are just plodding along that's all right, you'll get there in the end, but there won't be anything very dramatic happening en

route. Or less likelihood; sometimes there is something, sometimes your plodding is interrupted by some irruption from the outside world, and you have to face up to it and deal with it. You may be plodding along very steadily and methodically in your dull old way, and suddenly one day you may find out you have got cancer and have to face that.

nyway, was there anything more?

Abhaya: I think that was it, thank you.

Tejananda: The third question is from Ratnaprabha, on Vajrapani.

Ratnaprabha: There is a main question and possibly a couple of subsidiaries to follow. The main question is: [58] Why does Vajrapani trample upon figures representing craving and ignorance but not upon a figure representing hatred?

S: I suppose it is because he has only got two feet! (laughter). Well, you could have put two bodies or figures under one foot, but it looks more symmetrical one under one foot and one under the other. I expect it is just for reasons of that sort, because you get various explanations of these figures that are under the feet of different Bodhisattvas; sometimes you see poor old Ganapati, the Hindu god, redcoloured, and he represents usually love in that case love with a small l and he is, of course, the remover of obstacles; and so you are as it were trampling on the remover of obstacles, because he removes worldly obstacles, which is not necessarily a good thing from the spiritual point of view. So I doubt if there is any profound as it were philosophical reason. Sometimes one gets, under the feet of the Bodhisattvas, figures gods, human beings representing sometimes one kind of passion, sometimes another. Sometimes you get Hindu gods, not only Ganapati but other Hindu gods, which rather puzzles Hindus who visit museums in India and see Buddhist Bodhisattvas trampling on their gods and goddesses; but this is because, from the point of view of Buddhism, the gods and goddesses are gods and goddesses of the Round; they are, so to speak, personifications of natural forces, so the Bodhisattva is trampling underfoot the forces not just of the material world but the forces of conditioned existence. He is trampling underfoot the different aspects of the samsara, even in their most refined forms.

Ratnaprabha: When we discussed this issue, some suggested that it might be because Vajrapani himself represents, if you like, spiritual anger or something like that, and therefore he was not particularly interested he was interested more in transmuting hatred, perhaps, than in destroying it.

S: Could be; but really the principle of transmutation would apply to all the passions. Well, it does in the Vajrayana, doesn't it? But, yes, that might be a possible explanation. Though maybe one could say Vajrapani would be being rather subjective, but still !

Ratnaprabha: Does the Tantra ever use the language of 'hating hatred' and that kind of thing?

S: I think Shantideva uses that sort of language, doesn't he? Isn't that figure of speech called oxymoron?

Ratnaprabha: I think so.

S: Yes; hate hatred. The example that is usually given is from Tennyson, isn't it? faith unfaithful kept him falsely true. Yes, you could speak in those terms. That was it, yes. Sometimes I think there isn't a rational explanation for these details of iconography; they just seem to have grown up, just seem to have developed. There may have been a reason at one time, but sometimes there may not have been.

Tejananda: The fourth question is from Ratnaprabha again, and is about sexual symbolism in the vajra and bell. [59]

Ratnaprabha: In reading Tibetan works, sometimes in fact, quite often they seem to speak of the vajra as a sexual symbol representing the penis. You don't actually mention that in the lecture. Is that a traditional ?

S: Indeed it is, yes. I don't know why I didn't mention it. Maybe there was quite enough of that sort of talk going on at that time. I can't remember. But, yes, that certainly is one interpretation.

Ratnaprabha: Is that just as it were as another rich piece of sign language in the Tantric array, sort of thing, or is there more significance to it than that?

S: Well, what further significance could there be?

Ratnaprabha: I don't know!

S: I suppose it all boils down to a question of how literally or otherwise you take the so-called sexual symbolism of the Tantra. But certainly the symbolism of the vajra usually, in that case, it is not vajra and bell but vajra and lotus does have a sexual significance in certain contexts. There is one Tantric writer quoted by Guenther, who speaks of the bliss arising from the union of vajra and lotus; and there it is clearly a sexual reference whether to be understood literally or not is not perhaps clear. But, yes, the vajra does have that kind of significance in some contexts.

Ratnaprabha: Presumably partly because it represents potency in various ways.

S: Well, put it this way: if you are going to assign a sexual significance to the vajra and the bell or the vajra and the lotus, the vajra more nearly resembles the masculine sex organ, presumably, and so therefore is associated with that, rather than with its complement.

Tejananda: The next question is from Kuladeva

Kuladeva: This question might be a bit nitpicking or even a bit pedantic. In the lecture, you refer to a vision of One Reality in relation to both Vairocana's Wisdom of the Dharmadhatu and Ratnasambhava's Wisdom of Equality. Does this kind of terminology not create an impression of a monistic rather than a nondual Reality, which, as I understand it, is the generally accepted standpoint adopted by all the major schools of Buddhism, especially by the Madhyamika?

S: It probably is better to use the language or terminology of nonduality or advaya. But that might sometimes sound a bit not exactly pedantic but a bit abstract. Oneness seems to have

more emotional resonance. But if one does use the expression 'oneness', one does need to make it clear that it is not oneness in the monistic sense but oneness in the sense of a transcendence of all duality, including, of course, the duality of one and many. If in English one speaks of, say, oneness, it doesn't have the same sort of evocative value as when you speak of oneness. But none the less oneness is a one-sided concept, from the Buddhist point of view. I don't usually speak in terms of oneness, do I? [60]

Kuladeva: No, I don't think so.

S: I hope not.

Tejananda: Ratnaprabha has a question on the ground of being.

Ratnaprabha: Actually, really, it was the same point that Kuladeva was

S: Do I use that expression, 'ground of being'?

Ratnaprabha: No, you don't use that expression.

S: I thought I didn't. I might have referred to it, but I don't actually use it.

Ratnaprabha: I think perhaps you have already answered it in answering Kuladeva's question, but I will mention it anyway. In your discussion of the central sphere of the vajra, in the way you talk of it it could perhaps be mistaken for implying a monistic conception of Reality in which there was a sort of ground of being, out of which dualities sort of split off.

S: I think here the Plotinian critique is rather useful, because he makes it clear that what he calls 'the one', which is not a numerical one, transcends being; it cannot be spoken of in terms of being. Not that it can be spoken of in terms of nonbeing either, but Plotinus sees 'being' as involved in the world of relativity, as part of a duality, so that 'the one' cannot be spoken of even in terms of being. So there is no question of a ground of being. Well, there is no question of 'being' being the ultimate ground. If there is an ultimate ground, it is the One, but it is not a ground in the sense of being 'being.' It is of a different order, so to speak, altogether.

Kulananda: Perhaps there is a ground of being, but that is already within a dualistic framework; it is not as it were the ultimate description.

S: Yes. Well, perhaps Plotinus would say that 'being' and 'ground of being' are on the next level down from the One, on the level of what he calls nous, which is sometimes translated as mind, sometimes intellect, sometimes spirit. It is the next level down the first level about which anything can really be said. But it is quite distinct from the One. When you speak of something as a ground, you certainly imply that it has an existence, so you imply that it has being or even that it is being; but if one speaks in terms of ultimate ground at all, then Plotinus would say, presumably, that the One cannot be the ground of whatever exists, because it does not exist in order to be such a ground. It has no being that can be such a ground. Anyway, perhaps we had better leave that. Ratnaprabha is getting us into deep waters, as usual. One has to be careful, when talking about Buddhism, about using any expression which implies a real ontology.

Ratnaprabha: Is it really possible to do that because, in the implication of an ontology, surely, is largely a matter of the way in which the listener is going to take what you say? [61]

S: You can't help using words which imply existence. You say sunyata is this or is that, even though you know quite well that sunyata is not a matter of existence or nonexistence or both or neither; so whatever you say must be accompanied by an 'as if' or 'as it were' or 'in a manner of speaking' or 'from the standpoint of the relative truth', or something of that sort. But there is no doubt that some expressions, if they have their limitations, are less liable to misinterpretation than others.

Side 2

Tejananda: Now Abhaya has a question, which I think comes from Aloka, about correlations.

Abhaya: I've done a little chart of the usual correlations, if you would like to look at it. In the section of the lecture where you make the correlation of the five Buddhas and their Wisdoms with the five elements, the five skandhas, the five poisons and so on, you have changed the order of the skandhas so that the second Buddha in your list, Aksobhya, is associated with samjna, perception, which is not No. 2 on the skandha list. (This is Aloka's note.) The only other correlation I can find that matches this is Padmakorpur's(?), in Guenther's Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, in the note at the back. I realise that correlations are different according to different systems, and sometimes Aksobhya moves to the centre of the mandala, but: a) What were your sources for this section? b) Is there anything to be said for a standard WBO system of correspondences in terms of the symbolism of the five Buddha Mandala?

S: I don't remember what my sources were. But, yes, I think it would definitely be a good thing if there was a standard FWBO list though it should always be made clear that, in the Buddhist tradition, there are alternative lists, alternative sets of correlations. But clearly one's choice would not have to be arbitrary; you would have to have definite reasons, you would have to argue it out as it were as to why one set of correlations was more suitable, more appropriate or more helpful than another. or instance, if Amoghasiddhi represents the AllPerforming Wisdom, clearly samskara is more appropriate to him, isn't it, because samskara represents the volitional aspect? But, no, perhaps that is a little job that Aloka could get on with studying the different sets of correlations and trying to see whether any one set is the most appropriate and helpful.

Chakkhupala: In Tuscany 1982, the study group that Vessantara was leading spent quite a long time in examining and studying all these correlations, and had come up with a fairly comprehensive and exhaustive list of correlations which was the result of some degree of investigation

S: Well, maybe Aloka would like to get in touch with Vessantara, if he has that material. He

probably does, because he has taken all his files with him to Guhyaloka and quite recently was hard at work on a book on the symbolism of the different Bodhisattvas and so on, so probably that material is all under consideration [62] by him at the moment. So maybe Aloka could be informed of that. It could be that Vessantara has already sorted it all out. But I think we first of all have to make sure we have got all the available information from traditional sources all the different alternative sets of correspondences; and that then we sort of ponder them. But Aksobhya always seems to be associated with hatred; there don't seem to be any variations there. Vairocana is, I know, at least sometimes associated with rupa; but here, of course, he is associated with consciousness. Amitabha, so far as I know, so far as I remember, is always associated with samjna, perception.

Abhaya: So you have no idea, Bhante, why in this lecture Aksobhya is associated with perception?

S: No, I really couldn't say. I just can't remember either what sources I consulted or what led me to make that sort of connection. If I was to go through all the source material again, I would probably be able to see why I made that connection. His set of correlations does seem to make sense from certain points of view; for instance, Aksobhya is associated with the Mirrorlike Wisdom and with the skandha of form, rupa, because the mirror reflects forms, doesn't it? You could say that Amoghasiddhi is associated with the All-Performing Wisdom and therefore could be associated with the poison of envy, because envy is akin to jealousy and this suggests also competitiveness, which might arise when different people are trying to do things; and so on.

Tejananda: Our eighth question is from Ratnaprabha on yang and yin.

Ratnaprabha: This question is on the dualities which come out of the sort of splitting of the vajra. In considering the different dualities that you mention in the lecture, it seemed to me that there were two kinds of duality: first, what might be summarised as the duality between the active and the receptive, which seems to correspond closely to the Chinese system of yang and yin which you mention in the lecture; secondly, there seems to be the kind of duality between the positive and the negative, and although these are related they don't seem to be quite the same thing the positive and the negative or progressive and regressive, or even nirvana and samsara. So the former of these dualities that is, the active and receptive is actually present within the Wisdoms, within the jnanas, in the form of the male and female Buddhas which you talk about in the last lecture of the series; and it also seems to relate to the duality between the Bodhisattva in time and the Buddha outside of time, and also Wisdom and Compassion. But the duality between positive and negative tendencies seems of quite a different nature, to me at least; yet in the lecture the vajra is said to embody both of these kinds of duality. I wonder if you have any comments on that.

S: In some ways, of course, the symbolism or the terminology of yin and yang don't quite belong in the Buddhist context, because it is a duality that comes from Taoism. One notices, in Chinese thought, that in relation to yin and yang there seems to be no question of evaluation certainly not that yin is bad and yang is good, or therefore that positive is good and negative is bad. It is said that the [63] origin of the yin and the yang concept can be traced back to the difference between the two sides of a hill one in the sunshine and the other in shadow, the light and the dark; so it wasn't any question of one being good and the other bad, because under certain conditions sunshine is good and under other conditions shade is

good. o it is not that there is an association of darkness with evil, as very often we have in Western thought. The distinction, as it were, is just factual. This applies also you can follow this through, say, in active and receptive. Here there is no value judgement, they are both good, as it were not that you are using 'good' in a dualistic way. But when you come, say, to skilful and unskilful, that is really quite different; that is a different kind of duality. So I think as it were there is not exactly a mixup but an overlap, between the traditional Chinese concept of a duality, in which the two members of the duality just are there is no question of one being good and the other bad and another set of dual terms in which one is definitely positive, in the sense of skilful, and the other definitely negative, in the sense of unskilful. So perhaps these have got mixed up, or perhaps overlap, in the case of the terms I mentioned. But that is due to the transposition of the Chinese concept of yin and yang to the Indian Buddhist context. Do you see what I am getting at?

Ratnaprabha: Yes; although yin and yang as such may not be present in the Indian Buddhist context, there are dualities present in which you do not have one side of the duality valued less than the other side of the duality, and you mentioned receptive and active, for example.

S: Well, perhaps I should put it in this way: that, if you go back to the original vajra, you can have the vajra either like this or like that. This is the Chinese way, you could say; you have got, for instance, the five Buddhas there and the five elements there. The five Buddhas are no better than the five elements; the five elements are no better than the five Buddhas. That is the Chinese way of looking at it. But then you turn it round. The Indian way is: the five Buddhas are up there and the five elements are down there. The five Buddhas are higher, the five elements are lower; in a sense, the five Buddhas are better and the five elements worse. You have got to go from here to there. The Chinese view is you have got to keep the two in balance. It is a rather different sort of view. Do you see what I am getting at?

Ratnaprabha: Maybe we should say, for the sake of the tape, that you were holding the vajra horizontally in the first example, and vertically in the second example.

S: You ought to videotape me! But I think that is quite an important point that, in Chinese thought, there tends to be this balancing of opposites and not any evaluation of them, whereas in Indian thought there is definitely an evaluation at least from the relative point of view or at least from the point of view of practice.

Tejananda: Did that Chinese tendency have an effect on Buddhism as it entered China?

S: This I am not sure about; I don't really know, I couldn't say. It certainly has an effect, obviously, on practical disciplines like TaiCh'i.

Ruchiraketu: Presumably even in the Chinese system there would be an evaluation, as it were, put on balance or lack of balance, so the evaluation is creeping in? [64]

S: Yes; in a way, yes, you can't get away from it completely that balance is preferable to imbalance. But I don't think that duality features on the lists of terms correlated with the yin and the yang; you don't get that the yang is balance and the yin is imbalance, or vice versa. According to Taoism, you aim at that central point which is the point where yin and yang are balanced; you don't just try to have yin with yang and you don't try to have yang without yin. That is the significance in that diagram of the point of white within the black tadpole and the

point of black within the white tadpole in the circle. But that is not really the Indian, or Indian Buddhist, way of looking at things at all. You could say that the Chinese way of looking at things is nonhierarchical but don't get that mixed up with modern ideas of patriarchy and feminism and all that sort of thing. Whereas Indian thought is definitely hierarchical, or most of it is.

Tejananda: One question is from Kuladeva about using vajras and vajra bells.

Kuladeva: In the lecture you say that the vajra above all is used as a ritual implement, and that if one uses it properly one has an experience of Reality. I also understand that you do not feel happy with people using vajra bells for the usual meditation practices I mean for leading meditations. In view of all this, do you foresee our using the vajra and bell as ritual objects within the context of an appropriate ritual? Have you ever used the vajra and bell in the context of a ritual?

S: I can't say that I have any very definite ideas about the use of vajras and bells in the FWBO. It is a question to what extent, in their present form, they are a part of Tibetan culture. It is very doubtful whether we had them in Indian Buddhism, even during the later phase: we might have done, but we might not. We certainly didn't have them during the earlier phase. Also, of course, it is connected with this whole question of the yantras and whether the yantras are successive or as it were contained one within another the Vajrayana within the Mahayana, the Mahayana, so to speak, within the Hinayana so that one doesn't as it were need to practise the Mahayana and the Vajrayana separately; it is bound up with that question. When I was in Kalimpong, I did have some experience of holding the vajra and ringing the bell in a ritual context, and of course I have seen it done often enough. The Tibetan tradition is that you are not really entitled to use the vajra and bell without the proper initiation. Whether we stick with that is another question. But, yes, I have never been very much in favour of the vajra bells being used just for keeping time and so on: I think for two reasons firstly, that is not what they are really meant to be used for, and secondly, I think the note is quite inappropriate; I don't like the sound of the vajra bell for meditation. I think a soft, resonant gong sound which just sort of steals on you is much more appropriate. The vajra bell is rather harsh and clanging in its sound which is quite suited to the ritual context but not to the more meditative context. You don't want to be meditating peacefully and then clang! you know? on a vajra bell. Well, maybe some people like it, maybe find it stimulating, but I think most would find it slightly disturbing; and you would have to try to ring it very gently. So I think a gong is much more suitable, provided it is not one of those brassy sort of gongs which make a horrible it is difficult to describe it sort of halfway between a dong and a clash. I think we have perhaps to give more attention to finding bells and gongs with really suitable sounds for leading meditation and marking the intervals. A very faint, very silvery, highpitched [65] sound is sometimes quite appropriate, in the case of a bell; or a very soft, gentle gong sound, which is so soft, in a way, that is difficult to tell when it actually begins; it is not a sort of clash, not a definite stroke on the gong and then the reverberations afterwards. Do you know what I mean? It depends also how you use the gong and what type of gong it is. Certainly the Tibetans have evolved a very impressive type of ritual using primarily the bell and the dorje, and of course the damaru. The Nyingmapas especially are very fond of that; that definitely produces an effect of its own. And then, of course, there are the trumpets, and clarinets or whatever they are, not to speak of the big drums. We have to develop something of that sort; but it may take us many, many years. I don't think there can be any question of just importing Tibetan ritual accessories and effects. One could also

look at some of the Chinese and Japanese wooden percussion instruments for use in connection with meditation; some of those sounds are very pleasing. In my Travel Letters I describe some chanting I heard in Malaysia do you remember? the chanting of nuns, mostly, I think it was; and it was accompanied by various Chinese Buddhist instruments, and the chanting went faster and faster, incredibly fast, and then suddenly stopped at a big stroke on the gong; it was all quite impressive, made a very powerful effect. A very strongly rhythmical chanting, but getting faster and faster. I was reminded of an express train. I quite liked it. I used to hear it very early in the morning; I was lying in bed still, I am afraid to say; this was about 5 or 5.30 in the morning, and I used to be woken virtually by this it was very pleasant to be woken in that way. It was mainly nuns, as far as I remember, but young nuns, and they sounded like choirboys, almost, you might say. But so fast! gathering speed all the time, and suddenly coming to a halt. I believe they were chanting things like the Heart Sutra and perhaps even the Diamond Sutra, and the Great Crown Parani(?), and praises of Avalokitesvara. But I think it would not be easy really to experience what the vajra symbolises unless you were very intensely concentrated in the course of not just attending but really participating in the puja that was going on, and holding your own vajra and ringing your own bell and chanting yourself, and so on. Anyway, is that the lot?

Tejananda: That's the lot.

S: All right then. Nothing more, no supplementaries?

: Maybe. You spoke quite a lot in the Survey you mentioned the word sacramental in relation to Tantric ritual, and it seems to be an element which obviously one realises that one can't just introduce, but it seems to be a very important element in ritual, which somehow we need to move towards.

S: I think this is true; yes. Vajrabodhi has been writing to me quite a lot about this recently, because he has been witnessing some Shingon Japanese Tantric rituals and he is very impressed by them. And also, as some of you perhaps know, recently, especially when I was in Guhyaloka, I have been studying Plotinus and other neoPlatonic writers; and some of the later neoPlatonists, as you know, attach a great importance to what they called theurgy. Theurgy seems to have certain affinities with the Vajrayana, or with Tantric ritual in general, whether Buddhist or Hindu; and, of course, it is based on a sort of system of correspondences, so [66] that you can manipulate the correspondences as it were lower down the scale in such a way that they provide an effective basis for the manifestation of the corresponding reality higher up. This is basically how theurgy works. And this is perhaps how ritual in general works; and certainly it seems to be how the Tantric ritual works. It is in a way higher magic, you might say. For instance, to give a very simple example, in a certain ritual all the appurtenances may be of a particular colour; let us say they are green. Well, in that case if, for instance, you associate the colour green with Tara if you wanted to evoke, so to speak, Tara in a ritual context, presumably the colour green would play a very important part. You wouldn't decorate the room in bright red, or have red flowers unless you wanted to invoke Red Tara, who is a sort of minor form. But if you were invoking Tara in a more general sense you would surely use the colour green. And so on. Presumably, if it was again the standard form of Green Tara, any music that you had would be gentle, pleasing, charming music; and, of course, you would be reciting the litanies of Tara, have the image of Tara. So all that would create a sort of context within which you could, to use the traditional language, evoke Tara. In other words, you would personally, by performing that kind of ritual, be able

to experience Tara, or whatever Tara represents, more intensely than you normally could; at least, that would be true of certain persons who were, so to speak, given to theurgy or for whom the theurgic type of approach was appropriate and helpful which would not be everybody. It would seem that some of the later neoPlatonic teachers, such as Iamblichus, brought in theurgy quite extensively. It became in a way a substitute for meditation. It would seem that Plotinus himself had recourse more to meditation and reflection, or even the development of Insight, as we would say; he seems to have had no interest in theurgy whatever, or any kind of popular practice. He never went, for instance, to temples or anything of that sort. But the later teachers either found it too difficult or found it was not suited to everybody, so brought in theurgy in various ways. I think very often they took for their models various Egyptian rites, some of them quite influenced by Egyptian magic and symbolism and so on in much the same way that we are by Indian or Buddhist symbolism.

: What was the later writer you mentioned?

S: Iamblichus. Almost all, if not all, writers on neoPlatonism treat the introduction of theurgy as a sign of great degeneration the irruption of superstition and so on. They don't see its spiritual function at all, as far as I know, or as far as I have read. They treat it in much the same way as writers on Buddhism used to treat the Vajrayana as just a degeneration. But it is not that you throw away the Mahayana philosophy and have recourse to Tantric ritual: no, the ritual is one of the means of implementing the realisation of the philosophy. So I am quite interested to study the way in which the neoPlatonists made use of theurgy, because it may throw some light on our own problems in that regard. I have sometimes suggested that we ought at some time to experiment a little, especially in this matter of having, say, a Tara Puja. I mention Tara usually in this connection because, traditionally, she is a safe deity. The Tibetans say that even if you her puja wrongly and mispronounce her mantra, she won't mind! There will never be any repercussions. With other deities they suggest that there might be, but you are quite safe with Tara, she will overlook all mistakes! So, yes, it is a nice easy deity to begin with, so I thought maybe there could be occasions on which there is a special Tara Puja, including mantra recitation and meditation, but not just with the Tara image but with everything either white or green - [67] predominantly green but with some white accessories. And maybe the room even painted green for the occasion: green vases, green carpet, even perhaps people wearing green robes; see what the effect was. We can only experiment.

Kulananda: Would you consider that that should be kept in an Order context?

S: Oh yes, oh yes indeed, to begin with. One can quite easily see or feel that, if you had everything, say, of a certain colour it would produce a particular effect. Just think of doing, say, a Jambhala Puja with everything a sort of golden yellow perhaps even with heaps of gold coins on the altar! Well, you could borrow them from a bank! Some people have probably got gold coins stashed away! Maybe with tangerines on the altar. So, yes, there would be a difference of effect, wouldn't there? I am hoping that we can experiment a little in that way perhaps at Guhyaloka. That would be a quite suitable place for such experiments. Anyway, I'll leave you to think about it. [68]

11 December: The Symbolism of the Refuge Tree and Guru

Tejananda: Some of them are quite short. The first question is from Susiddhi and it is about the lay Sangha in the Pali Canon.

Susiddhi: During the lifetime of the Buddha, there must have been lots of people who Went for Refuge to him but could not take up the bhikkhu lifestyle because of domestic responsibilities. Do we have any indication how these people related to one another? Did they get together in any organised way? Is the term Sangha ever used in the Pali Canon so as to include those people?

S: Yes, let's have it bit by bit.

Susiddhi: Do you want the introduction? 'During the lifetime of the Buddha, there must have been lots of people who Went for Refuge to him but could not take up the bhikkhu lifestyle because of domestic responsibilities.'

S: That's true; not only took refuge in the Buddha or Went for Refuge to the Buddha but became Stream Entrants, anagamis and so on as well. That is very clear.

Susiddhi: 'Do we have any indication how these people related to one another?'

S: We don't, actually. This is probably because the Pali Canon was handed down among the bhikkhus. Perhaps they weren't too concerned with what the lay people, to use that expression, did among themselves; perhaps they didn't know very much about it. But we do have some information. It seems clear that they did gather together. There are one or two references, even, pertaining to the period shortly after the Buddha, that bhikkhus and upasakas got together sometimes. But above all, perhaps, it seems clear that for many of the lay people the stupas were a great focus of devotion and that they gathered together to circumambulate and make offerings to the stupas. In other words, for many lay people, in the centuries after the Buddha's death, devotional activities featured very largely in their spiritual lives, even what we might call group devotional activities. Some scholars are of the opinion that the bhikkhus only rather reluctantly acknowledged stupa worship, and gave it a place in, so to speak, official Buddhism.

Susiddhi: 'Is the term Sangha ever used in the Pali Canon so as to include those people?'

S: I am not sure about that. I couldn't reply to that just off the cuff. But there is one passage which I quote in *The Three Jewels* where the Buddha describes all the four vargas that is to say, bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, upasakas and upasikas, as lighting up or illuminating the Sangha; which certainly suggests that they all belong to it. But, especially in later Buddhism, usually the term varga is used for upasakas and upasikas; but then it is also used for bhikkhus too. As used by the Mahasanghikas, the term Sangha certainly included lay people, so perhaps there is a difference according to school; according to the Mahasanghikas, the upasakas and upasikas also belonged to the Sangha. That seems to have been the reason why they spoke of the Mahasangha, that is to say the Sangha as containing all four vargas, and were called the Mahasanghikas. The Theravadins, then and now, seem to have limited the term Sangha to the bhikkhus. [69] But then again, there is another point I have thought of, though I have never actually mentioned this in writing anywhere. It is well known that the Aryasangha is the Sangha consisting of Aryas: you know what an Arya is, dont you? Everybody does; if you

don't, please admit it on the spot. So does the Aryasangha contain upasakas as well as bhikkhus?

Voices: Yes.

S: So, if upasakas could be regarded as belonging to the Aryasangha, could they not be regarded as belonging to the nonAryasangha?

Voices: Yes.

S: That is a new point.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, I have this idea that there was a reluctance, at least among the Theravadins afterwards, to accept that it was true upasakas who had achieved Insight and become Aryans, and that they somehow tried to make them honorary bhikkhus. I believe it was Ratnaprabha who mentioned in our group that the one layman who is recorded in the Pali Canon as having achieved Enlightenment, according to a commentary, was made a bhikkhu on the point of achieving Enlightenment.

S: Ah, no, I think there seems to be a bit of a mixup here. As regards I am speaking now of the Pali Canon as regards Stream Entrants, OnceReturners and NonReturners, it is quite clear that many of them were lay people who remained lay people. But it seems to have been at least a Theravadin belief that if a lay person gained arahantship he would automatically, as it were almost magically or miraculously, become a bhikkhu; that, even if he was not formally ordained, the bhikkhu robes would appear on him and his head would at once become shaven, and so on; and he would appear just like a bhikkhu. Well, that is rather extraordinary, but you can see the idea behind it the idea being that, at a certain level of spiritual attainment, or at a certain level, the lay lifestyle was simply incompatible. This may be discussed pro and con, but it was certainly the Theravada conviction that it might be possible to become an anagamin, even, and still remain a lay person, but not become an arahant and remain a lay person. When that happened, the sheer force as it were of your spiritual realisation would oblige you to live like a bhikkhu. That, of course, can be debated it depends what you mean by a bhikkhu and what you mean by an upasaka or layman.

Tejananda: Question No. 2 is from Cittapala, asking for a reference.

Cittapala: Yes, it is just a point of information. In the lecture you describe how the Buddha used a particular set of three synonyms to describe what it was like to be Enlightened. Do you know the ones I am referring to?

S: Yes, I do.

: Do you happen to know where that reference would be?

S: Oh, I couldn't give you a single reference, because there are so many. Just read through the Majjhima Nikaya. That particular set of comparisons occurs dozens, if not scores of times; it is very common. If you want to do it the easy [70] way, just thumb through the little book of Some Sayings of the Buddha, translated from the Pali Canon by Woodward. It occurs there several times.

Tejananda: Now a question from Vairocana on the Dakini Refuge in practice.

Vairocana: Yes, it concerns the Esoteric Refuges guru, yidam and dakini. The group found the first two quite easy to relate to, but the dakini Refuge they found a bit more difficult. Could you tell us what it actually means in practical terms?

S: I think I might even have said it in the course of the lecture, if not somewhere else: that dakas and dakinis, as the esoteric Sangha, represent those spiritual friends who do actually stimulate you quite strongly, stimulate you spiritually. You can have very good spiritual friends whom you greatly respect and revere, but you might find them a bit dull, not all that interesting, not all that lively; they don't exactly spark you off. But the dakas and dakinis do just that. I say dakas and dakinis, using both the masculine and the feminine forms of the word, but of course in practice it is probably safer to rely upon your spiritual friends, in that sense, of the same sex rather than those of the opposite sex, who might spark you off in a different way. But it is that quality of stimulation that is important spiritual stimulation. Do you know what I mean? But perhaps as represented by dakas and dakinis of rather a high order, not just a bit of mundane liveliness; something much more than that, something that goes much deeper than that. It is a question of the quality of communication, you could say: those spiritual friends or I was going to say just friends, but no, it has to be really spiritual friends communication with whom really does stir you quite deeply.

Vairocana: In a Tantric initiation, would someone actually be presented with someone like that?

S: As far as one can see, that did actually happen in the Indian Vajrayana tradition, and I gather occasionally happened in Tibet. I think I mention in the lecture, don't I, that the daka or dakini it is usually the dakini, the practitioner usually being male has to be presented by the guru and consecrated and properly identified, has to be properly initiated; it is not just someone you happened to meet in the street or at a party or even in a meditation class!ut I think one can disregard the particular form that the tradition took in India and in Tibet, and just think in terms of spiritually stimulating company. No doubt in a broad general sense you find the whole Sangha, the whole Order, stimulating, but within that Sangha, within that Order, there is just perhaps a handful of people, perhaps only one or two, whose company you find really stimulating, spiritually stimulating; and in relation to you they are the Third Esoteric Refuge.

Kuladeva: Bhante, do you think one's ordination kula represents in any sense the dakini Refuge? bearing in mind

S: I wouldn't say automatically.

Kuladeva: I was just thinking partly in the sense in which you say that the dakini is actually chosen by the guru, rather than one has to (?) choose one's ordination, um

S: No, it doesn't work like that, because usually when the sequence is arranged, either by Mitra seniority or natural seniority, we don't sort of put people [71] together, say, for their private ordinations on the same evening, because of any particular spiritual affinity of that sort.

Kuladeva: But then one's coming into contact being ordained with that particular set of people would seem to constitute some kind of chance(?), possibly.

S: It is an opportunity inasmuch as you are together with them uninterruptedly, in the case of the final ordination retreat, for three whole months. But I have known cases where people together on that retreat didn't get on particularly well so, yes, it would give you an opportunity, but you would still need to work on it; assuming that you could work on someone to the point where they became spiritually stimulating or you became spiritually stimulating for each other. don't know whether anybody knows from their own experience of an instance where people on the same ordination retreat together did strike up a particularly intense spiritual friendship, let's say. Anybody know of it happening? Clearly you do get on better with certain people than with others, but one has in mind something rather more than that.

Cittapala: It depends what you mean by intense.

S: Well, spiritually intense. For instance, you find it very easy to talk to such a person about your meditation or the Dharma generally, and you find that communication with that person brings up all sorts of things, you feel able to talk very freely, and you are not just unloading, you feel inspired. And the more you communicate it doesn't mean you literally just talk a lot the more intensely you experience the spiritual life itself. Anybody seen this happening or experienced it happening? Perhaps it doesn't happen very often. Perhaps dakas and dakinis are rather rare.

Susiddhi: I know someone who always makes me feel as if I am not practising hard enough! Would that ?

S: Well, no, he or she would be a daka or dakini if they actually stimulated you to practise harder. If they just make you feel that you don't practise enough, no, that's just an ordinary spiritual friend!

Tejananda: I suppose there are times when one's ordinary spiritual friends act like or are also dakinis.

S: Yes. Perhaps one can't quite label people as dakas or dakinis; perhaps it is just something that, under very favourable conditions, spiritual friends are able to be, just occasionally. It's like the Dharma is not always the Dharma for you: you pick up a beautiful Dharma book, and you read it, but at that particular moment it doesn't really mean very much to you. In the same way, you can be with a spiritual friend and they don't spark you off; but, on another occasion, the circumstances being right, they could perhaps spark you off in a really daka or dakinilike way. Perhaps we should just be on the lookout for such opportunities, rather than thinking in terms of this person being a daka or dakini, and that person not being. Don't forget that sometimes, in Tantric legend, ugly old women were actually dakinis in disguise! and, if approached in the right way, became beautiful young women. So perhaps there is that sort of meaning that we can easily mislead ourselves as to who or what is a daka or dakini. From the masculine point of view, the dakini is not necessarily a Marilyn Monroe type of creature! It might just as well be the old lady next door. [72]

Saddhaloka: Bhante, going back to the actual history of the dakadakini, does it seem that, in

the original Indian tradition, the daka or dakini was usually of the opposite sex?

S: One doesn't hear much about dakas for female practitioners. One hears almost invariably about dakinis for male practitioners. One never hears, so far as my knowledge goes, of a daka of the same sex; that seems not to occur. When I say of the same sex, I mean within a specifically Tantric sexoyogic context, let us say. Yes, someone of the same sex as spiritual friend, yes; but not in that specifically Tantric dakalike way.

Saddhaloka: So that, in that context, it would have been associated with those sexoyogic practices, in the early Indian tradition?

S: It would seem so whether one understands those literally or symbolically; but it would seem so.

Saddhaloka: And then in the Tibetan tradition it came to be more an emphasis on inspiration, spiritual friendship?

S: I wouldn't say that; it varied from school to school. Sometimes, it is said though this is not borne out by my own experience that among the Nyingmapas, for instance, the sexoyogic practices with a female partner were taken more literally; not so among the Gelugpas so it is sometimes said.

I think we are on much firmer ground if we think of the daka or dakini as someone whom we find, whether regularly or momentarily, spiritually stimulating. There is no doubt that people find sex, or sexually attractive people, stimulating, but that does seem, in our culture at least, to be another matter.

Tejananda: Dharmapriya, did you want to put that supplementary?

Dharmapriya: I'm afraid I can't remember which one that was. I suspect it has been answered.

Tejananda: Well, it was about why, in the Tibetan tradition, it seems that the dakini wasn't taken as it were literally, in the terms that Bhante has been talking about it.

S: Yes, it was sometimes taken literally, yes. As I mentioned, the Nyingmapas are said to take it more literally than the Gelugpas. But actually, as far as I know, the Gelugpas take it literally, and therefore maintain that it is inappropriate for the monk; because they attach considerable importance to monastic life, in the way that the Nyingmapas do not. But Mr. Chen assured me that there had been great degeneration among the Tibetans on this score, and he once became very what shall I say? disappointed that, he said, some Nyingmapa lamas were even practising, or attempting to practise, sexoyogic sadhanas not with proper dakinis but actually, believe it or not, with their own wives! He seemed to think this was really quite scandalous and almost sacrilegious which shows an interesting point of view, yes? But anyway, this isn't anything that really concerns you! (Laughter).

: That wasn't quite the point we were considering in the discussion. We were talking about the fact that it seems in Tibetan Buddhism as we see it now, [73] that there doesn't seem to be any horizontal friendship between individuals, that it seems to be very much vertical.

S: Yes, this has been commented on, and I believe Western followers of Tibetan Buddhism whom some of us have met say, myself, Subhuti, Nagabodhi have commented that they feel rather the lack of what we call horizontal spiritual friendship. It is as though everybody has his or her own individual relationship with the guru, but there is not very much, if any, relating among themselves. I think some of them begin to perceive this as a definite lack.

: Do you think this could be because these particular people are not monks, and therefore the Sangha aspect is not really emphasised?

S: But then again, in Tibetan Buddhism, one has the Vajrayana, and in the Vajrayana tradition there is the emphasis on the Vajrakula, and the fact that those who have taken initiation from the same guru are all your Vajra brothers and Vajra sisters; this is emphasised in traditional Tibetan Buddhism quite strongly. I have seen it myself among the Nyingmapas in fact, I have just been writing about this quite recently that you have a very definite sense of spiritual community. They don't attach much importance to the division into monk and lay; to them what is important is whether you have received the abhiseka or not. And I have seen, on many an occasion, little groups of Nyingmapa initiates, we might say, sitting around their teacher some monks, some laymen, some men, some women, some children too very much as a spiritual community. You wouldn't get that, say, among the Theravadins, or even perhaps among some Mahayana Buddhists. So that element is there in Tibetan Buddhism, certainly among the Nyingmapas, I would say, and perhaps among the other nonGelugpa schools too. But it may be, in the case of the Gelugpas in the West, the fact that monastic ordination is rather stressed it may be, therefore, that the whole idea of spiritual community is given a rather monastic slant, and isn't understood as including people who aren't monks or nuns. ut I think, even among those Tibetans who are monks and nuns in the West, there is not much emphasis on spiritual community.

Ratnaprabha: This seems a little odd, Bhante, if they do stress the esoteric Refuges, because clearly they do attach a lot of importance to the guru and to the Buddha, so how is it that they forget about the dakini? or is it that they interpret it in a different way?

S: It seems not to be mentioned. One hears quite a lot about the guru, and a fair amount about the Dharma, but one hardly hears anything about the Sangha, least of all about the esoteric Sangha. But it is a lack that I think people are beginning to feel. Not only in Tibetan Buddhism; I was reading some time ago a report on why it was that Catholic priests left the priesthood; and the most common reason, apparently this applies to Europe; I am not sure about America was loneliness. Because a priest is not a monk; he lives in his presbytery, maybe with an aged housekeeper, and perhaps two or three priests live together, but they work separately, and they don't, in many cases, it seems, have very close friends. And maybe they were afraid of something, you know, anyway, developing; so they were a little bit wary, perhaps, of intimate relationships or intimate friendships among themselves. So when they left the priesthood, very often they got married; but it seems that companionship was what they were looking for almost as much, or perhaps in some cases more than, they were looking for sex. So it is as though deprivation [74] of companionship can be just as deeply felt in some cases even more deeply felt than deprivation of sex.

Tejananda: The fourth question is from Cittapala on the actual term yidam.

Cittapala: I was wondering, Bhante, whether it is appropriate for Order Members to call the

figure they visualise in their visualisation practice their yidam?

S: It is a very loose usage indeed. Strictly speaking, yidam refers to one of the usually wrathful yabyum type figures of the AnuttaraYoga Tantra; but, even in Tibetan Buddhism, it is sometimes used more loosely than that, and it is that loose usage that seems to have been adopted in the FWBO.

Kuladeva: But doesn't the yidam Refuge refer to the four Tantras rather than just the AnuttaraYoga? You are actually saying in the lecture, I think, you refer to the four orders of Tantric deities.

S: Yes. Well, Tantric deities in the sense that they occur in the four Tantras; but you can meditate on a Tantric deity and repeat his or her mantra without them being a yidam. Strictly speaking, the term yidam should be reserved for the deities of the AnuttaraYoga Tantra. But that isn't the case usually nowadays, it seems. In Hinduism, there is the more general term istadevata; it doesn't quite correspond to yidam. Ista means roughly sort of 'chosen'.

Cittapala: Was there some point being made when they chose to use the term yidam in that technical sense?

S: Well, yidam means 'oathbound', doesn't it? It refers to the particularly close, in a way, even crucial, relationship established with the deities of the AnuttaraYoga Tantra: something in a way more dangerous than the relationship with deities of the Yoga Tantra and so on. You had to sort of bind yourself, and bind them, with an oath; you are oathbound.

Cittapala: Would that indicate that one couldn't really have an esoteric DharmaRefuge until one was capable of entering into that kind of relationship?

S: Well, there are degrees. Just as there are degrees of Tantra, just as there are degrees of Going for Refuge; so degrees, you could say if you wanted to explain the term a little, degrees of yidams. Or degrees of istadevatas.

: Would the term deva, then, be more acceptable, as regards its ... than yidam?

S: Well, yes, one usually does say guru, deva, dakini. Yes. You could use the term deva in the more general sense: istadeva or istadevata, and reserve yidam for the devas of the AnuttaraYoga Tantra, which is the strict or more correct usage. You would probably be going against the tide! It is the same with the term guru; it is used very loosely. In India, a guru very often means nowadays just a schoolteacher the guru baba or guru amma, guru ma.

Tejananda: The next question is from me, on choosing a yidam. [75] Regarding the choice of yidam, you say that in Tibetan Buddhism it is usual for the guru to make the choice, and it is even said that it is better to leave it to chance than for the disciple to choose. It would seem that your own approach is to give people the opportunity to choose for themselves. Why the difference?

S: I think, in the ultimate sense, it doesn't matter who you choose. I think the important thing is choose and make a start and do the practice. I think it is only comparatively rarely that there is a very definite and very strong affinity, of a spiritual nature, between a particular

person, say a particular Order Member, and a particular visualised form. People do have their preferences, and sometimes the preference is for a quite superficial reason, but it doesn't matter, because even though initially the reason for the attraction or the choice is superficial, if you practise the nature of the relationship will change, it will deepen. The main thing is to get people started. And, of course, in the West people like to make their own choices, don't they? So all right, it doesn't really make any difference in the long run; but I couldn't imagine, say, that to take up the Tara practice instead of the Manjughosa practice is actually going to do anyone any harm or hold them back when they could have made much more rapid progress I really don't believe that. So I just content myself with getting people started somehow. If they want to choose, fine. Sometimes they don't want [to]; sometimes they dither, in an extraordinary way, between two or three different deities. So I help them make up their mind. Sometimes they just ask me to choose, and I do. But the main thing is just to get started.

Kuladeva: It was said in our study group that occasionally you have been known to veto people's choice of a meditation deity.

S: I am not sure about that. Sometimes people are just very doubtful, or sometimes it seems that their reasons for, not exactly choosing but thinking about a particular deity or Bodhisattva are quite subjective. But, however subjective their reasons were, if they felt very strongly I certainly wouldn't veto. I don't think I have ever actually vetoed anybody's choice; unless they were too ambitious, perhaps. But even then I doubt if I would absolutely veto, if they really wanted some way out sort of practice. As I said, the main thing is to get people started, and sometimes one can get started for, in a sense, the wrong reasons, but again in a sense it doesn't matter because at least one is getting started.

Kuladeva: Also, how appropriate do you think choosing wrathful deities would be for Order Members?

S: Again, I think very often there is a big confusion of thought here, because sometimes people say things like 'I think I've got to get all my anger and aggression out', so they think that they had better have a wrathful deity. It doesn't happen very often nowadays, though very rarely but they are not realising that that wrath is of a very different order from the wrath or anger or aggression that they experience; in fact, there is hardly any connection between the two at all; only very superficially. So this is using 'wrathful deity' in a psychological sort of way. But if someone insisted, I wouldn't stand in their way; let them get started. But I think probably a peaceful deity, on the whole, is more appropriate. I think it is easier to feel more genuinely inspired spiritually by a peaceful deity than a wrathful one.

Tejananda: Question No. 6 is from Abhaya, on chance in choosing a yidam. [76]

Abhaya: In a sense, Bhante, you have already answered this, but I will throw it in and see. The question just says: The element of chance in the choosing of the disciple's yidam. In the lecture you say 'Better to leave it to chance than choice.' I am curious what you think about specific instances I have heard of in this connection. The first one is throwing a flower in a mandala and seeing which figure it falls nearest, and the second is Suvajra's account of Dardo Rinpoche casting dice to help determine which practice to give them. I just wonder what is in that or what you think.

S: I use the word 'chance' here, but I am using it quite loosely, as it were. In a sense there is no such thing as chance, one could say. One could speak in terms of synchronicity. And if one just throws a flower, well, there could be some as it were karmic reason why it falls on a particular spot or on a particular divinity. One can't rule that out altogether. The same with the dice. Dardo Rinpoche had probably still has a reputation of being very good with the dice box and various other methods of divination. People are always going to him for this purpose, more perhaps than to other incarnate lamas. Perhaps there is something in it. This is a field I have never been particularly interested in. I don't have a very strong scepticism a certain amount but not, I trust, dogmatic; but I don't have a wholehearted faith in these things. I don't feel any great need to make up my mind one way or the other. It is one of those things I am content not to be sure about!

Abhaya: You never asked Dardo Rinpoche about that sort of area?

S: No. I knew that he did it; I knew that he was considered very good at it. But I didn't feel sufficiently interested to want to discuss it with him. I was interested in discussing various other topics when I got the opportunity not that one. But in my own life there have been lots of synchronicities and coincidences: more than one could really just put down to statistical chance. Mostly in quite small ways, but there have been quite a lot of them.

I will just give you one example it is a very minor example, but it just happens to come to my mind. This concerns Ananda and myself I mean our own Ananda, not the Ananda 2500 years ago. Some people might have heard of it. Ananda was one morning after his meditation reading the White Lotus Sutra, and he came to the parable of the burning house. Just as he was reading that parable, there came a knockknock at the door and it was the postman and there was a picture postcard from me; and the picture depicted a burning house! So things like that are happening quite often, so they make one think, as one says. , perhaps not very surprisingly, experience it most often in connection with books.

Abhaya: [Like] wanting a book and the book falls into your lap?

S: Yes; or you are thinking about some particular topic and you want certain information, and quite by accident you come across it; maybe you just happen to open the day's newspaper, something as mundane as that, and there it is, right there - [77]

Side 2

Within minutes! I am sure there are other explanations!

Tejananda: And now Kuladeva has a question on the guru.

Kuladeva: Given the importance attributed to the Tantric guru in the Vajrayana tradition, the Tantric element in the Western Buddhist Order, and your own apparent reluctance to accept the guru label: a) to what extent, if at all, do you consider yourself to be a Tantric guru?) to what extent, if at all, do you see an element of the Tantric guru continuing in the Order after

your decease?

S: I must say I have come rather to dislike the term guru, mainly on account of its modern, perhaps especially Western, connotations now, I am afraid, of exploitation, authoritarianism and so on. I feel it is a word we should perhaps avoid. But the word is one thing, the principle is another. What do we really mean by the Tantric guru? I have explained this, haven't I? that the guru stands in the position, so far as you are concerned, of the Buddha. So what does that mean? It is not so much that the guru is Enlightened like the Buddha if he is, of course, so much the better but the first point is you are not in direct contact with the Buddha. The Buddha doesn't know you, as far as one knows; you certainly don't know the Buddha. The guru, your personal guru, at least knows you, at least he has some knowledge of you, and he can act as a sort of interpreter, a sort of translator, of the Dharma, of the vast mass of Buddhist literature, of Buddhist teachings; he can select from those teachings what is suitable, what is helpful for you, putting all the rest aside. So you could say that a guru is in principle a sort of interpreter. There is a simile that illustrates this in the Hindu tradition with regard to the Bhagavad Gita, or rather the Vedas and the Gita and the Upanishads. As far as I remember, it goes like this: that the Vedas are the cow, the Upanishads are the milk drawn from the cow; and the Bhagavad Gita, which of course is classed as an Upanishad, is the I am not sure whether it is cream or clarified butter that is made from the milk. But who is the milkman or milkmaid? That is Sri Krishna, the teacher of the Bhagavad Gita; so it is he who reduces the Vedas to the Upanishads. The Vedas are very vast and incomprehensible; he reduces them to the Upanishads, but that is still pretty unmanageable for the individual devotee, so he reduces them to the Bhagavad Gita, and that he teaches. So that is as it were the guru's function. So one can perform it with regard to one particular person, or one can perform it with regard to a whole group of people. So if I were to think of myself as a guru at all, in this Tantric sense, it would be that I thought of myself as an interpreter of the existing Buddhist tradition in such a way that it was made more accessible to those people in the West with whom I am in direct or indirect contact; not that I was necessarily wearing a red robe and a lotus cap and ringing bells and waving vajras and things of that sort; it is the principle that is important. It is not unlike the principle of the translator; you know, St. Jerome as translator and all that. It is the interpreter, it is the transmitter, the boilerdown. Just as we said that the daka or dakini is that person among all those with whom you are in contact spiritually who actually stimulates you, so the Tantric guru is one who actually makes the Dharma intelligible to you and practicable for you. [78] So I think it is best to look at it in those broad, rather general, terms. It is not really, in essence or in principle, that the Tantric guru is the one who gives you these very esoteric Tantric initiations. That is really to miss the point, I think. Though it could be so; it could be that for a particular person the essence of the Dharma was be found in a particular Tantric practice, but one shouldn't identify it exclusively with the imparting of such initiations and practices. In a sense, you are all functioning as Tantric gurus when you take a beginners' class; you don't tell everything that you know; you don't repeat everything you have read at least, I hope you don't; you just consider the needs of the person or people in front of you, you just transmit as much as you feel they can understand and use and find useful. It is the same principle on that level. ut perhaps I should add that, inasmuch as it is 'Tantric', there should go with it a charge of energy; it shouldn't be just a theoretical explanation. You shouldn't be just a scholar, as St. Jerome seems to have been, more or less. You need a touch of the yogi, a touch of the actual practitioner, so that there is a sort of charge of energy, as I have called it, in your communication, in your boiling down, in your interpreting, in your translating.

Tejananda: Now a question from Dharmapriya about guru as Buddha.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, I think you may have already started to answer this question in the answer to the last one, but I'll read it out. In the section on the Esoteric Refuges, you say that the disciple should feel and experience his guru as the Buddha. What happens, however, if the guru (a) is not Enlightened or (b) has no Transcendental Insight? Does this affect the disciple's Going for Refuge? Does an unhealthy element of selfdelusion or of projection creep in? Would such a guru act as a weak link, so to speak, in the chain of lineage and thereby default the principle?

S: Well, you all know the story about the dog's tooth, don't you? There was a pious old woman whose son went on pilgrimage. She asked him to bring her back a tooth of the Buddha. And, just abbreviating the story, he forgot, but just as he was on the point of reaching home, he remembered: 'Oh, I didn't get a tooth of the Buddha for my old mother.' So he saw a dead dog lying nearby, so he pulled out a tooth, wrapped it up in a piece of silk and gave it to his mother. She was delighted, put it on the shrine, meditated; before long rays of light were coming out of the tooth. To cut a long story short, she gained Enlightenment! Do you see what I mean? But again, I think it is the Buddha principle. When you I am speaking from a more as it were Western point of view, though in accordance with the Dharma none the less when you say that the guru is the Buddha, you are not desperately trying to convince yourself that the guru actually is Enlightened in the way that the Buddha is or was. What you are really saying or feeling is that, within your particular world, within your particular universe your Buddhist world, your Buddhist universe the guru is the most Enlightened person you know. It is rather like, in a particular country, you have a king, the king for the whole country, but you are not in contact with him; you live in a particular corner of the country, you live in a particular province, a particular district. You may be in personal contact with the whatever he is called nowadays, I have forgotten- [79] the governor or district administrator; he is the king for you. So I think one can look at it rather in that sort of way. Of course, he must be genuinely the king to some extent; by which I mean that there must be an appreciable difference between him and all the other people within your district, so far as you are concerned. The position mustn't be purely honorary. Does that make it clearer?

Dharmapriya: Yes, Bhante, except for the one aspect of the lineage, because does this mean, then, that the lineage principle is not dependent on the guru being well, even having Insight? Or would you say this whole lineage principle, inasmuch as it can work, does depend on a Transcendental element in every link?

S: I tend to think of it not as a handing on of something I have mentioned this in the lecture, haven't I? but just as a sparking off. You have to be sparked off, at least to some extent. And there has to be a sort of in a way mutual recognition that what has been sparked off accords with what was sparked off at the previous stage in the process, as it were. I went into this a little this year in Guhyaloka; I spoke of it in terms of witnessing that, for instance, the person giving the ordination witnesses the other person's Going for Refuge. He experiences his own Going for Refuge, but he has got to be able to see that the other person is Going for Refuge in the way that he is Going for Refuge, not in some other way; otherwise there is as it were no transmission. So, at least, that has got to take place. But it is not a question of some mystical power being handed on, or mystical authority, or instance, you know if you are explaining something to somebody, you can tell if they have understood what you were

talking about, can't you? You may have to cross-examine them a bit, but sometimes you can see just by the expression of intelligence that lights up their face that they have understood, the penny has dropped, it's clicked; you can tell. So then something has been transmitted; that knowledge, as it were, that understanding or appreciation has been transmitted. So it is like that with the Going for Refuge.

Dharmapriya: My question mark is perhaps from the other side. It is whether the person, say, the new person can be sparked off in that way if his teacher does not have the Transcendental element of Insight; if, to give an analogy, the lineage is like a great river that has gradually over time started to run out into sands.

S: But then again we come back to the dog's tooth you see? If, let's say, the teacher has genuinely Gone for Refuge, he will be able to see if the disciple has Gone for Refuge. But if he has not himself genuinely Gone for Refuge, he won't be able to see whether the disciple has genuinely Gone for Refuge, though the disciple might have Gone for Refuge.

Dharmapriya: Just to press it one step further, Bhante I hope I am not misinterpreting you, but I believe you have made comments in which you have at least expressed doubt as to whether certain lamas who are apparently great reincarnations really are such great spiritual figures. They are the ends of these lineages, say, coming down from Milarepa in the case of the Karma Kagyupas. So then you have the case of a teacher who apparently can see that his disciple is really Going for Refuge Gampopa, for example, as much as Milarepa and, in theory, this should continue going down. The question mark that arises is: how do you end up, then, with people who are bearers of the lineage who - if I have [80] understood you correctly - certainly haven't Gone for Refuge in the same sense, perhaps, as Gampopa and Milarepa?

S: So it would seem. You could say that, after so many hundreds of years, it is sort of bound to start petering out, but I don't think that is the case. That is a too as it were mechanistic explanation. But it is simply that, at a certain point or a certain stage in the process, someone doesn't make the necessary effort. But what has been lost can be regained, can be revived. You probably all know from your own experience that you can sometimes get more out of what somebody says than he puts into it. Someone may give a very poor lecture about Buddhism, reproducing Buddhist teachings in a quite mechanical fashion; but it may inspire you none the less, because it is after all or at least the words are based on the doctrine, and do sometimes communicate something quite independently, as it would seem, of the communicator's own understanding. So sometimes it may happen that, if the teacher goes through all the motions, even in the absence of any real understanding or realisation on his part, the disciple, the pupil, if receptive, does manage to pick up something. But then the so-called guru in that case won't be able to know it. That, one could say, would not have been a full or genuine 'transmission'.

Tejananda: Surata has another guru question.

Surata: This is in connection with the bishon(?) guru yoga, Bhante, in anticipation of being asked this question by Mitras.

S: Yes, it did occur to me to say that this is not really material for Mitras at all. But you may get questions none the less.

Surata: Well, this particular question is: Whom do you consider to be your root guru?

S: That isn't an easy question to answer. I don't altogether go along with the Tibetan idea of root guru, because one gets inspiration or stimulation or whatever from different people at different times. I was thinking about this quite recently, in connection with something I am writing at the moment. There are various criteria. Sometimes it is said that the root guru is the guru from whom you get your highest Tantric initiation; sometimes it is said that the root guru is the one on whom you regularly depend for inspiration, and with whom you have regular contact. So, applying those different criteria, the results will come out differently. Among Tibetan teachers, I probably had the most prolonged contact with Dardo Rinpoche, but I had higher Tantric initiations than any I received from him from several Nyingmapa gurus; so one can as it were take one's choice. But I don't really personally think very much in those terms, because I recognise that I did receive a lot of inspiration from at least 10 or 12 different gurus or teachers at different times. So I wouldn't really like to say 'This one is the root guru' in the traditional Tibetan sense, at all. Kuladeva: Bhante, I remember you saying once this must be about 10 years ago now just simplifying things, that if you had a teacher of the Hinayana, it was Jagdish Kashyap.

S: That is true, because he was a teacher in the real sense that he taught. He didn't just ordain me and sort of leave me to myself; he did actually teach me. So that is true, yes, it was Kashyapji. [81]

Kuladeva: And you said for the Mahayana it was Dardo inasmuch as he gave you the Bodhisattva ordination.

S: That's right, yes.

Kuladeva: And for the Vajrayana it was Jamyang Kentse(?).

S: Yes, inasmuch as he gave me more initiations and of a higher type. If one wanted to schematise in that way, that would be correct. On the other hand, it would leave out several gurus for whom I also have very strong feelings; for instance, there is Kacho(?) Rinpoche, from whom I received the Padmasambhava initiation, which I considered quite important. He doesn't come into any of these categories in that way. But schemes always leave out something, don't they?

Tejananda: You said at the beginning that it occurred to you that the material may not be suitable for Mitras at all. Could you say anything more on how we could approach that?

S: Well, I suppose you shouldn't tell them: 'This isn't suitable for Mitras at all,' otherwise they will be sure to want to know all about it! But you can sort of glide over it, perhaps, or just make sure that there is not too much time left at the end of the class to go into it very deeply. It is not really very suitable material for Mitras. But, as I say, you can't really tell them that; not in these democratic days!

Tejananda: Question No. 10 is from Saddhaloka about lineage and the future of the WBO.

Saddhaloka: Following on from what has already been said about gurus, lineage and so on: At the moment, lineage seems to play quite a small part in WBO thinking and in the thinking

S: Yes, we don't talk about lineage very much.

Saddhaloka: But as time goes on, as the Movement grows much larger, after your death, and when more Order Members are actually performing ordinations not on your behalf but in their own right,

S: In their own right? All right, let's pass through it.

Saddhaloka: However it is worked out! lineage could become much more of a crucial issue, something we do need to think and talk about.

S: Lineage in what sense?

Saddhaloka: In the sense of verification and mutual recognition of

S: Have we got it right, as it were? Well, there is no absolute guarantee, because it does rest on the integrity and understanding of the individual concerned. I don't think one can devise a foolproof system. One can perhaps devise a nearly foolproof system, but not an absolutely foolproof system. In other words, one can make all sorts of rules that you have to do this, and check up on that, and maybe pass an examination in that but you could still find unsuitable [82] people as it were getting through the net. So it does all come back to the individual, really. Well, you could say that there should be no ordinations except conducted by 100 people; but 100 people can very easily be wrong! Perhaps they are less likely to be wrong under such conditions than, say, one person, but you can't guarantee that even 100 people will be right.

Saddhaloka: I was thinking in particular, when one has considerable movements in different continents, and probably some degree of separation of activities, and just that there is mutual recognition, we will almost certainly

S: But one has got separation of activities already, but one needs to find some way, as far as possible, of maintaining common standards. This is what it really amounts to: common standards of meditation practice, common standards of study, common standards of ethics, and so on. I think if one has these common standards in these ways, in these respects, you will be more likely to have a common level, as it were, of Going for Refuge.

Tejananda: We now have a question from Ratnaprabha on the debasement of progressive organisation of practices in the Buddhist tradition.

Ratnaprabha: My impression of the development of the various practices, and perhaps teachings, too, in Buddhism over the years is that an Enlightened Teacher taught a practice which was adequate to take his disciples all the way to Enlightenment, but after his death the practice, at least in some cases, degenerates until it is clear that it is not often taking people all the way to Enlightenment.

S: This, of course, is not the practice itself that degenerates

Ratnaprabha: The practice of it degenerates.

S: Yes. It is that just people either practise it less vigorously or find it less suitable.

Ratnaprabha: and then a new Enlightened Teacher introduces perhaps a new practice which is, for a time, completely effective. However, he does not repudiate the old practice but simply teaches that it is a lower or more basic practice than the new one. And this process of degeneration and revival seems to recur, yielding a sort of stack of practices or teachings, only the top one being considered to give rise to Enlightenment. Would you like to comment on that?

S: This is certainly what happens. You find it embodied in the Triyana system, with its various the doctrines of the respective yantras, their practices and attainments and so on. I think the stack has got so high we have just got to go back, and this is what we have done by stressing the importance of Going for Refuge; because Going for Refuge got rather thrust aside by the arising of the Bodhicitta, because Going for Refuge apparently had become well, the practice had degenerated, not the thing itself. So something new took its place: that was the arising of the Bodhicitta. And then, on top of that, there was the initiation into the lower Tantras, then initiation into the higher Tantras. o I think we have got to go back to the original Going for Refuge, and see these later developments as contained potentially within it. Otherwise we have stack upon stack, as you say, of practices which have superseded one another; and in [83] Tibetan Buddhism you are supposed to go through the whole lot. Actually, you go through the first few yantras well, the Nyingmapas have nine very quickly, and really only practising the last one. So you might as well just drop the I was going to say the previous series, but, no, drop perhaps all the later developments and go back to the original one, which is closer to the Buddha's own times and to the Buddha himself namely, the Going for Refuge and build on that. We can do that on account of our historical perspective, whereas formerly Buddhists couldn't. Formerly Buddhists had to believe, or did believe, that all the yantras were the personal teaching of the Buddha; the later yantras were for a more highly qualified group of disciples. Iso, of course, in the West we are confronted by Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism and Japanese Buddhism, not to speak of Theravada Buddhism, all with their own ways of looking at these things and with their own particular stacks.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think in the future, perhaps, Bhante, we might find that we are in a sense not exactly ignoring but not taking very much account of any of these later developments? I think, at the moment, we do take account of them to some extent and simply try to go back to the basic principles and decide what it is that is most appropriate here in the West for people to practise? I think you have made some steps already along these lines, perhaps.

S: We need not ignore the later developments; we can see them as growing out of the earlier beginnings. But I think it is important to get back to basic principles. The simpler, in a way, the more easily understandable, more easy to handle as it were. We do actually, in historical terms, get closer to the Buddha himself. Otherwise it might be rather disconcerting as perhaps it is, for some Tibetan and, say, Japanese Buddhists to read the Pali Canon, which clearly has or at least some parts of which have some connection with the life of the Buddha and recognise absolutely nothing that you yourself are practising! t is a bit like being a Catholic and knowing all about the Stations of the Cross and all about the Sacred Heart of

Jesus; and you read the Gospels, and you just don't find anything about the Sacred Heart of Jesus and so on in the Gospels at all; you find all sorts of unfamiliar ethical and spiritual teachings and parables you have never come across before. It is difficult to see your connection, then, with the founder of your religion. So we don't want to be in that position, as some Tibetan and Japanese Buddhists are. Fortunately, they do not read the Pali Canon, but we can hardly avoid it. o we have to be familiar with the earlier forms and base ourselves on them, and appreciate the later developments as growing out of those earlier forms, as filling them out, as it were; rounding them off, if you like; illustrating them. Otherwise, if you are not careful, you end up trying to practise some teaching which is really way beyond you and barely intelligible; not to say even fantastic in the literal sense, not the ordinary colloquial sense.

Ratnaprabha: Presumably it is not simply a question of attempting to resuscitate the original forms of Buddhism, but of attempting to get back in touch with the principles, and then expressing them in current

S: Oh yes; yes, I didn't use the word 'form' in the sense of external expression. But, yes, the principle, as you say. [84]

Ratnaprabha: So the new as it were practices and terminologies that we or you are introducing in the FWBO, such as the idea of evolution or personal development, or the Individual, or practices like perhaps communication exercises and so on they are not an extra layer on top of the stack; they are more going back to principles and trying to work them out in the modern context.

S: Yes, in the modern idiom, you might say. Usually, of course, they represent an elucidation of certain principles; they don't represent a different type of practice. We do the mettābhavana, we do the Mindfulness of Breathing. Those practices, if any do, go right back to the Buddha himself.

Tejananda: Now Ruchiraketu's question on direction or orientations.

Ruchiraketu: Yes, Bhante, this is just a clarification. When you describe the Cosmic Refuge Tree, you have directions. I wondered, was that just for the sake of explaining ?

S: It was for the sake of explaining. Going through my notes, I notice I spoke of the South as in front. If one had a mandala in the strict sense, it would be the East that was facing one, but I didn't have that in mind; I just wanted to enable people to get their bearings. I didn't want to say 'the one nearest you,' and then I would have to say 'the farthest one'; it seemed simpler to say North, South, East and West, because when you think in terms of the points of the compass you think of South as [down] here, North up there; but, yes, it doesn't correspond to your position in relation to the mandala. The East is the gate, the entrance, where you go in, so that is that side which is nearest to you. But if I described the lotus that was nearest to you as being in the East, it would have just confused people.

Tejananda: Question No. 13 is from Susiddhi, about your comments on the Refuge Tree as a potential lifetime's study.

Susiddhi: In the lecture you say thangkas of the Cosmic Refuge Tree are complex and detailed, and would take a lifetime to properly appreciate. Are they only used in a preparatory practice, which you say one must do before embarking on Tantric meditation proper?

S: Technically, they fall into that category and again this is something I have been wondering about recently. They very often go beyond that immediate context. Because, after all, it is a Going for Refuge practice, and Going for Refuge is the fundamental act of the Buddhist, you might say; so it is not something you do as a preliminary and then get over with, even though that is how it is presented in the context of Tibetan Buddhism, very often. But it is interesting and, perhaps, significant that that Going for Refuge and prostration practice has been elaborated in that way, as though it had sort of spontaneously asserted its own importance. All the major traditions have their own versions of the Refuge Tree, as I think I have mentioned. I have not ever seen a Sakyapa Refuge Tree, but I believe they do have. But I have certainly seen plenty of Nyingmapa and Gelugpa and Kargyupa Refuge Trees. They are comparatively rare. I did have once a rather beautiful Gelugpa Refuge Tree, but it was begged from me by an incarnate lama friend of mine, who very much wanted it, so I gave it to him. But they are comparatively rare because artists don't like to do them because there are hundreds of these tiny figures, and I expect artists find it all a bit fiddly, as it were; it is a strain on the eyes probably, too, so they are not very keen on doing them, and since there are a lot of figures they are quite expensive because Tibetan artists [85] usually charge in accordance with the number of figures and also the amount of gold used. So they are rare because they are difficult to do and also expensive. We do have, of course, reproductions, poster size ones, easily available these days. But I have sometimes thought and said that we should have in the FWBO perhaps a simplified version of our own; because hardly anybody is going even to try to visualise all the figures in the standard version. Perhaps we need a very much simplified version. I have tried to interest one or two of our artists in it, but then again it is the same problem of so many figures; even the simplified version would contain a few dozen, I imagine!

Dharmapriya: When I was in Tuscany in 1981, you suggested that it might be worth thinking about a nonTantric Going for Refuge practice as a kind of nonTantric equivalent to this prostration practice. Have you thought any further about that?

S: I haven't, I'm afraid. Though if one did, presumably, one would just have Sakyamuni in the centre, and the major Buddhist figures of various kinds surrounding him.

: I remember a version something like that being led when I was a Mitra at Vine Hall. All the Mitras were doing a sort of Sakyamuni Going for Refuge prostration practice.

S (menacingly): Who led it? who led it? (Laughter.)

: I can't remember now! I don't think it was me!

S: But it is a very valuable practice indeed. It is a distinctively Tibetan innovation, it would seem, but one that seems to be quite suited to us in the West. I think it helps to make the whole act or practice of Going for Refuge much more concrete and impresses it much more powerfully on people's minds, so I think it is certainly something to be encouraged whether in the traditional form or in some simplified version. Do many people still do it while we are on the subject? At one time, it was, so to speak, very 'popular' in the Movement; lots of

people were doing it; but now? Do some people still quietly keep it up? Do you know does anyone do it themselves, or do you know of anyone doing it on a reasonably regular basis?

: After completing 100,000 I didn't intend to stop there but I wanted to move on to the other foundation yogas. But I still in the mornings now do that, 21 prostrations, without building a visualisation. I find that only takes a few minutes.

S: One person I heard of recently did complete his 100,000; does anyone know who that was?

: Vajra...., I think.

S: Perhaps it was, yes. It would be a pity if the practice fell out of use. [86]

Side 3

Mitras do sometimes ask me if they can take it up, and even Order Members do sometimes! And I usually say 'Give yourself a month's trial, and then decide whether you are going to continue on a regular basis or whether that was, so to speak, sufficient.' I think probably, on an average once a month I get some such request from all over the Movement; either from a Mitra or an Order Member.

Tejananda: Is it advisable for an Order Member to ask you, check it out with you, if they are thinking of taking it up?

S: Oh yes, certainly.

Tejananda: And with any of the other foundations as well?

S: Yes. I like to know anyway who is doing what, or what certain individuals are doing. Sometimes, of course, people do start various practices and ask permission after two or three months! which seems a bit odd, but anyway that is the way some of them do it. Anyway; how far have we got?

Tejananda: There are only about four more. Priyananda now has a question on the Refuge Tree as archetype of evolution.

Priyananda: In the most recent Mitrata, 'The Bodhisattva Hierarchy', you spoke of 'the archetype of evolution'. It would seem that the Cosmic Refuge Tree, in its various forms, could be at least one symbol and ritual for that archetype, especially the archetype symbol of the Higher Evolution, and that in this one symbol and ritual we can link the archetypes of evolution and Going for Refuge. Could you comment?

S: Yes, I am sure we could do that, because it is definitely the Higher Evolution that is symbolised by the Refuge Tree, even the higher higher Higher Evolution! But, yes, the word

archetypal looks after that: it is evolution, or the evolutionary process, on the very highest level, and it is perhaps that archetypal evolutionary process which is reflected on the various lower levels of existence. So the Refuge Tree could stand for the evolutionary process as such, even though it in itself is what I called the higher higher Higher Evolutionary process. Perhaps on the ground, as it were this occurs to me just at this very moment; perhaps it is not to be taken too seriously or perhaps it is but on the ground beneath the lotus you could have all the other forms of life. You could have of course, if you have got your rocky ground that is the mineral; then well, you've got the lotus itself, the plant for vegetable; but then you can have other plants and living things. And then animals and then humans. Well, you've got the human figure usually in the form of the worshipper, the one Going for Refuge; you have got his mother on one shoulder, his father on the other. You could actually have behind him all the different degrees and levels of the Lower Evolution; he could be taking with him the whole animal creation, even the whole creation; perhaps one could do it in that way. Reflect that you are not just carrying your mother and father, but, yes, you are carrying the whole of creation: all the orders of existence, the whole Lower Evolution, of which you are the culmination, is Going for Refuge with you. It becomes a bit like the Cosmic Going for Refuge, doesn't it? [87]

Yes, I think you could certainly do that. Perhaps people could even just try reflecting in that way. Because your mother and father, your progenitors, they have their progenitors, and they have theirs, going right back to the manmonkeys and the monkeymen, and back and back; those of you who are biologists will know better than I do. You would have to brush up your biology to practise in that way, of course! You could ask, perhaps, Ratnaprabha to just draw up a succinct account of the Lower Evolution; maybe take into account the 10 or 12 major stages

Ratnaprabha: It's in my book!

S: Good, good! between amoeba and man.

Tejananda: Question No. 15 is from Saddhaloka on the Dharmapalas.

Saddhaloka: Again, in connection with the Refuge Tree. There seems to be two different sorts of Dharmapala. There are the converted local deities or Gods of the Round, who are now Protectors of the Dharma; and there are also archetypal beings appearing in wrathful form. First of all, is this correct?

S: It would seem so, yes. Though sometimes it is not easy to sort them out into these two classes.

Saddhaloka: And in that case are those Dharmapalas that we see on the Refuge Tree exclusively of the second type, which one would assume if one is Going for Refuge to them?

S: Yes, if one is Going for Refuge to them they must be, at least to some extent, Enlightened. I think technically they would be regarded as Bodhisattvas belonging to a certain bhumi, but not Gods of the Round, not Protectors in the mundane sense. What are sometimes called the Gods of the Round rather than the Deities of the Path.

Cittapala: Is there any way one can cultivate a certain kind of relationship with guardians and

with Dharmapalas?

S: I suppose you can; you can get to know them, you can familiarise yourself with their iconic form. Perhaps you will feel attracted to a particular one, start thinking about him; find out about him, try to develop some sort of awareness of his actual presence. One can do that with any of these figures.

Cittapala: It doesn't seem to be something which we have any great awareness of within the Order itself.

S: No, I'm afraid there are so many things of which we could be more aware within the Order, and this is one of the things that I don't think anyone has got around to yet. One could do it with regard to well, nature spirits or beings, personalities in Western mythology, or figures from Buddhist myth and legend or Buddhist Tantric symbolism. Take, say, the four guardians, the four lokapalas; you might feel more attracted by one than another; you might regard yourself as belonging to a particular Buddha family because the Bodhisattva that you are visualising and whose mantra you are reciting belonged to that family, so therefore you might take a particular interest in the lokapala for that particular quarter assuming it wasn't Vairocana, who doesn't have a lokapala. [88]

Cittapala: But they wouldn't be Dharmapalas in the sense of the ones which are actually on the Refuge Tree?

S: No, no; they are on a definitely lower level. They are among the Gods of the Round. But there is no harm in cultivating their acquaintance, too.

Cittapala: Sure. But would that does each Buddha family have its own particular dharmapalas, Transcendental dharmapalas?

S: Ah. I am not sure about that. I think it will vary according to the Tantric system concerned. But, in the case of the four lokapalas, of course, they are associated with North, South, East and West, and Buddhas are associated with North, South, East and West. But there are only four lokapalas, so there isn't one for the centre.

Tejananda: The next question is from Priyananda about Milarepa.

Priyananda: I understand that within the KarmaKargyu school there is a Milarepa practice. Do you know anything about this, and have you done this practice?

S: No, I don't know anything about this. Are you referring to the Going for Refuge and prostration practice?

Priyananda: No, the more purely visualisation practice.

S: Because you do have the visualisation as preceding the Going for Refuge and prostration.

Priyananda: This would be more purely a visualisation and mantra recitation, as you would for a Bodhisattva.

S: No, I haven't come across any such practice. But certainly there would be such a practice preceding the Going for Refuge and prostration practice of the Kargyupas.

Tejananda: The final question is from Kuladeva, and he wants two points of clarification.

Kuladeva: The first point is just technical. You refer to the sacred texts in the lecture as fulfilling the exoteric Dharma Refuge on the Refuge Tree, and this seems to be the general depiction. But Geshe Rabten suggests that Prajnaparamita could also be placed amidst the texts. Do you think this is a suitable addition?

S: When you say 'also placed amidst the texts', what do you mean? Because, presumably, if the

Kuladeva: I mean in a personalised form.

S: Ah, I see: the deity. Well, it's another figure. If she is not included elsewhere, there is no reason why she shouldn't be placed there. But I would have thought actually there were already quite enough figures. It is all right for an expert like Geshe Rabten, but for others perhaps it might be the last straw that [89] broke the camel's back and made you give up the practice! Do you see what I mean? But in the case of, say, our FWBO simplified practice, if we do formulate such, it might be a good idea to include Prajnaparamita, because she is included among the deities whose mantra we recite at the end of the Puja; so people are very familiar with that particular form and some people actually do the sadhana. So it could well be that we gave her a place in the simplified version. But if anyone is even trying to visualise all those hundreds of figures, they might not want an additional one. I am not quite sure why he suggested that; maybe it is just a bit of elaboration.

Kuladeva: I assumed it was a personalisation figure on the Dharma Refuge. The second point is just one that is a point of clarification: You refer to Milarepa and Tsongkhapa as fulfilling the role of the central position on the Kargyupa and Gelugpa Refuge Trees respectively. But I have only ever come across references to Vajradhara fulfilling this position in those two traditions. Milarepa, I understand, is usually placed amongst the lamas' Kargyu lineage deriving from Vajradhara: he is placed between Marpa and Gampopa. If Vajradhara as supreme AdiBuddha is so centrally placed, do you think this indicates a slight difference in emphasis between the Nyingmapas and the later Tibetan traditions, and that Milarepa and Tsongkhapa, although perhaps representing the vajraguru, are not quite parallel to Padmasambhava, and that Samantabhadra seems to be not quite as prominent among the Nyingmapas as Vajradhara seems to be among the Kargyus and Gelugpas?

S: I have certainly seen a number of Gelugpa Refuge Trees where Tsongkhapa definitely occupies the same place as Padmasambhava in the case of the Nyingmapa Refuge Trees. I have a vague recollection of Kargyupa thangkas, or thangkas of the Refuge Tree, with Milarepa in that place; but I won't be absolutely certain in any case I would have seen only one or two. As far as I remember, he occupied the central position in the Refuge Tree, but I couldn't as it were swear to it. I can't remember seeing any Kargyupa thangka in which Vajradhara occupied that central place.

Kuladeva: In a talk to he placed Vajradhara in that position. And I think I have actually seen pictures of Refuge Trees from the Kargyupa tradition.

S: There obviously must be such. Samantabhadra does occupy an important place in the Nyingmapa tradition. In those threestorey temples, he often occupies the topmost storey. You see him represented quite prominently in various ways. But it is as though Padmasambhava had such a powerful effect on the imagination, as it were, of the Nyingmapas that he is a very, very central figure for them. But Tsongkhapa is, too, for the Gelugpas. Perhaps it is something we don't always realise, because Tsongkhapa is not so popular with us, but there is a vast literature of prayers and meditations on him as the central figure. But my own contact with the Kargyupas was quite limited, so I can't be quite sure to what extent they are quite parallel in this respect to the Nyingmapas and Gelugpas. for the Nyingmapas, Padmasambhava is the second Buddha, so it makes sense for them to Go for Refuge to him; and I think the Gelugpas would regard Tsongkhapa as being pretty much in that position. Though the sort of impression one gets of the personality of Tsongkhapa is totally different from the impression one gets of the personality of Padmasambhava. The same with Milarepa.

: Bhante, does Tsongkhapa have any strong resonance for you personally? [90]

S: Sometimes! He is the great reformer, yes. But I won't say he is not such an attractive figure, but not such an evocative figure, certainly, as that of Padmasambhava; not so colourful. He just studied, meditated, taught his disciples, wrote books and that was that. That was his life! Whereas Padmasambhava had a very different life, didn't he? Lotus lakes and being burned at the stake, and lots of dakinis, and flying through the air, visiting Shambala; a very different sort of story indeed; exorcising demons. There are miracles associated with Tsongkhapa, too, but they are not on the same scale, really. I don't think Tsongkhapa has yet caught on in the FWBO; perhaps we haven't done him justice.

: I think we might be beginning to.

S: There is a Life of Tsongkhapa which is available, translated from the Tibetan. It is available well, it is in the Order Library, and it is available from the LBC Bookshop, if anyone is interested. It is not very long; it is a rather traditional type of biography. You won't read anything in it about his problems, or anything like that; he just gets straight on with his spiritual practice. Perhaps you could look on at least some of the demons conquered by Padmasambhava as being problems not his own, but sort of generic problems. Anyway, perhaps that is enough for one evening. [91]

12 December: SYMBOLISM OF THE CREMATION GROUND AND THE CELESTIAL MAIDENS

Tejananda:questions on the Symbolism of the Cremation Ground and the Celestial Maidens, starting with Susiddhi on mindfulness and the crucial situation.

Susiddhi: One aspect of my mindfulness practice has consisted in identifying areas of my life in which I experience irrational fear. Are these areas my personal cremation grounds? And is there a merely quantitative difference between my experience and that of a yogi striving for Insight by practising meditation in a cremation ground?

S: I wouldn't speak of there being no quantitative difference. I would rather speak in terms of a difference of principle. I would say, in principle, there is no difference. Recently you were in hospital, weren't you you had an operation? And so was I, earlier in the year! And it is in a way a crucial situation, isn't it? It is a sort of cremation ground; maybe not a very big one, but it is a cremation ground of some kind. And one can have those experiences well within the context as it were of ordinary life. One doesn't necessarily have to go off to India and start poking around actual cremation grounds in order to have them. On the other hand, there are some insensitive people who can make themselves very comfortable in a cremation ground, and do not derive any spiritual benefit from the experience of being there at all. I think it is quite important to recognise the principle here, and not be misled, even though one is inspired, by the colourful embodiment of that principle which one finds in the Tantric tradition. Yes, you can take it quite literally, and can have that experience quite literally, of the cremation ground if not of celestial maidens; but you can also have the experience in many other kinds of ways. I spoke, either yesterday or the day before, about the situation in which you go after a big business order and then it all just falls through at the last minute: that is a cremation ground, because very powerful feelings emerge on such occasions with which you have to deal. Thinking it over during the day, afterwards, I thought there was one particular powerful emotion that nearly everybody has to deal with sooner or later. We often speak about fear, don't we? That is cropping up all the time; but what about jealousy? Jealousy is one of the most powerful emotions, especially sexual jealousy, and it comes up, or threatens to come up, within the context of quite a number of sexual relationships; and sometimes the emotion of jealousy can be so powerful you can even feel like murdering the person that you supposedly love. So when the feeling of jealousy comes up, you should alert yourself and say: 'Aha! This is the crucial situation. I am approaching a cremation ground a ground where my ego could die' because the feeling of jealousy represents a very powerful assertion of the ego; it is a very unpleasant emotion. In some ways it is more unpleasant than fear, because it threatens another person, even other people. You are not very likely, under ordinary circumstances, to commit murder on account of fear, but you are quite likely to commit it if you are overcome or overpowered by feelings of very intense jealousy. You have probably all experienced these feelings at some time or other if not recently, at least in your youth! That is supposed to be a joke! (Laughter.) Maybe it isn't a joke! Maybe the fact that it isn't a joke is a crucial situation! (Laughter.) Yes, have a good laugh! But you see what I mean? [92] Yes, one hears talk about fear all the time; everybody asks about fear, and fear comes up in the course of almost everybody's solitary retreat, it seems; but what about jealousy? Well, everyone knows about that. So that is also the sort of powerful emotion that you have to be on the lookout for; as I said, when that arises that is also a cremation groundtype experience. It is based on possessiveness, it is based on projection, it is based on all sorts of things of that sort. But haven't some of you at least experienced this very powerful sensation or emotion of jealousy, and then realised that there was in a way some meaning in it from a spiritual point of view? It tells you quite a lot about yourself and, of course, about your relationship, whatever it is. So don't just think in terms of fear in the cremation ground but jealousy in the cremation ground, even hatred. Not so much anger, but certainly hatred in the cremation ground.

Kulananda: I was wondering, on a similar point, whether we couldn't see if there was a sort of small cremation ground existing on the Wheel of Life, at the point between vedana and tanha.

S: That's true, yes. This could be described as a crucial point of transition; you can go either way.

Tejananda: Question 2 is from Kuladeva about weeping in the presence of a corpse.

Kuladeva: It's not just actually a corpse it's I understand from The Tibetan Book of the Dead that weeping is to be carried out away from the dying person and from his corpse after his death. Nevertheless, at the time of my father's death I noticed that the expression of grief was beneficial especially to those who had difficulty in expressing themselves to him while he lived. Although I succeeded in keeping weeping relatives from being too close to him, I did not feel that I could be too insistent about it. How important do you think it is that weeping should be kept away from the dying and from the recently deceased?

S: It is very difficult to say. I suppose the living have to be considered as well as the dead. Perhaps there is a difference between the situation within the context of, say, the traditional Tibetan culture, where people, it seems, express their feelings quite freely, and the same situation within the context of our English culture, at least though it wasn't an English occasion, was it? AngloIrish? where people perhaps find it less easy to express their emotions. So you almost have to decide whether it is better, for the sake of the deceased person, that there is no weeping in the vicinity of the corpse, or better for the bereaved people that they should be allowed to weep in the vicinity of the corpse. think the reasoning behind what The Tibetan Book of the Dead has to say is that the consciousness of the deceased should be allowed to be calm and peaceful and detached from not just the body but from relations and friends and wealth and so on; and perhaps the sight, if that is still going on, of grieving relatives can as it were pull him back. It is very difficult to speculate, but supposing the departed person himself had not found it easy to express emotion, nor his relations, but he was actually seeing them grieve for him; one could think that that might be beneficial, that he would feel that there was some positive feeling towards him. It is difficult to say. I don't think you can ever make an absolute rule. [93] I have also read in several places that very often it happens that immediately after somebody dies their features at once assume an extremely peaceful expression. If that is really the case if they really are at peace by being now detached from the physical body I find it difficult to believe that that peace would be very deeply disturbed by some weeping in the vicinity of the corpse, assuming that the corpse could see it. There is also the question of whether the consciousness or the awareness of the deceased person is limited to the area in the immediate vicinity of the corpse. Can we be so sure of that? So I think we can't take these pronouncements too literally, always. Here I am merely speculating, but it does occur to me that it might be more important that people should restrain their grief just at the time of death, or just before death. They should be able to express their feelings towards the dying person in a positive way, without it being disruptive or disturbing.

Kuladeva: That was the moment when it seemed to me that it was most crucial. I noticed with my father that there was some kind of struggle going on.

S: Yes, right. There very often is just immediately preceding death, even if it is just a sort of

reactive physical struggle. One has to use one's common sense, or whatever insight into such matters one may happen to have.

Tejananda: I have just been reading a number of researched cases of alleged rebirth by M... Storey(?), which seem to have a common feature when the person remembers the inbetween life the Bardo, so to speak of seeing relatives weeping; but there is never any indication that they feel distressed at seeing that. They sort of sit there quite indifferent to it.

S: I would have thought, if anything would have disturbed them, it would have been relations quarrelling as sometimes people do quarrel, even in the presence of the dying person, about the contents of the will, or just old family matters. I was reading an account just the other day of the death of Oscar Wilde Padmaraja very kindly gave me the new biography as a present. There is also an account of the death, at about the same time, of his old antagonist, the Marquess of Queensberry, who was on bad terms with every member of his family. And when one of his sons went to see him on his deathbed he tried to spit at him; and so another son who was still alive just didn't go. So one obviously tries to keep the deathbed as peaceful as is possible. I don't know what sort of rebirth he had the author of the famous Queensberry Rules, apparently: that is his main claim to fame. (Brief discussion about functioning of tape recorder.)

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaprabha about the sign you mention, the bone sign.

S: Bone sign? Oh. I have read my notes through, but I don't think I've got

Tejananda: The ten stages of the decomposition of the corpse.

S: Oh right, yes, yes, I've got it.

Ratnaprabha: When you are talking about the ten stages of decomposition of the corpse in the lecture, you say first of all that practising this meditation, one may eventually see all people as walking skeletons, and [94]

when you just see the white pure bone, this is the 'sign' which is presumably the nimitta.

S: That's right, the ugha(?)nimitta.

Ratnaprabha: And this sign should be the object of concentration in the next stage. I didn't really understand this point. I don't really understand what this 'sign' means in general, either.

S: Well, it is quite standard. If one takes, for instance, the example of the red kasina(?) first of all, you concentrate on the external red disc or whatever; then you close your eyes and you concentrate on the mental replica. And then, after a while, there emerges from the mental replica a shining counterpart, and it is on that that you concentrate, or rather in that that you become absorbed; and that absorption becomes the nucleus for the experience of dhyana. So, in this type of asubhabhavana practice, the flashing white bones correspond to the disc of light, the brilliant disc, that emerges from the mental counterpart of the red disc in the red kasina practice. I have not done this practice myself but I did once talk to a nun who had done it, and her experience seemed to correspond to the traditional account.

Ratnaprabha: So the sign that you see is when you are going through the ten stages of the decomposition of the corpse; you finish with the skeleton, and then you would hope that a sign would arise; in other words, instead of seeing the skeleton in your mind's eye

S: I assume I have not actually practised this, but I assume that you would end up literally contemplating that is, with your eyes open the white bones; and then, closing the eyes, you would concentrate on the mental picture of the white bones, and then from that contemplation there would arise a sort of brilliant counterpart, not necessarily looking exactly like a bone at that stage and that you would then concentrate upon that, or become absorbed in that.

Ratnaprabha: So your point about when one practises this meditation one may see ordinary people as if they were walking skeletons that is a quite separate point, then, is it?

S: That seems to be a separate point. This nun also had that experience, and I imagine that what would happen would be that when you were not practising, as it were in between, you would as it were, perhaps quite naturally and spontaneously, superimpose the visualised skeleton that is, the mental counterpart of the actual skeleton on the living human bodies, presumably almost as a form of Insight practice. That is to say, if you had been practising regularly or strongly, even when you opened your eyes you would still see that nimitta; so that you would see the skeleton, as it were, in the human bodies that were moving around. You would see that that was what they really were of course 'really' here within single inverted commas, because the bone is no more real than the flesh and the blood, really.

Ratnaprabha: I think one reason why I was a little confused is that when I have read the Visuddhimagga, which describes several different meditation practices, it does tend to talk about the 'sign' relevant to each practice. Unfortunately, I didn't look it up just before this session, but I seem to remember that the sign is [95] not always something that one would automatically associate with that particular practice, although I am afraid I can't recall any examples.

S: Well, many types of signs are mentioned in the literature in connection with different practices not necessarily brilliant; sometimes one, it says, sees smoke, or sometimes one sees as it were glowworms or there is a flash of lightning. I seem to remember somewhere reading about the nimitta in connection with this particular ten stages of decomposition of a corpse practice, being like a flash of lightning, white, as though you suddenly see this brilliant white bone.

Ratnaprabha: And is this dependent upon one's psychological type, or is there genuinely only one kind of sign that one would associate with each kind of meditation?

S: No, I think one couldn't say that. Sometimes the sign may not be visual at all; the sign may be auditory, or it may be even in the form of a physical sensation. But, as I think I have mentioned somewhere, visual signs seem to be the most common, with auditory signs coming next. You may even get an olfactory sign; you may experience a very pleasant scent, for which there is no objective external cause. The consciousness is more refined, and you are operating on a finer level, as it were, having finer experiences.

Cittapala: Would the sign always be something of the nature of a sense input, or could it be a feeling tone, more?

S: Sometimes well, what should one say? if you see something, the analogy is that of sight; as you say, 'Oh, I see,' meaning 'I understand.' Sometimes, though, it is very difficult to distinguish whether you are actually experiencing a physical sensation or experiencing something as though it was a physical sensation. To drop the visual example, supposing in meditation you experience a soft wind blowing against your body, but there is no source for it; maybe the doors, the windows, are completely closed, there is no movement. So it must be as it were mental, subjective; but none the less you experience it as though it was a physical sensation. Initially you might think, 'Oh, there's a draught, there's a window open,' but you check and you find, no, there is nothing of that sort; so it must be subjective. So sometimes there are as it were sort of mental experiences which are experienced as though they were physical. In the same way, you could swear, perhaps, sometimes, that you had actually seen something with your physical eyes, but actually it wouldn't be your physical eyes; it would be your devavision.

Cittapala: But, say, in the mettabhavana, it wouldn't be the nimitta of that, where the object of your concentration is more of a feeling or emotion. Would you expect to see a sort of as it were physical sensation, or ?

S: I don't remember what the texts say here, if anything, but I would say, just speaking from personal experience, that the nimitta is when you start feeling as it were carried away by that feeling without any effort, and that the feeling is just going on and expanding and becoming more intense, as it were quite spontaneously. That is not to say you may not get other nimittas, too, at that time, because there can be all sorts of reactions and repercussions. It may depend on your temperament; some people have lots of experiences, as it were, in a way lots of nimittas, in the course of their practice. Others may have very few, hardly any. [96] Anyway, where did the question come from?

Ratnaprabha: Well, your mention of the sign in the corpse meditation.

S: Right, yes. So, yes, there are these as it were signs connected with all meditation practices we are talking of samatha practices now. They represent a more subtle type of experience due to the fact that your consciousness has become more subtle, more concentrated, and you are as it were operating, at least to some extent, on a more subtle level of consciousness. But sometimes not very much more subtle than the one you usually operate on, and sometimes it is difficult to know whether one is experiencing just a physical sensation of some kind, or whether the experience is of a different, more subtle, nature.

Ratnaprabha: So is it called the 'sign' because it is as it were a signal to you that you should now slightly change your approach to the meditation in order to take advantage of the new

S: No, it isn't; it is just a sign in a general sense. You can take it like that, but it happens quite naturally, because if, for instance, you are meditating and suddenly you see a beautiful lotus in front of you, your attention is naturally drawn by that, and you become absorbed in that. It is in a way part of your process of unification of consciousness; you are naturally drawn to it. You are drawn to it because it is there, but it is there because not that you are drawn to it, because it hasn't, but because your consciousness is becoming more and more integrated. It is one of the signs that it is. So the two mutually reinforce each other.

Tejananda: So should one allow oneself to be drawn into it if it does occur?

S: Not unmindfully, but certainly allow it to become one's object of concentration. You then have a more subtle object of concentration, and therefore you will achieve a more subtle concentration.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnabodhi on having companions in the cremation ground.

Ratnabodhi: You say in the lecture that someone in India who wanted to overcome fear would go alone at night to a cremation ground. It seemed to me that one's aloneness in that situation would form a large part of one's fear, because one would have to face one's aloneness as much as facing one's fear. I was wondering how this aspect of being alone fits into the crucial situation as we may experience it in the Movement. So I have two overlapping questions: a) Can one be said to be in a crucial situation if one does not experience a sense of being alone, whether or not one is physically alone? that is, is aloneness a necessary part, if not the essential part, of a crucial situation? b) Need one necessarily be physically alone in a crucial situation, or is it the sense of one's aloneness that really matters? In other words, could one have a companion, in the objective sense, in the situation, to support and see one through the crucial situation, without making it any less crucial? [97]

S: I suppose a lot depends on what one means by 'alone'. I am not sure that aloneness is in itself a crucial situation or part of it, because you can have a very positive experience of aloneness, as you do on a solitary retreat, perhaps. I mean the experience of fear often arises when you are alone. Perhaps, in many cases, that is due to the fact that you do not have the company of another person to distract you from the fear that is perhaps always there. Sometimes it is the presence of another person that does constitute a crucial situation. I mentioned jealousy, didn't I? Well, there are usually, if not actually present, at least sort of mentally present, at least two other people there is you, the person of whom you are jealous, and the person on account of whom you are jealous. There may, for instance, concretely, be your wife or your girl friend and 'the other man'; and so, yes, that sort of crucial situation arises very much when you are 'together' with other people. There could be hundreds of other people present when you were experiencing a crucial situation. Supposing you were being publicly executed burned at the stake, or in front of a firing squad. That would certainly be a crucial situation for most people, but there would be lots of people present. I don't think the crucial situation is necessarily associated either with being alone or being with other people. It can occur in either way. This suggests that being alone is not in itself a crucial situation. It may be; or the crucial situation may arise when you are on your own, or it may arise when you are with other people. When one speaks of the burning ground as representing the crucial situation when one mentions the dakinis as frequenting the cremation grounds if one takes that rather literally, clearly other people are present. Does that deal with the whole question, or were there some bits and pieces that I haven't really covered?

Ratnabodhi: I think that just about covers it.

Ratnaprabha: I think perhaps there was something else that came up in our discussion of this in the group. I think we were wondering whether, although you might not be physically alone, the sensation of having to 'go it alone' was an important part of the situation that the responsibility entirely lay on you; and whether, in a sense, if you grabbed hold of a friend and said, 'Right, come along, help me out,' that was letting you off the hook and avoiding the crucial situation.

S: Right. But the crucial situation is not having to go it alone, but your selfconfidence. Some people can be lacking in selfconfidence even though they are working along with other people. So it is not the physical aloneness, not even a mental sense of being on your own, but a sense of 'I'm not up to this, I don't have the ability.' So it is not that that is itself the crucial situation, but the crucial situation is that you have to face that fact and hopefully overcome it. Sometimes the presence of another person actually can help you do that; they don't take responsibility for you, but they can encourage you to have faith in yourself.

Kuladeva: Are you referring to lack of selfconfidence as constituting a crucial situation in that particular instance or as a general rule?

S: It is not so much the lack of selfconfidence itself which is a crucial situation. You may just lack selfconfidence [where] there is no question of a crucial situation. But it can be a crucial situation when you are forced to recognise that you are lacking in selfconfidence. Perhaps you have not recognised [98] it so far, so being brought into a situation where you are compelled to recognise that, a situation which hitherto you have avoided, can represent a crucial situation. You then have the opportunity, of course, once you have recognised your lack of selfconfidence, to do something about it hopefully, overcome it by as it were taking risks, even, in that situation, which thus does become a crucial situation. But the mere lack of selfconfidence is not, I would say, a crucial situation.

Saddhaloka: Could one go further and say it is not even the recognition that it is the crucial situation but the resolve to do something about it, or

S: No, I think take one crucial situation at a time: if hitherto you have hidden from yourself the fact that you are lacking in selfconfidence, to have to face up to that can be a very crucial experience indeed, and therefore the situation can be a very crucial situation. So, having dealt with that crucial situation, you can now face the next one. Sometimes it is a very crucial situation, when one has to recognise the existence of one's little weaknesses!

Cittapala: Taking an example of that, perhaps: if one was asked to give a talk, and then the day before you suddenly realised that you were lacking in selfconfidence, that would be one crucial situation, wouldn't it, when you had to face up to that and try and do something about it

S: Yes, especially if you had been bluffing yourself 'Oh, I'm quite confident; no problem for me just to give that little talk' but maybe, just before, you are faced by an overwhelming fear and feel 'I just can't go through with it' yes, to accept that you didn't have as much confidence as you thought you had represents a crucial situation; because you can evade, even then; you can manage to fall ill, and convince yourself and your friends: 'Oh, I wasn't able to give the talk because I wasn't feeling very well. I was ill. So to face up to the fact that one's selfimage was not a correct image, that can be a crucial situation.

Ratnaprabha: And then actually giving the talk, and using that to try and overcome what you have just realised about your lack of selfconfidence, that would be a second crucial situation. Is that what you were saying?

S: Say that again?

Ratnaprabha: As I understood you, the realisation of your lack of selfconfidence, just having to face up to it as it were internally, is one crucial situation; and what you decide to do about it for example, going ahead with the talk despite your realisation

S: Right, yes; well, you could regard them as two crucial situations or two different stages of the same one; it doesn't really matter. They are both crucial, yes. You could regard them as adjacent cremation grounds, if you like!

Cittapala: In the past you have characterised one of the traits of the individual as being aloneness. I was wondering whether you had the crucial situation in mind, or a tieup between them.

S: I don't think I did, no. I think by aloneness I meant more his or her sense of their own individuality; the awareness of themselves as not part of the group. [99] And if, of course, there is no other individual around, that will give rise to a sense of aloneness. But it is a healthy sense, a healthy feeling, inasmuch as it does include the recognition that you are not just a group member and have an existence of your own apart from the existence of the group. Tejananda: Now a question from Susiddhi in fact, we've got a whole series of questions about dakinis which is his third.

S: That's amazing, considering how rare they are! Anyway, let's have the questions about the dakinis. We did talk about them a bit yesterday, didn't we? Anyway, they've flown back!

Susiddhi: A short question, Bhante: Are dakinis amoral?

S: Are they nonmoral? It depends what one means by that, I suppose. Is one thinking of dakinis in the literal sense, as actual as it were human beings?

Susiddhi: Yes.

S: Then in that case what does one mean by amoral? In anycase, what does one mean by being amoral?

Susiddhi: I was really thinking of a situation which you outlined well, went into quite a bit of detail in the tape of the yogi experiencing dakinis. I think I have always thought of dakinis as nice young ladies who help you on the Path.

S: Yes!

Susiddhi: I got the impression, listening to the tape, that if you are not in control of them they will in a way dictate what happens to you.

S: Well, as I also explained in the talk, dakinis exist in different ways on different levels. But, if one uses the term in a quite sort of ordinary sense, as it seems to be used usually, say, in *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, then the dakini in human form is definitely a quite Enlightened female, you may say, in association with whom you practise the Dharma and whose company you do find spiritually inspiring. Far from being amoral in the modern sense, she is, well, highly moral, one might say, though not necessarily moral in the conventional sense; and with a strong feeling for the spiritual life and even some actual

spiritual attainment and realisation. That would be the human dakini in the as it were standard sense, which does not mean that such dakinis are really very common at all. But one does occasionally meet a woman who has something of that quality, and it is quite easily recognisable; but I can't say I have ever met a woman who had a lot of it, usually there is just a touch of it, just a little of it. Dakinis in this sense are usually described as being, well, extremely to start with, their physical attributes extremely beautiful and youthful; at the same time, full of very intense faith and devotion, and being given to meditation and being pureminded. [100]

Side 2

I suppose here I am speculating a bit part of the stimulating effect is the sheer novelty of it, because women are usually, even at their best, rather different from this. Supposing you did actually meet a woman who was young, beautiful, attractive, very, very devout, full of faith in the Dharma, very devoted to meditation practice, being not in the least interested in flirting with you, but genuinely wanting to help you in your spiritual practice well, that could be quite inspiring! (Laughter.) I see some of you are quite overwhelmed by the idea! In modern Britain, you are unlikely, I think, to find them in cremation grounds if we do have any left or anywhere else. But this is one of the ideals of the Vajrayana. I must say, within the Movement itself and within the Order, the idea of being like a dakini is quite popular, but I think the women who do find this sort of idea quite popular are not usually drawn to it in this particular form, the form that I have just outlined; they are usually drawn to it in a slightly more primitive form. They seem to like the idea of the dakini as a rather wild sort of creature, with her hair flying out behind her and running around naked and that sort of thing. Those seem to be the sort of dakinilike qualities which appeal to them more. Anyway, we won't go into that.

as that your only question, or

Susiddhi: Yes.

S: Tejananda said you had a whole list of them?

Tejananda: Not all from Susiddhi.

S: Right. So what was Susiddhi's question, basically?

Susiddhi: Well, I think it is based on the fact I have always regarded dakinis as helpful young ladies you meet further along the Path; but this morning I just got the impression, in a way, that they were energies, and if you couldn't handle the energies you could do yourself harm.

S: Well, they do represent energies. They do represent your own energies, and certainly your own energies, when they get out of hand say, as in the case of jealousy can do you harm, yes. But dakinis usually represent energies, including one's own energies, in their more beneficent

and helpful aspect.

ho had the next dakini question?

Tejananda: Ratnaprabha, on teaching the dakinis.

S: Oh! He is ambitious, isn't he? (Laughter.) Do you have them in Cambridge?

Ratnaprabha: I think this is probably about dakinis as one's energies rather than as feelings

S: All right, let's come down to that level, then.

Ratnaprabha: It refers to passages in The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava in which he is related as doing various things in the cremation grounds [101] that he lives in. One of them in particular is teaching the dakinis. I wondered if you could perhaps explain what this could represent, in terms of dakinis as energies.

S: Yes. In this case, of course, it is Padmasambhava, so his dakinis, if one interprets them subjectively, are his own very high level energies which he is teaching. So, in our case, I suppose one could say that the dakinis represent all the powerful potentially helpful emotions that we experience including even negative emotions, because they represent a charge of energy which could be turned in a different direction and made helpful to the spiritual life. So teaching dakinis would be bringing those energies under control, by one means or another. Sometimes you have to use comparatively rough methods; at other times, perhaps, comparatively gentle methods. It is also, perhaps, to some extent a question of freeing one's energies. It is all right to talk in terms of teaching one's dakinis, but where are they? Maybe they are all hiding down in the cellar and have to be brought up and brought out. I was talking the other day, wasn't I, about a relative lack of passion? that the dakinis in some way, as one's own energies, represent that more passionate side of one's nature. Teaching, I suppose, really means bringing under control; not just holding down, but guiding, directing, integrating. No doubt there are many, many different ways of doing that. But does one actually feel one's energies in this way? It is all right to talk in terms of dakinis, but does one really feel that one is as it were surrounded by one's own energies as by dakinis? Does one actually feel that? Is it a meaningful symbol for one?

Ratnaprabha: In dreams, definitely, but not so much in waking life.

S: Perhaps that suggests the necessity of establishing more contact with one's dreams; trying to recall them, dwelling upon them.

: It does seem to be a very powerful symbol, very evocative.

S: Yes.

: I think also, in meditation, when one is actually in dhyana, it is more possible to relate to one's energies in that kind of way.

S: Sometimes when one is reading poetry, or any very imaginative literature assuming that you really are reading it, that you are really in the mood for it. Perhaps one could also say,

since I have used that word 'mood', that the dakinis, on a certain level, are one's moods. Everybody has moods, don't they? sometimes more positive, sometimes more negative. Perhaps some of you don't; perhaps you are always in the same sort of equable mental state. But do you have moods?

Voices: Mm.

S: Oh. Because Jung has something to say about moods, doesn't he, in the case of the male? It is his anima troubling him. I forget the details, but when you have a mood, it is as though your anima has taken you over; she is not properly integrated, she is not very happy. She is not very pleased with you. You know sometimes you are in an argumentative mood, aren't you? Or sometimes you are in a rather dull sort of mood, or a rather annoyed mood or a depressed mood; or a [102] cheerful mood. And these moods can change. According to Jung, it is the work of your anima. So you could think of these moods as dakinis that you have got to teach, that you have got to bring under control. Why should you be troubled by moods? It is disturbing, it is annoying, isn't it? It is not under your control, they just happen. And, in the case of the woman, she is possessed by ideas; she just gets ideas into her head which she hasn't thought about, she has picked them up, and they just sort of take possession of her. It is her unintegrated animus, so the Jungians tell us. So, in the case of the male, it is the unintegrated anima which causes this emotional disturbance usually of a rather mild sort, but none the less a disturbance, in the sense that you are sort of possessed by a feeling or emotion for which you can't really account. There is no reason, you just wake up like that. Perhaps it is connected with your dream life; but certainly you don't feel in that particular mood for a definite reason that is why it is a mood.

: What would bringing these moods under control actually mean, in terms of the mood as it were?

S: Well, some of them, I think, when brought under control would just dissolve the more negative ones; and those which were more positive would become more stable. Instead of just having an occasional cheerful mood, you would be all the time, for good rational reasons, in a cheerful frame of mind.

Vairocana: You said, in the case of a woman, it was more like ideas

S: I am following Jung here not with complete confidence.

Vairocana: So you could not compare that to a dakini figure, then, could you?

S: No, I suppose in her case it would be a daka, supposedly, just reversing the genders. Anyway, what with Jung and anima and dakinis and dakas maybe we are getting a little out of our depth.

Kulananda: Bhante, I wonder if you have any suggestions for teaching techniques in this regard in regard to ourselves and in regard to our own moods? in regard to teaching our own dakinis.

S: I think the first thing you have to do with a mood is recognise it as a mood. In the same way as we recognise certain energies there, recognise that there is a dakini lurking there

which needs to be brought out and trained, as it were. For instance, you could even sort of develop a little system of your own. Supposing that you started feeling really jealous; you would say: 'Aha! Here's the green dakini appearing. She needs to be tamed. She needs to be made more genuinely dakinilike, a bit more like a Bodhisattva.'

Kulananda: Because there is an energy

S: 'I can't have her in that undisciplined state; she is only giving me trouble. I am suffering because of this jealousy dakini. She has got to be transformed.'

Susiddhi: I am not sure if this is the same as Kulananda [was asking]: what do you do, apart from being aware of the situation if anything?

S: Well, take a concrete example. I suppose in some ways it is a crucial situation because you can develop Insight. Let us go back to this question of jealousy again: you become aware that you are jealous; all right, you try to deal with it [103]

by telling yourself, 'This is the green dakini, I've got to bring her under control.' But, all right, how do you bring her under control? Only really through some deeper realisation. You have to ask yourself: 'Why am I jealous? What does it mean to be jealous?' Supposing you are jealous because your girl friend is going out with somebody else, neglecting you. You say: 'Look, this represents possessiveness. Does she really belong to me? Is she my slave, or is she my property, my exclusive property? If someone else goes out [with her], enjoys her company, do I really lose anything? She may come back cheerful and happy, willing to talk in a friendly way with me; am I therefore going to meet her with a gloomy face and reproach her for having been talking with somebody else? Is not this really foolish?' Of course, you won't succeed first time off, but you should talk to yourself in this sort of way, or talk to your jealousy dakini in this sort of way: 'It is really so ridiculous.' For instance, say to yourself: 'Supposing I didn't know about it, supposing I didn't know my girl friend had been seeing somebody else; I wouldn't be worried then, I wouldn't be conscious of having lost anything' especially if she was just as friendly to me as before. So when I know about it, why should it make any difference?' It seems so absurd to be jealous. Or even if you actually lose your girl friend; so what? You can console yourself with more mundane reflections, like: 'Well, there's as big fish in the sea as ever came out of it!' or things like that, but that is not really very helpful from a spiritual point of view. Say: 'She is also a human being; surely I wish that she should be well and happy. If she is happier with somebody else than she is with me, that's fine. Just let her go with my best wishes, as it were.' One has to reason with oneself, and see it as an opportunity for seeing through your own possessiveness; seeing through the fact that you have invested a portion of yourself in that other person. That is why you experience the jealousy, that is why the situation is so painful. It is not as though she is just taking herself away, she is taking you away with her; but then that is your fault because you have invested a part of your personality in her; you have projected on to her. So when you experience jealousy, it is an opportunity for you to analyse the situation and see through all that, and that cannot but be helpful to you. Perhaps if she had never had that little affair with somebody else, you never would have had that opportunity. You would have remained projecting, would have remained investing a part of yourself in that other person, so you should be grateful to her. She has given you an opportunity for developing Insight. e don't usually look at it in this way; usually we want to shoot her, but actually we should be quite grateful! Well, you don't know who your best friends are, do you?

Susiddhi: Could you say you are trying to coax that green dakini into line by setting up a dialogue with her?

S: Oh, yes; a dialogue is very good, even if it is sort of an imaginary dialogue well, that's fine; a dialogue means communication, and that is one way of integrating one's own as it were unconscious contents; personalising them, if you like, and conducting a dialogue with that personalised form.

Susiddhi: I believe that is what Jung actually recommends in somes, that you do to come to terms with your anima and actually do start this dialogue.

S: Yes. I remember experiences that I had myself years and years ago. I used to have dreams in which a very angry woman was telephoning me. I eventually worked [104] it out: it was because I wasn't spending enough time in purely creative work. If I engaged in writing, especially poetry, I wouldn't get those angry telephone messages; but if it was all too intellectual, I started getting them. It was very clear. It was a sort of musetype figure which was trying to reestablish contact.

Dharmapriya: The way you describe the dialogue, it sounds as if the realisation or the insight is on an intellectual level, but if I understand you correctly, because of the force of your emotion, that combined with the intellectual realisation can break through.

S: Yes, intellectually it is never, in that sort of situation, just intellectual. It can amount, to some extent, to an actual understanding, but you do have to link it, as you say, with those powerful, usually destructive, emotional forces.

Dharmapriya: It does also, then, mean really letting yourself feel the jealousy, painful though it is.

S: Yes, right. It's no good saying: 'I'm not jealous; after all, I'm a civilised human being. Let her go, yes.' No, that is not really quite the thing, is it? Anyway, any more dakini questions?

Tejananda: Yes, quite a few.

S: They are dancing around this evening, aren't they?

Tejananda: Well, I don't know if Ratnaprabha has got another subsidiary on that one.

S: A minidakini?

Ratnaprabha: It's not really directly connected with this. In the lecture you describe Sarvabuddha(?) Dakini, and you describe her in a section in which you are talking of your second category of dakinis, that is dakinis as energies. But your first category of dakinis is dakinis as Buddhas. Would I be right in saying that Sarvabuddha Dakini also fits into that category that she is a Buddha or is she not regarded as a Buddha?

S: She is certainly regarded in a sense as a Buddha, but she is regarded as the embodiment of the energies of all the Buddhas; so she is one's energies, as it were, on the highest level the

level of the Enlightened personality; not just even the Enlightened energies of one Buddha but of all the Buddhas. So, yes, in a way she is a Buddha figure, but on the other hand she does embody energies on the highest level the energies of all the Buddhas. You notice these different levels are not neatly mutually exclusive.

Tejananda: Susiddhi has got another question on Sarvabuddha Dakini.

Susiddhi: What do the two figures being trampled under Sarvabuddha Dakini's feet represent? One figure is black, the other red.

S: I am not sure, because one represents almost a mini Sarvabuddha Dakini, the red one, doesn't it? I thought about this this evening, when I went through my notes, [105] but I can't remember having heard any explanation. It is difficult to say; because one could have said it was greed, and it was ignorance; but then that red figure does look so much like Sarvabuddha Dakini, she carries that kadvanga(?), doesn't she? So, no, I won't venture a guess.

Satyaraja: Bhante, is it significant that they are saluting Sarvabuddha Dakini? Could that be a clue?

S: It could be.

Dharmapriya: I wondered if the red figure would not be untransformed passion, untransformed love, and the black one perhaps simply untransformed, uncontrolled energy.

S: Perhaps; yes, in a way, it doesn't have to have a precise assignable meaning. You can let your imagination play around those figures and give them whatever meaning you feel is appropriate. Symbols are like that, aren't they? They are not tied down just to one particular meaning. We went into that on the first evening, didn't we? They are symbols, they are not signs. Just little thoughts which were passing through my mind not very closely connected, but somewhat connected. I mentioned just now that Padmaraja had given me this new biography of Oscar Wilde; I am afraid I have dipped into it extensively already, though I had intended to keep it for my Christmas holiday reading but anyway! There are some quite interesting bits of information. Apparently, when he was quite a young man, he was very friendly with Lily Langtry, the famous Jersey Lily; you must have heard of her everybody's heard of her who was apparently one of the most beautiful women of her time. And apparently in London in those days there were quite a lot of beautiful women who were famous just for being beautiful. They did a bit of acting and a bit of a few other things but they were really famous for being just beautiful, and they were famous for being Beauties with a capital B; and there were picture postcards of them for sale in the shops and all that sort of thing. Wherever they went people stared at them. ut, if you look at photographs or paintings of them, they don't look in the least like modern film stars. Their beauty seems to have been of a quite different order. I don't know whether it was because of the taste of those days, which apparently ran to what they described as Junoesque women rather massive, wellbuilt women who were very definitely women, very definitely female. But sometimes the features are quite extraordinary. But you don't see those sort of women around now, so far as I know; and film actresses don't look at all like that, don't have that kind of beauty. And it is as though that sort of beauty no longer appeals to people well, men, basically. In, for instance, advertisements, what sort of beauty, if you can call it that, do you often see? Scowling features, harsh, taut, sort of highly strung features; gaunt; bones showing. That is

what you see. You don't see these beautiful, smooth, classical features; and I think that tells us something, probably, about the state of men's animas nowadays. It is as though, in Oscar Wilde's day I am talking about the '90s and the earlier part of this century the ideal of female beauty approximated rather more to the sort of dakini type than it does nowadays.

nyway,these are just thoughts passing through my mind; perhaps not to be taken too seriously, but perhaps there is some significance there. Because Oscar Wilde himself, despite his later adventures, seemed to have been quite impressed or quite [106] stirred, or even inspired sometimes, by some of these beauties of his day, especially by Lily Langtry, the Jersey Lily.o maybe there is something lacking in the environment, so to speak do you see what I mean?

: Something lacking in the environment?

S: Well, in Oscar Wilde's day it must have been a very pleasing thing if you sort of walked into I was going to say a party; they didn't have parties in those days, fortunately but if you walked into some social situation and there were all these really beautiful women around, instead of the gaunt, haggard, beplastered types that you tend to see nowadays! And you got a charming smile instead of a feminist scowl! It must do something to people mainly to men, I suppose. Anyway, these are passing thoughts; don't take them too seriously.t an earlier stage, just to dwell a little on it, there were all these preRaphaelite women floating around, you know, in their voluminous draperies, looking very decorative and draped over sofas and their long hair falling down their backs, holding lilies in their hands or whatever it was. But you don't see that sort of thing now; it is absent, it is missing, from our environment. And it must make some difference, surely. Anyway, as I said, we won't dwell on it we really won't! Next question. Tejananda: Well, we are not getting away from dakinis quite yet.

S: We're not getting away, oh; they do seem to feature somewhere in people's psyches, then.

Tejananda: Cittapala was next.

S: Yes, I know, some of you have got your very own dakinis; I know that! (Laughter.)

Cittapala: We won't go into that! The way you described Sarvabuddha Dakini in the lecture is very alluring; an attractive, even a fascinating, figure

S: Well, it's meant to be!

Cittapala: But I have come across pictures of other types of dakinis, such as there is Vajravahari(?), I think she is called, she is the Diamond; and then there is a LionFaced Dakini; and also descriptions of headless dakinis, carrying their bleeding heads under their shoulders; and cutting open their bellies and eating their entrails. I was wondering what we were to make of these figures, how we were to interpret them.

S: Probably these are dakinis of a different order, as it were. Some of them, no doubt, are figures from indigenous Tibetan mythology, these animalheaded dakinis, and presumably they do represent more primitive, even animal, energies, even though they may be associated with the higher Tantra in some cases; because, in some ways, the higher the realisation the deeper the energy that could be transformed. [107] I am reminded, in this connection, of the animalheaded deities of ancient Egypt. I don't know if you've seen any of those in the British

Museum, in the Egyptological Department; they are very impressive indeed. I think if one just reflects on them, they seem to convey quite a strange impression. They have definite personalities, and you can feel, yes, they are gods or they are goddesses. In the case of the goddesses, you have got well, there is a lionheaded deity, isn't there? What is she called? The lionheaded goddess; I forget, it will come to me perhaps in a minute. But then there is the hippopotamusheaded goddess. And the heads are in complete keeping with the bodies; you can believe in them. Yes, Sekhmet is the lionheaded goddess, and she is seated on a throne with her arms out like this, looking quite majestic, you could say. And then, of course, there is the Sphinx, which is the other way around. Perhaps one mustn't forget that, in early days, man did attribute almost divine qualities to animals. In ancient days, man did not always regard animals as inferior. In a way they are, in evolutionary terms, but ancient man knew nothing about evolution; he didn't know that he had developed from the animals. They were just different. Sometimes they were more powerful than him, or more beautiful than him, he thought, or swifter than him, or they could do things that he could not do. He had no reason, very often, to regard himself as superior to them; certainly not in all cases. So he had a quite different attitude to them than we have, and he could see, as it were, divinity in an animal form just as easily as we, or at least the ancient Greeks, saw it in the human form; so could combine the human and the animal without the sense of incongruity that we might experience. The animal represented the Other; the animal represented, very often, something numinous. So we can look at it in that sort of way, too. If we encounter an animalheaded god or goddess, it gives us a sort of shock a culture shock, initially; we are not used to that sort of thing. You have a little, just a little, of it in Christian art when you have the figures of the four [evangelists]. Sometimes they are all represented in semianimal form. You usually just get the animals, but one of them is quite often represented in semianimal, semihuman form which one is that? Is it St. Mark? half lion, half human? But on the whole it is quite unusual.

Abhaya: Bhante, could you say again what the name of the lionheaded goddess was?

S: It was Sekhmet (spells it) it is usually Sekhmet. As depicted in ancient Egypt, they have definite personalities. Sekhmet especially is a very impressive figure, quite a noble figure. There is certainly no suggestion of animality in the ordinary sense. And the hippopotamusheaded goddess is also quite extraordinary; she looks just like a hippopotamus, but at the same time she is as it were human it all sort of hangs together and is not quite such a majestic figure but a sturdy, dignified figure! You can quite believe in them, as it were. I believe there is a crocodileheaded goddess; I can't quite remember that one. But these two certainly do stand out. They are both there in the Egyptian Gallery downstairs on the ground floor. ut anyway, that doesn't quite answer Cittapala's question. I think in the case of the Tibetan Tantra these animalheaded forms belong, probably, more to indigenous Tibetan mythology than to the Buddhist tradition proper, but they have been incorporated, which is significant.

Cittapala: Would you have any explanation as to why they do such bizarre things, like cutting open their own bodies and that sort of thing? [108]

S: It does all have a significance, like Sarvabuddha Dakini's drinking blood, like the organs which are offered in Tantric ritual, usually dough replicas. I think it is all to some extent associated with this cremation ground imagery, because don't forget, in cremation grounds you didn't necessarily just cremate people; sometimes they were chopped up into bits and fed

to the jackals, vultures and so on.

: You said that there were various orders, so maybe some of those more horrifying ones are like the dakinis which are not under control, the moods.

S: I wouldn't say that. I said probably they represented the more drastic situations, where it is not just a question of dying comfortably in your bed, it is where you are being torn to pieces, having your ego really attacked, disintegrated, ripped apart. I think it more often has that sort of significance; a violent assault upon the ego.

Tejananda: Now Kuladeva has a question on representations of dakinis in the Movement.

Kuladeva: I gather that, although you allowed an Order Member to photograph your thangka of Sarvabuddha Dakini and to distribute it to interested Order Members, you did not feel very happy about it being distributed to Mitras and Friends. Is Dakini, therefore, appropriate both as a title and as an image for the women's newsletter which is distributed to women Order Members, Mitras and Friends, or is this a somewhat different matter?

S: That is the title they chose. But it is significant, perhaps, that the dakini that appears on the cover, the design, is of the type it is; it is somewhat wrathful, one might say. I don't know whether it was because that was the only design they could get hold of or whether that was for a definite reason. It did occur to me just a few weeks ago, happening to look at it, that maybe I should ask them about this, because one would have thought that a more positive, more peaceful form would have been more appropriate; but they may not feel it that way. As I mentioned a little while ago, the type of dakini figure that seems to appeal to most women Order Members who are interested in these things is of that rather wild, dishevelled, naked figure, flying through the air. I don't know whether it is because women feel that their energies are repressed, but this sort of figure does seem to attract quite a lot of them. I think also sometimes women suffer, or feel that they suffer, from a lack of positive spiritual role models. They feel that, in the case of the men, there is the Buddha, especially the Buddha in the LBC Shrine Room a sturdy, not to say burly, figure, very definitely masculine, with whom the average male Order Member can very easily identify (laughter) but what about the women? Is it really easy for a woman to identify with a Buddha admittedly a big, beautiful golden Buddha with those bulging muscles and no breasts? Well, they find it rather difficult, and that is quite understandable. So I think some of them have turned to the figure of the dakini; that seems to appeal more strongly than, say, Tara. Tara does appeal to quite a lot, and they have called the women's retreat centre Taraloka, which is very significant, but the dakini seems to be a sort of feminine substitute for the Buddha. So the dakini is obviously a more abstract figure, in a way, inasmuch as well, there isn't a definite historical dakini in the way that there is a definite historical Buddha, or even Padmasambhava. [109]

So I think the feeling for the dakini to some extent represents attempts to find a sort of feminine equivalent of the traditional Buddha figure something with which women can more easily identify.

: It strikes me that it brings out a sort of maenadtype quality.

S: Mm?

: Maenads.

S: Yes, right, indeed. It is definitely the untamed, even disruptive, energy, as in Euripides' Bacchae. Not only disruptive, destructive. I think you get that in many feminists of the more extreme type. They are the twentiethcentury maenads, some of them. Also, of course, a lot of feminists a lot of women generally, perhaps quite rightly object to the sort of traditional classification of woman as either Eve or Virgin Mary. Maybe the dakini figure, for some women in the Buddhist movement, represents an attempt to discover something as it were in between. They don't particularly want to be Virgin Marys, but they don't like to think of themselves as Eves, either; so perhaps the dakini follows a sort of Middle Way. She has the attractiveness of Eve and the spiritual qualities of the Virgin Mary, perhaps.

Side 3

Tejananda: The final question on dakinis

S: Oh, they are doing very well this evening!

Tejananda: is from Priyananda on the term 'dakini' as used in India today.

Priyananda: The use of Tantric or Tantricderived terminology in the Indian ex Untouchable Buddhist context for instance, the use of 'dakini', 'deva', 'ista', 'devata' would seem to be inappropriate currently

S: That's true. Lokamitra, for instance, has asked me that when I name Indian Order Members I should not give them a name that includes 'deva'. Maybe it is carrying things a little too far, because I think sooner or later they have got to come to terms with such things; but anyway, for the time being at least I have complied with that.

Priyananda: In teaching situations, giving talks and in study, the study of Tantric materials

S: is not really very suitable for India. Though sometimes I have thought that there is something a bit Tantric about some of those Dalit(?) panthers you see what I mean? You know who I am talking about? You read this Dalit literature, you know? It is a little bit Tantric, on a rather low level, but it is full of energy and very unconventional and quite wild; mainly written by men, not by many women. But, yes, we have to be cautious. But sooner or later they have got to get over their somewhat rationalistic attitude to Buddhism and their overidentification, in effect, with the Theravada not that they know very much about the Theravada as such, but they tend to have that more rationalistic approach, which is sometimes quite limiting. [110] On the other hand, one can sympathise with their fear of being absorbed in Hinduism again, as superficially some of the Mahayana imagery is very close to that of modern Hinduism. Bodhisattvas are represented looking very much like Hindu gods and goddesses, and you can't really expect ordinary Buddhists on the village level to be able to

distinguish; and they may think that the worship of Bodhisattvas justifies the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses; or vice versa they might think that if you are worshipping Bodhisattvas you are just worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses, and Baba Sai (?) was prohibited that. So it is a very different situation. I have said, for instance, how would we feel if we went into the Shrine Room and we found a figure of the Buddha on the altar looking exactly like Jesus Christ? We wouldn't feel very happy about it, even though we were told that in fact it was the Buddha. Or if you found Tara in a blue and white gown just like the Virgin Mary. Your responses would be rather mixed, to say the least; you would be getting two different messages. So one can sympathise with their difficulties. Perhaps they need a nice Westerntype Bodhisattva I think that would go down rather well with them! that didn't bear any resemblance to Hindu deities. But, yes, one must be sensitive to these cultural differences and differences of cultural response.

Saddhaloka: Do you know if Ratnadakini had any problem with her name, travelling in India? Because you did mention that one of the meanings of 'dakini' is prostitute. That is obviously going to be something very difficult to get across.

S: The word is used in that sense, but it isn't in very common use. I think you would find it in literature, especially old vernacular literature.

Saddhaloka: It wouldn't be like in if her name was announced on the stage it wouldn't be

S: It wouldn't sound like 'Jewel Prostitute' would sound in English. Oh, no, not at all, no.

Saddhaloka: Ah, so there isn't that problem.

S: No. (Pause.) Yes, the dakinis have done rather well this evening; they should be quite pleased, quite happy.

: Can I just ask a sort of supplementary? which is whether any dakini visualisation practices have been given to Order Members?

S: I don't think so. There is the (Green) Tara practice, which is a very popular one, and now the White Tara practice is coming in; and the Prajnaparamita practice. But not dakinis as such.

: A number of Order Members do the Guru Yoga.

S: That's true, yes. Well, the Red Dakini does come into that. But that is in a rather different way, because one identifies oneself with that dakini in a way for obvious reasons. Righto, then. Oh, I thought you said that was the last one; you meant the last dakini question?

Tejananda: There are only two more. [111]

S: Righto, carry on, then.

Tejananda: Kuladeva, on Padmasambhava's Heruka form.

Kuladeva: You refer to Padmasambhava appearing in the Heruka form in the eight cremation

grounds. In doing so, you describe a yogilike figure. I understand that Padmasambhava receives different names in each of these cremation grounds. Some of these are identical with the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava, which all have slightly differing forms. Does Padmasambhava as Heruka retain the same form in each of these eight cremation grounds, or is it understood that he has the form of the particular manifestation associated with the name which he receives in the particular cremation ground?

S: I am not sure about that. There are many different forms of Padmasambhava. Sometimes a list of 24 is given, isn't it? I think that occurs in *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. There are five Herukas, aren't there, corresponding to the five Buddhas? They are as it were naked versions of the Buddhas. You could even say it is Buddhahood in its 'most ultimate' form, if you can use that expression devoid of all attributes, as it were. Probably it would be neater to have Padmasambhava as having a different Heruka form in each of the cremation grounds, but then the question would arise: how did you arrive at eight? The standard list of Herukas is five, though I do remember seeing somewhere a reference to the six Herukas.

Kuladeva: In fact, there is a Refuge Tree there just behind you, and there are six on there.

S: But even that doesn't make eight, does it?

Kuladeva: No. But it did strike me there was a slight discrepancy between what I understood as the normal form of the Heruka, which has six arms and wings and Three heads, and the yogi that was described.

S: Well, usually it is said, though this is subject to verification, that winged figures are found only in the Nyingmapa tradition, not in the others. So there may be a difference

Kuladeva: So the Herukas in the other traditions wouldn't have wings?

S: On that basis, presumably. I have been told by Tibetan friends that winged figures are peculiar to the Nyingmapa tradition. But a Heruka form of Padmasambhava is presumably just the most ultimate form that one can get, as it were but with a touch of wrathfulness. But to work out all the different permutations and combinations and correlations would be quite a business!

Kuladeva: I understand there is also a yidam and dakini form of Padmasambhava. It is Dorje Tragpa(?) and Sangye Dhangmo(?).

S: Yes. Someone will have to draw up a chart of all these. I must say I don't remember them all, by any means.

: I think most of them are in *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. [112]

S: There are many, many figures there. But the most famous list, of course, is the eight forms. OK: last one?

Tejananda: There is one question and a supplementary after that. Susiddhi has a question on the damaru.

Susiddhi: Bhante, if I find myself in a cremation ground at night, I think one of the last things I would do would be to make a deliberate noise. I think I would be much more likely to be tiptoeing around, looking for the exit! This made me wonder if the damaru is a symbol of fearlessness, because it is a deliberate challenge to any forces around who might want to impede the yogi's progress.

S: It could be. I don't know if you have heard the sound of the damaru, have you?

Susiddhi: Yes.

S: It is very highpitched, it goes taktaktaktaktak, like that. And, yes, it is quite a challenging sound. So it may have the significance that you suggest. It is said that when you approach a cremation ground you can hear the yogis or the Tantrics performing their rites from a great distance.

Susiddhi: It is a rather insistent sound.

S: Yes, it is. Perhaps that is one of the signs of fearlessness, that you are not afraid to make a noise when you are alone in the open on a dark, moonless night. On the other hand, sometimes people do sing or whistle to keep up their spirits, don't they? Whistling in the dark there used to be a song, didn't there, 'Whistling in the Dark'? You are not old enough to remember.

: Just about. 'Whistle a Happy Tune', isn't it?

S: Yes. There is a line of poetry I am trying to remember about this: and whistles in the dark for want of I think it's Dryden.

Ratnaprabha: Absalom and Achitophel? I can't remember

S: Ah! Could be. So, in a way, it works both ways. You can make a noise out of a sense of fearlessness and not caring who is around; and also you can make a noise or sound just to keep your spirits up, to give yourself company, as it were.

Susiddhi: I think if you are going to stay there until the situation is resolved

S: Ha ha, yes!

Susiddhi: making a noise, it [is] a challenge.

[footnote :and whistled as he went, for want of thought. Dryden, Cymon and Iphigenia, 1.1.] [13]

Tejananda: Finally, Surata has a picture to show you, which he wants you to comment on, if you care to.

Surata: I just wondered whether you could identify any of the figures in this one, Bhante. It looks like a sort of cremation ground picture.

S: Oh dear! No, I think some of them are a bit too small for me to identify, anyway. Well, he's got a sword, hasn't he? No, I don't know who they are. Then there is this is it a sixarmed figure? Is it six or fourarmed?

Surata: I think it's a yabyum figure.

S: Yes, it is, yes. There is a snow lion; perhaps that is the skin of a snowlion, and his foot is trampling on one particular figure, a female figure, brown. And there is this dark blue figure sort of clambering up the side of the lotus! And then there are the offerings of the sense organs: ah, and then there is a yogi blowing on a trumpet. Yes, that's interesting. That is a cremation ground, then, isn't it? Perhaps I am not sure, but perhaps that small figure is the actual practitioner; and that big red figure is what is visualised, and that figure itself is inspired by another figure, sort of higher up. Yes, there is a stupa; there is a fire, presumably burning a corpse

Surata: And then there is a body being picked to pieces by a couple of birds, in the middle.

S: Oh yes, that's what it is; I was trying to make out what it was. Yes, that's right. So that is the cremation ground. In the bottom righthand corner, that's the yogi, I imagine, blowing his trumpet and making his Tantric offerings; and presumably that's a dakini dancing on the left. But who he is invoking I couldn't say. It looks like a Heruka figure, doesn't it, with the five skulls, naked and with that upstanding hair? And with the snake is it? no, it isn't snakes, it's just a scarf. And there is the pelt of the snow lion. So that seems to be a Heruka figure; and if it is red, it should be the Padma Heruka, if it follows that. But he has got a sword it must be a sword of wisdom but who the dark blue figure is, is difficult to say. Looks like a she. She has also the five skull headdress. But who is that other figure? I can't see it very clearly, but, yes, if it is a yabyum figure, that must be well, a Dharmakayaleveltype figure? Then there is a Buddha up in the top lefthand corner. That may well be Amitabha, because he looks as though he is meditating. That would link with the Padma family, wouldn't it? Oh: it's a Nepalese figure; 'painted by Sudarshan Suol(?), Nepal'. Hm; if it is a modern painting, it's quite good. f anyone ever does get thangkas from Nepal or while in Nepal, it would be good to ask the local Vajracarya or the artist, if one could, who the figures were, because there are so many of them and some are really very obscure.

Surata: Is there any mixing with Hindu figures as well?

S: I don't think so. It doesn't seem to be so to me at all. But it's Tantric, you can be sure of that! Where did you get it?

Surata: They just appeared in the Brighton Centre bookshop. They come from Copenhagen. Somebody sent them out from Copenhagen.

: It's a Danish Tibetan centre of some sort. [114]

: The Karma Kargyupas have quite a presence there, as far as I know. Some of the other pictures are quite nice.

: There is a nice one of Manjusri with the Five Buddhas, but it's got a picture of Ganesh in the corner which rather spoils the effect!

S: But Ganesh does figure in the Tibetan Tantric tradition oh yes, definitely. Ganapati or Ganesh is one of the three red divinities, the other two being oh dear, it's so many years since I've mentioned these things Amitayus and Gurukwulai(?). They form a definite group. And I've seen very beautiful Ganesh or Ganapati thangka of purely Tibetan Buddhist origin.

: What does he signify?

S: He does represent the power of attraction or fascination. He is usually called Ganapati Hridaya in the Tibetan Tantra Ganapati Heart, or Heart of Ganapati, or Ganapati the Heart.

Cittapala: Would he be depicted in a different way to

S: No, elephantheaded, but always red in colour.

Cittapala: But in things like

S: That I can't remember. But always red in colour.

Abhaya: There is a picture of him in that book there

Cittapala: I've got a carving of Ganesh which I picked up in Bali.

S: Ah. Well, that's probably more of Hindu origin probably. One can't be sure, because there are traces of Buddhism in Bali. But in India, of course, he is definitely a Hindu deity, one of the sons of Shiva and Parvati. There is a whole mythology around him. He rides on a rat; I don't think you see the rat in the Tibetan tradition. He is regarded as a remover of obstacles, much invoked by businessmen.

Ratnaprabha: This one is presumably definitely a Hindu version.

S: Yes, that looks like a Hindu version. Oh yes, and he's got his spouse. I don't remember who she was or is. Yes, that is a Hindu version. It might be of Nepalese origin.

Ratnaprabha: The book is on the Himalayas, so that might be where

S: Mm. But to me he does look more Hindu than Buddhist. Oh, there's the rat! Yes, to one side; that's his mouth, his rahana(?). I wonder if Some are definitely Buddhist. It's not impossible there is a white Ganapati in Tibetan or Nepalese Buddhism, but as far as my knowledge goes he is always red. But in Nepal you do get a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism, there is no doubt. It's a quite late version, because his lady is dressed in sort of local dress, almost.ight. I expect you will all be dreaming of dakinis tonight! [115]

13 December: SYMBOLISM OF THE OFFERINGS AND SELFSACRIFICE

Tejananda: We've got only seven questions on the Symbolism of Offerings and Self-Sacrifice, starting with one from Kuladeva about the translation of the verses that you quoted in the lecture.

Kuladeva: It's just a point of information, Bhante. Who was the Tibetan teacher who helped you to translate those verses?

Sangharakshita: That was Dardo Rinpoche. (Pause). Just that?

Tejananda: from me. It's about Recollection of Death. It really pertains more to yesterday's lecture. I believe, according to Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga, the two meditation practices which are suited to all temperaments are the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Recollection of Death. On a number of occasions Mitras have asked me about their doing a death recollection of some kind, sometimes after reading Buddhaghosa. How do you feel about Mitras and even, perhaps, regular Friends, doing this kind of practice?

S: Do many Mitras read Buddhaghosa?

Tejananda: Oh, a few.

S: Presumably in a selection perhaps in Conze's Buddhist Meditation. Well, it's always good to be mindful of the fact that one will die. Doing a specific practice is another matter. I think one needs to be quite sure that there is a firm foundation of Mindfulness and Metta in some ways, perhaps, especially Metta, including metta towards oneself, perhaps paradoxically; because one's recollection of death should not represent a negative attitude towards oneself in a purely psychological sense. But do many Mitras in fact want to do a practice of this sort? What is 'many'? 'Many' is a relative term.

Tejananda: Well, I have experienced a few say three in the last year have mentioned it to me.

S: In any particular connection, whether on retreat, or anything of that sort, or just ?

Tejananda: I think in at least one case after reading Buddhaghosa; in other cases after hearing tapes of you talking about that

S: If someone is thinking seriously on the subject of death, one does expect a degree of seriousness from them; it is not an idea, much less still a practice, that one can just play around with. There must be a sort of overall seriousness in their approach. I would suggest caution. It is very difficult to generalise, because one would need to know the particular person, the particular Mitra. I think, at the very least, one should not accede to their request immediately. They may just forget about it, which would suggest that it was just a feeling of [116] passing interest. Let them bring their question up at least a couple of times before you start discussing it really seriously with them.

Tejananda: The suggestion that I made, I think in one case at least, was I didn't recommend that they actually do any meditation on death, but I said: 'If you want to think about it, maybe just find a Song of Milarepa or something like that, which has that kind of feeling about it, and just read that or think about it.'

S: People do sometimes have an impulse to take up a particular practice, but it is no more than an impulse, and it can exhaust itself and they can forget about it quite quickly. You need to be quite sure that they are serious. That applies to any practice, really, doesn't it? I do get quite a few requests from Mitras to take up a visualisation practice. It is almost as though, in some cases, they think: 'Order Members do these things, why shouldn't we?' It isn't very often that I think someone really needs to do it. I usually suggest that as a start they strengthen their foundation of Mindfulness and Metta.

Tejananda: Now a question from Abhaya. It's a question from Aloka, actually, about the Mandala practice.

Abhaya: Aloka says: Since doing the Offering the Mandala practice, I have been thinking of working on a simplified or perhaps just less Indian version of it: that is, using different symbols for the offerings. That is all he says; I assume he means: 'What do you think about it?'

S: Well, there is no harm in trying. One can see what Aloka comes up with, and whether it would be useful to see the Mandala in those sort of terms. If one wanted to take the modern scientific model, how would one construct that? I suppose one would start off with infinite space and scatter a few billion galaxies through that. No doubt Aloka has other ideas.

Tejananda: I suppose you could use the traditional form, with the rings and the rice, but give a different significance to the rice that you throw into it, in your own mind.

S: A different significance to what?

Tejananda: Well, you said in the lecture that different bits of rice are given to represent the different aspects of things, like the Auspicious Minister and

S: It is everything, practically, instead of having a model of that particular item, you just place a few grains of rice.

Tejananda: So presumably you could mentally substitute something which meant something more to you than the Precious Minister or

S: Yes, indeed. Well, Mrs. Thatcher, for instance, I suppose! Some people would be quite pleased to offer her up! (Laughter.) Or else you could offer up Neil Kinnock you have to be impartial

Ratnaprabha: Can you think of any other Western model universes which might be useful, perhaps, like Dante's? [117]

S: Well, the Ptolemaic, of course, on which Dante's is based; but it doesn't quite carry conviction to the modern mind.

Ratnaprabha: Not even if one was aware of it as a symbolic universe, as it were?

S: Well, then, one might as well stick with the traditional Buddhist symbolism. Most people are not particularly familiar with the Ptolemaic system, are they? even with Dante's use of

that?

Ratnaprabha: I am thinking of his Mountain of Purgatory and Hell in the centre, and then the Heavens in successive spheres above.

S: Right. I suppose, in a sense, it is more traditional to the West, but then we have lost our continuity with that, I suppose, really, haven't we, since Renaissance times? I don't know; if people would like to try, I have no objection. If they could report back on the results, whether it did bring the practice more alive so far as they were concerned, did make it more real.

Tejananda: Question No. 4 is from Kulananda about offerings.

Kulananda: In the tape, in the Tantric section of the lecture, you list three different categories: the inner, the outer and the secret. Could you say more about these categories, and what you mean by inner, what is outer, and what is secret, and why?

S: In a sense, I don't know that there is much more to be said.

Kulananda: I think it is more in terms of 'Why is the secret called the secret?' because the things start seeming pretty esoteric when you start talking about the outer offerings anyway. Why the labels?

S: I suppose you could say 'secret' meant more inner than the inner. I am not sure what the Tibetan term was. Whereabouts is that?

Kulananda: About twothirds of the way through. (Pause; searching.)

S: Offerings of one's own self? is it after that?

Kulananda: No, before that.

Cittapala: Just at the beginning of the Vajrayana section.

S: Ah; there is the Meru; where does that come?

Kulananda: No, it's a bit before that.

S: Ah, here we are. 'Internal offerings are represented by the so-called Flower of the Senses' that is the skull cup containing the heart for touch, the tongue for taste, the nose for smell, a pair of eyes for sight and a pair of ears for hearing; and these are all artistically arranged to form a sort of flower. So these are the internal offerings the offerings of the five senses. I suppose they are called internal inasmuch as the senses are forms of perception, which is subjective rather than objective. [118] Then the external offerings: a cemetery flower, the incense of singed flesh, a lamp of human fat; well, these are separate from oneself, so they are objective, or rather they are external. And then the secret offerings: the flesh, heart, blood, brain, entrails I suppose they could be secret because they are not seen; they are usually hidden inside the body that is one possible explanation. I say 'It is not enough to dedicate one's senses. The Tantra says, as it were, that one must give with one's very guts.' It is not even just the internal as opposed to the external; it goes even deeper than that, and

presumably the term esoteric just covers that. It is not esoteric in the sense that we usually use the word. Radical, one could say.

Kulananda: It all seems pretty radical.

S: Yes! You have seen representations of these, I take it? I think they are sometimes depicted in thangkas.

Ratnaprabha: Would Tantric practitioners have simply visualised offering the secret offerings, or would they literally have tried to find these human

S: No, they can be modelled in dough.

Ratnaprabha: I know you mention that the internal offerings are modelled in dough, but this is also the case, is it, with the secret offerings?

S: Oh yes, and you can also have paintings of them, maybe a painting on a small card or something like that. And, of course, one can visualise them.

Cittapala: So, Bhante, when you refer to the very distinctive smell of human flesh singeing, I think you use the word that isn't associated directly with the offering, that is just a memory which you would have associated withation?

S: Presumably, yes. I suppose if you have a vivid imagination you could actually smell it!

Tejananda: I think Sarvamitra might have a related question.

Sarvamitra: I was wondering, since we don't have any wrathful deities on the Shrines on public occasions, we wouldn't actually do any of these external, internal or secret offerings or offerings of amrita on our?

S: No. The normal practice is that public worship, so to speak, is of the peaceful divinities, or divinities in their peaceful form, and the worship of the wrathful deities is usually for small circles of initiated people.

Cittapala: How does that square with quite a common practice in the FWBO of having the wrathful form of Vajrapani on the shrine at public shrines?

S: He seems to have been an exception, because whenever in Tibet you see the three Family Protectors depicted and they are very common indeed you always get the wrathful Vajrapani, even though it is very public. But you usually get them in a quite as it were ordinary way; maybe you get the three together over a doorway or something of that kind. There is no question, usually, of actual worship or offerings. You often see them on the stones of the wayside large boulders like the Om Mani Padme Hum. [119]

Tejananda: Now a question from Priyananda on Bodhisattva Pujas.

Priyananda: This is connected to Sarvamitra's question. Regarding the Pujas are devoted to a particular Bodhisattva or archetypal Buddha, to what extent is it appropriate to have these for

people other than Order Members? Of course, these are the peaceful forms.

S: Say that again. I am not quite sure what you are getting at.

Priyananda: Pujas devoted to a particular Bodhisattva or archetypal Buddha to what extent is it appropriate to have these for people other than Order Members?

S: Ah, right, yes. I am not sure. I think one has to be very careful, because quite a lot of explanation would be needed. Some people, of course, might just take such Pujas as pleasant, colourful occasions and think no more about it. But others might ask questions; they might want to know, 'Why do you have Pujas of this sort?' It might seem, as it were, quite polytheistic; it might seem to have nothing to do with Buddhism. It certainly would have nothing, or very little, to do, say, with the Theravada, which might be the form of Buddhism they were most familiar with, or represent the sort of terms in which they saw Buddhism. I think one should be very careful about that; resist the temptation just to do something different, or try to liven up the proceedings. Probably Mitras shouldn't be introduced to these things until, perhaps, they have even asked for ordination and are on preordination or selection retreats. Such Pujas do feature very prominently on ordination retreats, as I think you all know; and those Bodhisattva and similar Pujas have been getting better and better, undoubtedly, and people get a lot from them. But I think one must be careful not to introduce people to them prematurely.

Priyananda: Does that apply to a Padmasambhava Puja? because that is a semipublic festival at most centres, Padmasambhava Day.

S: Well, of course, Padmasambhava is a historical figure at least, the nucleus of the figure is historical so people can connect with it to some extent in that way. He can be presented as a great teacher. He did have the historic function of helping to introduce Buddhism into Tibet, or even being mainly responsible for the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, initially. So it is possible to see him in that sort of way. But what are you to do with Manjughosa or Avalokitesvara or Tara?

Saddhaloka: I do get the impression that Pujas dedicated to Bodhisattvas or Buddhas are common on a lot of longer retreats, and generally seem very well received. I think it is almost a standard practice.

S: One would have to look into that; but it could be that, on a retreat, especially a longer one, one would have more opportunities of talking to people and clearing up any difficulties or reservations, which would not be the case, probably, if you were to hold such Pujas at a public centre, where that might be someone's first contact with Buddhism and with the FWBO, just that very evening, and they might think: 'This is not just for me.' It might seem even very ethnic and very cultural, rather than having anything to do with Buddhism or the spiritual life. And it could put someone completely off if he or she was there for the first time. So I think centres have to be quite careful, and one should perhaps be quite careful even on retreats, and not introduce things that relatively new people might [120] feel were rather way out, as it were. Because most people, when they think of Buddhism, without knowing very much about it, think in terms perhaps of meditation; think even in terms of rationality, simplicity, ethics; they don't think in terms of Puja and worshipping colourful Bodhisattva figures possibly with extra arms and legs and heads.

Satyaraja: At what point do you think the Sevenfold Puja should be introduced to people who are new to the Movement?

S: I really don't know. I think centres have to decide for themselves. I think certainly not for beginners; regulars, perhaps? I don't know what the general practice is. Could any chairmen who may be present speak up?

Abhaya: When I was working at a public centre regularly, we used to introduce them at weekend retreats sometimes, at the end of a weekend retreat.

S: Yes. Again, where you have an opportunity of talking to people, if necessary, or even having an introductory explanation. Any other centre?

: At the LBC, I don't know if it's still current, but there used to be a sort of bridging class, intermedia[te], an intermedia[te] section where people could be introduced to the chanting, as a preparation for going on to the regulars' class where they would do the Sevenfold Puja.

S: Good, yes.

Tejananda: Yes, in Bristol we had intermedia[te] classes and only introduced the Basic Puja at retreats.

S: Is the Basic Puja still used? (Murmurs of assent.) Because I never get any information or reports about these sort of things. It is usually about practical or organisational, financial, matters; other matters don't usually appear in minutes and so on.

Tejananda: We use the Threefold Puja on beginners' retreats

Dharmapriya: We have found generally we have to be very careful with the Puja, and also very careful with communication exercises; the exception being retreats of more than a day's length, and there we have actually found that there is as much resistance to the Basic Puja as to the Sevenfold Puja.

S: Ah. That's interesting.

Dharmapriya: We have had the experience very often of doing so called study on the Sevenfold Puja on these retreats to clear up misunderstandings, and then we say: 'Let's look at the Threefold Puja; that describes it a bit more prosaically.' And they say: 'Oh, why don't we do this?' But our experience is, if we actually introduce it by the Threefold Puja, we get exactly the same reactions against the Threefold Puja.

S: That is quite interesting, yes.

Dharmapriya: And as we prefer the Sevenfold Puja and we are more wholehearted in it, we do that. [121]

S: Anybody else had a similar experience?

: In Finland I think I have tended to notice the same that if people react to a Puja it's to

S: Because the Basic Puja is actually designed for Finland, for Helsinki, originally; I think it was at Vajrabodhi's request. It was meant for translation into Finnish and then got into wider circulation.

: The way we introduce Pujas and that side of things now is we try to incorporate that into our Buddhism course a little bit, and each evening just a little bit more and a little bit more, like chanting, and then the short Puja, and then the long Puja.

S: Do you find that most people eventually do find the Puja in principle acceptable?

: Yes, I think so.

S: It is an initial resistance, or is it something that persists and for some people has definite rational grounds?

: Rational grounds?

S: Mm.

: Irrational grounds, yes.

Tejananda: At least one person at Bristol put up a very, very strong resistance against the Puja for quite a long time, but he eventually was converted at the last Ordination Request Retreat,

Ratnaprabha: In Cambridge we virtually never have Pujas except in the community.

S: I suppose at Cambridge you have a lot of intellectuals?

Kulananda: No, at Cambridge we don't have a centre.

S: Ah, simply that, is it?

Kulananda: Yes, I am sure when we have a centre we will have Pujas.

S: We will see how the intellectuals take to it, then.

Kulananda: I don't expect there will be a problem with the people we get.

S: You could say that you were High Church Buddhists, or High Sangha Buddhists! They will understand that.

Kulananda: It's interesting, I was talking Professor Gombrich two days ago, and he said he had got the impression that the FWBO were Protestant Buddhists, because they did so much work in the world. I said: 'I have just come back from a three months' solitary retreat where I

was doing Tantric visualisations.' He said: 'Oh well, maybe you are moving a little up church, then!' I said: 'I think we are Jewish Buddhists!' [122]

S: You should have said that we had solitary retreats and so on long before we had activities out there in the world.

: Could I just come back to Pujas what you were saying earlier about Bodhisattva Pujas? That makes me wonder about generally using the mantras at the end of the Puja in the Centre. Do you feel this is advisable, or not?

S: I tend to think that if people object to any part of the Sevenfold Puja they will object to all, and vice versa. If it isn't so, then the matter can be further discussed; if you find, for instance, people willing to accept everything of the Sevenfold Puja but not the mantras, well, then one can consider perhaps dropping the mantras. But is there any actual evidence for that? Has anybody ever said: 'I really like the Sevenfold Puja, but I wish we didn't have those mantras at the end'?

Dharmapriya: The other way around: they like the mantras, they like the chanting, but they don't like the text. They don't like the words.

S: Ah. This is Germany?

Dharmapriya: This is Germany, the general

S: I take it it's nothing to do with the translation?

Dharmapriya: No, it is partly to do with the flowery language. We have had one accusation that the flowers are nonegalitarian! It's the equivalent of

S: Oh! I don't think I've ever come across an egalitarian flower. In what way are flowers nonegalitarian? This is quite interesting.

Dharmapriya: I'm not big on flowers [they say] these little wild ones that grow in the fields, these are the sort of ones we should have.

S: Wild flowers. Well, in India, lotuses grow wild. And mandaravas you can say are wild, and hyacinths! (Laughter.) We had other objections from Finland, didn't we? Probably long before your time. Because some people, I heard it was reported by Vajrabodhi objected to saying 'With mandarava, blue lotus and jasmine' because they were not actually offering those things, and they said therefore they were telling lies. Also the same with the golden what is it? (Voices prompting.) Yes, the golden lamps festooned with flowers. They said they weren't actually offering those things, and so if they were to say that they were offering those things they would be telling lies and breaking the Precepts.

: There was also the bit about 'standing before them', because they weren't actually standing!
.....

S: What's the word for imagination in Finnish? (Laughter.)

: Maybe I should introduce it!

S: But that is a thing of the past, isn't it? (Laughter.) I mean that sort of literalism? Oh. Oh, it's like that, is it? You have your work cut out, don't you? It's the other extreme from the Indian mind. An Indian thinks nothing of offering ten million lotuses on the spot; they do it every day! But the Finnish attitude - [123] to look at it more positively does show a very worthy preoccupation with veracity, of which I am sure Dr. Johnson would have approved!

Il right, then, let's carry on.

Tejananda: Well, this is more or less the last question, from Saddhaloka about the Chod.

Saddhaloka: In the discussion on the practices of self-sacrifice, from external offerings of the Tantra through the secret offerings to the Chod practice, the consensus in discussing it was that they are not practices that we could realistically see ourselves doing or be generally practised in our cultural setting, but we did recognise the great importance of the spiritual principles behind them. Do you have any thoughts or reflections on how these principles might be applied, either by innovation, extension or intensification of our practices within the FWBO?

S: I think one could do the Chod right, especially on solitary retreat, and in a place like Guhyaloka. You don't literally need to have a tent. But the visualisations one could certainly do.

Saddhaloka: I think we actually took it that they were done literally, not just visualised and using clay or dough models.

S: But you visualise the dakini figure, don't you, cutting off your head? You don't do it literally not even with dough! You could do those visualisations. I don't think much in the way of modification would be really required.

Kulananda: [I have been] reading Alexandra David-Neel's book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* as an account of her coming across a Chod ritual, and she describes the practitioner in a state of acute fear and panic. It occurred to me, thinking about that, that people in that cultural context have a belief in spirits and in demons which we do not, and are therefore likely to experience these things much more acutely than we are. We could visualise, by a sort of effort of creative imagination and will, spirits coming to partake of our corpse, but we couldn't believe it in quite the same way, I tend to think, that someone with that cultural background could. I wonder, therefore, if it would have the same efficacy in this cultural background?

S: Well, one could only try it and see. Perhaps one couldn't say without having actually tried it. Because, though we are as it were civilised, we have only been civilised for a few thousand years, and before that we were just primitive man, savage man, with all sorts of fears, all sorts of strange beliefs, which perhaps do lurk beneath the surface of our minds in some form or other. I would suggest that a few people perhaps try it and then we might have a better idea. I think, even if we didn't have that sort of belief, the practice would certainly be useful to quite an extent. Otherwise you might say 'What about the Bodhisattvas themselves?' Western Buddhists, with the best will in the world, find it difficult to believe in their

existence in quite the same way as Tibetan Buddhists or Chinese Buddhists or Japanese Buddhists do. None the less, we do visualise them, we do our best. So perhaps we have to approach the Chod practice in that sort of way, in that sort of spirit.

Tejananda: Presumably the strictures that you mentioned with regard to doing the Recollection of Death would apply even more so to doing the Chod rite. [124]

S: Oh yes, indeed! But Guhyaloka would be a good place to do something of that sort. You could perhaps even literally pitch a little tent.

Ratnaprabha: What is the tent for?

S: I suppose it is just as a shelter, really. But I think if you are in a tent you are much nearer to nature, to the elements, than you would be if you were in a house. The protection is much more flimsy. You could no doubt do it even more beneficially in the open air. But I imagine that a tent was prescribed because, in Tibet, it would no doubt be very difficult to do those practices in the open air at night, just for purely climatic reasons. You might freeze to death.

Dharmapriya: Even though you introduced Chod under the theme of self-sacrifice and offering oneself up, it struck me, when you were describing it on the tape, very strongly as a kind of Tantric version of the Decomposition of the Corpse meditation.

S: In a way it is, yes.

Dharmapriya: It seemed probably, looking at it from the outside, to really go for the same thing.

S: It is much more colourful and in a way appealing than the Ten Stages in the Decomposition of the Corpse. In a way it is, to use that term, much more positive. One could no doubt combine the two: do one first and then the other.

Side 2

Cittapala: Bhante, do you have the instructions for the preliminaries and so forth, which you didn't describe in the lecture, for somebody who wished to take up the practice?

S: I can't remember, actually. But it isn't difficult to get hold of the information. I would certainly encourage anyone who was so inclined to do the practice, preferably at Guhyaloka. It is a relatively simple practice; doesn't involve a great deal of visualisation, by Tibetan standards.

Kuladeva: Would you suggest, under such circumstances, that the person is actually on solitary rather than, say, living in a community or otherwise being on retreat with other

people?

S: Oh, I think a solitary retreat would be much better. Though, in the case of Guhyaloka, the community would be within hail, as it were, which might be advisable until we were better acquainted with this type of practice.

: Have you ever practised it yourself?

S: No, I haven't, but I must say it quite appeals to me! Maybe Guhyaloka will turn into a centre for the practice of that type of thing. Well, that's it! Oh. Did you not work very hard today, or was it quite simple and straightforward? I thought there might be a lot of questions. Or did you have a sort of halfday off, or ? No? Ah. [125]

: Bhante, I've got a picture, that card we were talking about yesterday with the elephant figure in. I thought you might like to look at it. There are some other ones as well.

S: Right, good. Yes, a Wheel of Life. Eights of Padmasambhava. It's rather an elaborate one, isn't it? Painter unknown. White Tara. Yes, they are rather good, aren't they? I haven't seen these before. Do I see a slight trace of Western influence in that waterfall and all that? The legend of the valiant Katmandu, painted by Prem Mancitrakara(?). Yes, they are quite good. Righto, then..... [126]

14 December: SYMBOLISM OF COLOUR AND MANTRA

Tejananda: Tonight we've got 13 questions on the Symbolism of Colour and Mantra Sound. The first one is from Cittapala, about the Sanskrit alphabet.

Cittapala: In the lecture, and also in the Manjughosa studhi(?) sadhana seminar, you refer to the Sanskrit alphabet as having 64 letters. I have only been able to find 16 vowels and 33 consonants and semivowels, which makes 49. I was wondering whether you could resolve this apparent difference.

S: I can't without checking up. I would have to go and look at the dictionary. I must have got that number from somewhere, obviously. Yes, there are the vowels and the consonants. Also various consonants, aren't there, like ri, which is reckoned separately. There are two ris, in fact did you include those?

Cittapala: Well, I had the alphabet from the sadhana here, and that has got the same number.....

S: Ah, they have got the ris. There must be some reason for that 64. It is all so long ago I just don't remember. I will have to check up and see.

Tejananda: Is it possible that 64 includes certain syllables that are not included in the normal Sanskrit [alphabet]?

S: That is quite possible. But then, of course, you have got, as you probably know, what they call the conjoint consonants, but there are far more there are a couple of hundred of those. It could be that they do sometimes reckon, if they want 64 letters as it were for a certain purpose, they could include the first 20, perhaps, of the conjoint consonants. But again there must have been some reason for the 64.

Cittapala: In the Manjughosa stuthi(?) it refers to the 64fold Brahma voice. I was wondering whether that might have any bearing on it.

S: That is quite possible. But I would need to check my sources to be sure of that. There are also 64 Bodhisattva Precepts in the Tibetan tradition, so it makes you think, doesn't it? Yes, it requires further research.

Tejananda: Question No. 2 is from Ratnaprabha, and it concerns the Rite of Fascination and neoplatonism.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, you mention neoplatonism in connection with the Rite of Fascination, because of their concern with ideal beauty

S: Did I mention neoplatonism?

Ratnaprabha: You did, yes.

S: Ah. That was an aside; it is not in my notes. [127]

Ratnaprabha: If your ideal is expressed in terms of beauty and fascination, is there not the danger of failing to ensure the welfare of others, since welfare is not an explicit aspect of your ideal?

S: Well, I suppose you could say the same of truth, couldn't you? That it [thought] of the ultimate goal in terms of truth would be open, conceivably, to the same objection, wouldn't it?

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: I suppose one could argue that if you had realised the goal as beauty, or thought of it as beauty, you would be in a state of as it were delight; you would be in a state of happiness, and if you were in that state of happiness you would presumably be much more likely to do good to others; because I think usually one does harm to others only when you are in a miserable, frustrated, angry sort of state; which you wouldn't be if you were delighting in that beauty. Also there is the point that it is not that you think of the goal as beauty, in the sense of the goal conceived of as something quite separate and distinct; it is the only as it were locus of beauty; you begin to see beauty everywhere, or see everything as beautiful, and therefore take delight in everything, in everybody, and therefore act positively towards them. here is also the point that, if you develop metta, you see people as so to speak beautiful. If you dislike someone you will tend to see them as ugly, even though in a sense they are quite

goodlooking. Similarly, if you look with metta you can see even someone who normally would be regarded as ugly as quite beautiful. I don't think, therefore, that in practice, thinking of the goal in terms of beauty does result in a selfcentred or even a nonaltruistic attitude; not in practice. If one thinks of beauty in a sort of selfcentred, pseudoaesthetic way, there may be that danger, but I would say that that probably isn't a real appreciation of beauty.

Ratnaprabha:I suppose that was what was at the back of my mind: I was thinking of the aesthete who, perhaps, has a rather supercilious attitude towards others, and simply enjoys the aesthetic aspects of his environment in a passive way.

S: In that case, you are using beauty to satisfy yourself, which is not really taking delight in beauty as it were for its own sake.

Ratnaprabha:So there was no hint of this in, say, neoplatonism, as far as you can tell no hint of this aesthete's attitude?

S: Well, this raises all sorts of questions. Neoplatonism was not an overtly altruistic tradition. They didn't as it were encourage people to go around doing good. But the neoplatonic appreciation of beauty was certainly not a question of aesthetic selfindulgence. (Pause.) I was just trying to think of a reference to an apparently quite famous passage in the writings somewhere of Dean Inge, who wrote some quite wellknown words about the hardness of the Greeks: 'the Greeks not being sentimental' and I think there is some discussion, initiated by him, as to the extent to which this 'hardness' of the Greeks also finds expression in neoplatonism. The ancient Greeks were prepared to tolerate slavery; they didn't really think very much about it. They didn't want to be slaves themselves, but they didn't seem to see anything particularly wrong in enslaving other people. They didn't seem to see anything particularly wrong in female infanticide. So there was an element of hardness, some scholars argued, in the Greek character, the [128] Greek approach to life. They were not sentimentalists, and that is reflected in their philosophies, too. I would not say that the neoplatonists, for instance, were nonaltruistic. They had a rather severe conception of altruism. They perhaps would have asked themselves how did one really benefit other people? Did you necessarily benefit them by making them, say, richer or by improving their mundane condition? They would have argued that the greatest benefit you could confer was to remove their illusions and open their eyes to the truth, and that not many people were capable of that. In fact, you couldn't benefit many people. A lot of people were incapable of being truly benefited which to us seems a rather hard attitude. We like to feel, as popular Mahayana Buddhism apparently liked to feel, that everybody can be benefited; all you have got to do is just hand out Enlightenment to them, right, left and centre. Then everybody will be happy, everybody will be Enlightened. I think the Mahayana sometimes is a little soft in some of its more popular expressions. So if there is a seeming lack of altruism in neoplatonism I don't think it is due to the neoplatonists thinking of the Goal in terms of beauty though they do not, as I explained the other day, think of the One as the same thing as beauty or the beautiful. It is more on account of the general attitude of Greek civilisation and culture, even Greek philosophy, in which to some extent they share. Plotinus himself was, it would seem, a quite highly altruistic person. He did teach; but also he was very highly regarded as a guardian of minors that is to say, quite a lot of his friends left their children or their dependants in his care; he was entrusted with the management of their property, and he had an extremely good reputation in this respect for bringing up those orphans very well and taking great care of their property, and handing it over to them when they reached their

majority. Not all Romans he was living in Rome, of course were as honest or as careful as that. So Plotinus himself does seem to have had a strongly altruistic side to his character, to have been a highly altruistic person; but none the less he did not advocate altruism in quite the Mahayana way, or rather the popular Mahayana way, or in the way that sometimes is done in the modern West.

Kulananda: I wonder if it would be possible to pursue neoplatonic beauty without at the same time pursuing ethical beauty?

S: Well, Greek is in this respect an ambiguous language, because the Greeks apparently spoke of a beautiful action as well as of a beautiful picture or a beautiful face. I think, for them, the beautiful was an ethical category. They did not make quite the distinction that we seem to make. In Pali, of course, subha means pure as well as beautiful. Even in English, we sometimes speak of a beautiful action, don't we? perhaps a little selfconsciously or a little artificially, but we do, I think, sometimes speak in that way.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, even though you make reference here to beauty possibly as the Goal, and in the next lecture in the series you talk of Ratnasambhava in a sense as the Buddha of beauty and beauty crops up all the time in Buddhism it seems that these are the only two references I can think of where beauty is posited as the Goal. Are there other references? Only your two

S: Well, I don't beauty is posited as the Goal, or I don't think the Goal is spoken of in terms of beauty in, certainly, the Pali scriptures. But don't forget that there is a certain, what shall I say? ambiguity, in a sense. You probably all know of the three Vimokshadvaras(?) or Vimokshamukhas the three Doors to Liberation. So what are those doors? [129]

Voices: Emptiness, imageless, directionless.

S: That's right. So you have got, corresponding to those, the three viparyayas, haven't you? But there are sets in which you also have asubha as, so to speak, a viparyaya; so the positive counterpart of that, corresponding to the vimoksamukhas, would be subha. So subha ought really to be reckoned as a Door of Liberation but, as far as I know, it isn't; so I have sometimes wondered why. That is something I keep meaning to follow up, but I haven't yet done it. Because if the conditioned is dukkha, anicca, anatta, and asubha, one would have thought that the Unconditioned was not only anatta, animitta, apranihita, but also subha. It would seem to be logical. There may be a reason why subha is not regarded as a vimoksamukha, but I can't really see, myself, any reason. But you see what I am getting at? Subha is the third of the eight vimoksas, anyway, isn't it? When you reach the third vimoksa, according to the texts, you say 'Subhati! Oh, it's beautiful!' So it does indicate a sort of following of that line. But, as I say, this is something I haven't looked into systematically. As far as I remember it is a long time since I read these things immediately after the subha vimoksa, comes the first of the arupa dhyanas. So perhaps there could be more of a place for subha, or beauty in the sense of subha, in Buddhism than it has as yet been given. In the Vedanta, usually, they speak in terms of satchitananda the Absolute or Brahman is satchitananda that is to say, being, consciousness and bliss. But in the Saivasidantra(?) of the South, they have another trinity which is nearly as well known, and that is satyam, sivam and sundaram; satyam meaning truth, sivam meaning goodness, and sundaram meaning beauty; which is a bit like the Western trinity of Goodness, Truth and Beauty. But sundaram is

definitely mentioned. o it could be that in Buddhism subha ought to occupy that kind of place. Perhaps Buddhists have not made enough of subha; they have been too afraid of its worldly aspects, as it were.

Chakkhupala:Coming back to the eight vimoksas, if memory serves, the next as it were level of freedom is gained by relinquishing attachment to a lower level of freedom.

S: Right.

Chakkhupala:So the place of subha, subhati, there it is as if that seems to put it in the context of rupaloka experience

S: It seems to, yes.

Chakkhupala:A higher dhyanic experience.

S: But I would say it is not necessarily confined there. Even though, in that scheme of the eight vimoksas, it does come there, it is located in the rupaloka, but could it not be that you could continue to think of more and more refined forms of beauty? It is as though beauty, as characteristic of the rupaloka, is associated with form that is, the subtle form, the archetypal form of that particular set of levels. But why should you not continue to think of even the higher levels, in a sense, as being levels of beauty? Could you not even say that infinite space had a beauty of its own? Could you not speak of infinite consciousness as having a beauty of its own? Or is beauty definitely limited to that which has form? [130]

Chakkhupala:Could it be more that beauty is somehow part of the language of object? And if the object is becoming very definitely attenuated, the language of beauty fails?

S: But then the language of object, at least in a subtle form, continues, really, until Enlightenment itself, doesn't it? Plato definitely says you can speak in terms of moral beauty; he speaks, I think in the Symposium, of a progression from beautiful forms to beautiful characters and beautiful qualities, and almost beautiful truths. Mathematicians speak of an 'elegant' demonstration, don't they? Elegant comes quite close to beautiful. It is used metaphorically, but then what expression is not used metaphorically? Because we do as it were personify Enlightenment in Buddhism, don't we, in the form of a Buddha or Bodhisattva? So we are still thinking of the Goal in terms of the beautiful. But it is definitely a beauty of form, at least in the way that we experience it or conceive of it, and perhaps we have to go beyond that; more the beauty of the Bodhisattva's qualities or attitude, not just concentrate on the beautiful willowy figure and the lustrous eyes and flowing black hair and beautiful smile and all the rest of it.

Dharmapriya:Without wishing to restrict myself to a quote such as 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder', our experience of beauty is very much a subjective and internal experience. Would you not say there is a link between beauty and, say, ananda in the progression of anandas, or even just in lower meditational experience the priti and the sukha is very similar to beauty experience?

S: Right, that's true.

Dharmapriya: And that goes well beyond form. You go finer, obviously.

S: I was just trying to think of yes, I've got it now, Thomas Aquinas's definition of beauty. It is quite a famous one. He says: The beautiful is that which, when seen, delights. So, yes, it comes very close to ananda. It is that kind of form, if you like, which delights. And you can have an experience of delight, apart from an experience of beauty in the artistic sense, presumably. But the element of delight seems to be common. You could argue I don't know whether this is very logical that whatever you delight in is beautiful.

: So mahasukha?

S: Mahasukha, yes. Mahasukha and mahasubha.

: It does make it quite different, thinking of it's easy to respond to the Samboghakaya forms of the Buddha as beautiful, but to try and think of the Dharmakaya, as it were, the qualities of Buddhahood on that level, as beautiful, it's very difficult to make that

S: I suppose that just reflects our own limitations: that we associate beauty with the material world, therefore with form even in quite a gross sense; and we have to imagine Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in that sort of way before we can really delight in them. It is difficult to delight in what to us is an abstraction, unless perhaps you are a mathematician. [131] The Theravada, on the whole, seems to be very suspicious of beauty. [That is] one of the reasons why it virtually bans music. And monks are not really supposed to decorate their cells with frescoes. The Theravada tells a very approving story of a bhikkhu who occupied a cell for 40 years I forget the details of the story, but anyway, someone came to see him and made some reference to the frescoes on the wall of his cell, and he said: 'What frescoes?' because, in the whole of the 40 years he had occupied that cell, he had never raised his eyes to these frescoes. So this is the sort of attitude that is highly approved of in official Theravadin circles. It is a bit like the story about St. Bernard, when he was travelling from either France or Germany down into Italy, and he never bothered to look at the Alps; he was so busy reciting his prayers! He considered them, apparently, a temptation. But you can see, yes, it is in a way dangerous to be too susceptible to beauty, because you usually experience beauty very definitely on the kamaloka level; but none the less, despite the danger, we have, I think, to acknowledge the fact that there are higher forms of beauty that can be even spiritually inspiring. And probably the aesthetic element in life is very important. I am using 'aesthetic' now in a more positive sense. Perhaps we had better move on, as there are quite a few questions.

Tejananda: Now a question from me on Going for Refuge as green. You say in the lecture that green is, among other things, the colour of Going for Refuge. I wonder why we don't put more emphasis on this in the Order. In ordinations, the colour white is emphasised, including the white kesa. In my study group, we speculated that, in so far as white is associated with purity, it relates more to the Precepts than to the Going for Refuge. Maybe having a green kesa would be more appropriate, and also be a way of further emphasising the primacy of Going for Refuge.

S: Oh dear, that means another 20 years of discussion! (Laughter). We haven't yet got ourselves a generally agreed robe, I think. I really don't know; I really don't know. I see the logic of it. But you could argue in other ways: yes, I have said there that green is the colour

of Going for Refuge because green is associated with safety, with Mother Nature and is calm and restful and free from danger, and all that; but you could associate Going for Refuge with red, because you need that fiery, blazing energy, and that passion. I am just trying to think how one could associate it with yellow! but, yes, it is a very creative experience, isn't it? And blue: yes, when you Go for Refuge you are going to the Unconditioned, which is symbolised by the blue sky. So, yes, though Going for Refuge can be thought of as green, perhaps it is not possible really to associate it exclusively with that colour. The Green Tara delivers from all dangers; in the same way, you Go for Refuge from dangers, don't you? from suffering, from limitation.

Saddhaloka: Is there any traditional association of green with Going for Refuge, or is it

S: I can't remember; it is just something that occurred to me at the time of writing my notes. I imagine I must have had some traditional basis, but again I am sorry to say I have just forgotten; or at least I can't remember. Fifteen years [132] have passed. I suspect it was probably a sort of elaboration of my own, but I can't be completely sure of that. I could have picked it up from some traditional source.

Kuladeva: I seem to remember you a few years ago associating the colour green with Mitras.

S: Ah, that's true, yes. There was a great debate about the green cord, wasn't there? It dragged on for years.

Kuladeva: I seem to remember you referring to it as the colour of growth at the time.

S: Yes, growth, receptivity; yes, indeed. But it didn't catch on, did it?

Kuladeva: I don't know; I think some Mitras were interested. But it never got beyond preliminary discussions, I think.

S: The 'preliminary discussions', I believe, were in fact quite lengthy. Anyone got any feelings about the colour green, especially in connection with Going for Refuge?

Sarvamitra: I think it should be white, since it is at the centre of the mandala.

S: Yes, that's true.

Sarvamitra: Like white is all the colours mixed together.

S: Maybe we should have a rainbow kesa! Anyway, let's pass on.

Tejananda: Question No. 4 is from Kuladeva, on Bhaisajjaraja, Tara, and healing.

Kuladeva: In the lecture, you associate the colour green with healing; this I can relate to. Nevertheless, I understand that the Medicine Buddha, Bhaisajjaraja, is often, if not usually, blue, and that the Tara who is particularly concerned with healing is also blue. Can you explain the apparent association of blue with healing?

S: I am afraid I can't. I am trying to remember which family Bhaisajjaraja belongs to. Or is

he a sort of independent figure? He may be independent, in a way, in the sense of falling outside the five families, because he figures in Mahayana sutras, doesn't he, and therefore before the appearance of that five Buddha symbolism? I do have a thangka of the Medicine Buddha, and he is blue. I believe he is surrounded by figures of other colours. Was this a photo or copy of my one? Yes, I think it is. Yes, he is surrounded by figures of other colours: yellow, red, white. There isn't a green one, though, is there? No, I don't know why he is blue, particularly. I think the blue is the standard colour, even though there are other Buddhas in this, other Bhaisajjarajas with different colours.

Kuladeva: I think on the back of the thangka, which Dharmadhara sent me, is a copy of the inscription. I think there is a mantra to Amitayus. I don't know whether that is just because it has a long life [133]

S: Perhaps you should read the Sutra Bhaisajjaraja and see if there is any clue there. Ah, just a moment. His full name is Baisajjaraja Bhaiduryaprabha(?), isn't it? So what is bhaidurya(?)?

Ratnaprabha: Lapis lazuli.

S: Lapis lazuli, so it's blue, isn't it? So does the colour come from that name? Or does the name come from the colour?

Priyananda: I believe that the lapis lazuli was a healing stone, particularly used in medicine. Maybe it would have power in association with

S: It could be that, yes. That may be the basic connection. One could always look up bhaidurya in the Sanskrit Dictionary. Because there was a branch of Indian medicine that did make extensive use of powdered jewels and semiprecious stones. It was called vasayana(?). OK, thanks. Yes, that is probably the source of the connection.

Kuladeva: Because I was a bit surprised about the healing Tara practice so I have heard.

S: Though the blue of Bhaisajja Guru seems to be quite a greenyblue, because bhaidurya is sometimes translated as lapis lazuli, or explained as blue, sometimes explained as green or greenish. But what we call lapis lazuli is definitely blue, isn't it, with a gold speck, usually? So that was the question, then.

Tejananda: Now a question from Cittapala on development of Tibetan Tantra.

Cittapala: This is a very general question, Bhante. I was wondering to what extent the forms of Tibetan Tantric practices were merely translations of practices introduced from the Indian Vajrayana, and to what extent the original Indian Vajrayana practices were developed further by the Tibetans themselves.

S: I think basically the Tibetan Vajrayana is Indian Vajrayana. I think probably one had best say they elaborated a lot. For instance, probably a good example is the example of the tormas. In India, it would seem a torma was very much like a chapatti; it was a flat cake, as it were, of unleavened bread. Well, we know what the Tibetans developed a torma into, don't we? First of all, they started making it of barley flour; and then they started moulding it into

all sorts of fantastic shapes, and then decorating it and painting it; and some of their tormas are, on special occasions, 10 or 12 feet high, and take weeks and weeks to make. But it is still a torma; it fulfils or performs the same basic function as that Indian chapatti style of object. So I think that is a very good illustration of the sort of thing that the Tibetans did. According to Guenther, there were certain philosophical refinements which they introduced, but that is rather another matter. I think, as regards Tantric practice, their practice was the Indian Tantric practice, but in certain respects greatly elaborated. For instance, their mandalas; I am not sure whether the original Indian mandalas were always so elaborate, or whether their ritual accessories were always so elaborate. But the basic pattern of practice seems to have been faithfully adhered to in Tibet. That is my overall impression. [134]

: They seem to have translated the sutras very faithfully and quite literally if that is anything to go by.

S: Generally speaking, the Tibetans are very concerned with accuracy, fidelity to tradition. I think perhaps the only real innovations were when they incorporated Tibetan ethnic or indigenous Tibetan deities into mandalas; but, as far as I know, they never occupied a very prominent position. They were incorporated, say, into the corners of the mandalas. A bit like the animalheaded divinities we were talking about the other evening.

Cittapala: Did the Indian Vajrayana continue to develop in tandem with the Tibetan Tantra, or did they diverge at all?

S: One gets the impression that very often the Indians were only one step ahead of the Tibetans, because the Vajrayana went on developing in India until the disappearance of Buddhism from India, and all the time Tibetan monks and scholars were coming down to India and eagerly inquiring for the latest Tantric cycle that had been made public, and studying it, practising it, taking it back to Tibet. Do you see what I mean? So this process was going on for several hundred years. So scholars, or yogis, had to keep coming to India to get, to learn, to study, to practise, the latest thing in the Tantras; because new Tantras were being brought out all the time. So, as I said, it is as though the Indians were keeping one step ahead of the Tibetans. The Tibetans were very quick to latch on to any new Tantric teaching or practice, and introduce it into Tibet. So it wasn't as though, about 900 AD, things came to a stop in India and were just transported or transferred to Tibet. While the Tibetans were transferring the existing material to Tibet, fresh material was being created in India itself, for which the Tibetans had to come back later on.

Side 2

Ratnaprabha: Do you think it would be possible for us to draw any lessons from the as it were faithfulness of the Tibetans to the Indian teaching? I mean, does this imply that we should, if you like, be I suppose the trouble is that there is no form of Buddhism, perhaps, which is as alive in the East as Indian Vajrayana was when it was moving into Tibet; so, in a

way, we can't just rely on an Eastern form and bring it over here, but we have to be able to utilise their

S: Well, to give them their due, the Tibetans didn't rely so much on the Indian form; they really did learn and assimilate the spirit of the teachings, so far as we can make out.

Ratnaprabha: But isn't it, in that case, surprising that they didn't introduce more innovations themselves? For example, why is it that visualised Bodhisattvas wear Indian royal dress rather than Tibetan royal dress?

S: I suppose one explanation, in the broader sense, is that before the introduction of Buddhism the Tibetans did have very little culture. Their culture has always been mainly Buddhist culture. The same with Ceylon; the same throughout SouthEast Asia; the same with Japan, even. The great exception is China, which did not always take very kindly to Indian cultural forms because they already had a very highly developed culture of their own. So our position is more akin to that of China, because the West has already its own very highly developed culture; its own religions, as it were, reckoning Christianity as a Western religion rather than as a Middle Eastern religion. So the only real parallel between Buddhism in the West [135] and Buddhism in the East is really with regard to China, speaking in terms of the introduction of Buddhism.

Kulananda: It is interesting also to note that [among the] Chinese Buddhism had a tremendous aesthetic impact which goes back to the previous question, and I wonder if there isn't something to be said for the fact that the Indian cultural tradition and the Tibetan cultural tradition were less aesthetically developed

S: I think that is true, because I have certainly noticed it in India. For instance, going to a Hindu temple, it isn't neatly kept, it's not beautiful well, the architecture may be beautiful but the accessories are not; there are old newspapers, banana skins, everywhere; no one seems to bother; old garlands, cows wandering about, and leaving cowpats behind them; and no one bothers. And you call a brahmin, perhaps, to perform a ritual, and he has no regard to the aesthetic side of things. It is purely a magical operation. It doesn't matter how you do it so long as you do it correctly from as it were a magical or ritual point of view. But go to Japan and it's a completely different matter. Even go to the Theravadins, come to that; usually, in India at least well, I believe in Sri Lanka too, and Burma and Thailand temples are not only beautiful from the architectural point of view, they are very well kept, they are clean, they are light, they are tidy. I remember that Hindu visitors coming from Banaras to Sarnath used to be always very surprised to see how beautifully the Buddhist temples were kept. This always struck them. They often commented on it. So even though this is aesthetics at the very lowest level just neatness, cleanliness, tidiness it seems quite characteristic of Buddhism.

Kulananda: But I wonder if that factor doesn't in part account for the previous question, where we see that beauty wasn't built into the Buddhist approach from the early days. In a way it seems to a factor which is a bit left out. Perhaps that was because it was arising in a cultural tradition which didn't already place a high value on beauty.

S: That could be so. Probably it is difficult to say, but probably I think a lot of art critics would agree with this Chinese Buddhist art reached a higher level, as art, than did Indian Buddhist art. Indian culture Hinduism can be very colourful, but there is often a lack of

refinement, a lack of sensitivity. Again, maybe not in certain areas; in music you don't find that; their music is very highly developed, of great subtlety and sensitivity. The same, perhaps, with Indian classical dance. was going to say similarly with miniature painting, but then that shows Moghul, it shows Persian, influence, doesn't it? Similarly with the Moghul architecture. I must say in India I often used to prefer Islamic architecture to Buddhist architecture! It appealed to me aesthetically much more strongly. So, heresy?

Dharmapriya: That begs [raises] the question, then, where or how the aesthetic element came into Buddhism which didn't go to China, for example, or Sri Lanka, as you mentioned.

S: It is a rather lowlevel aesthetic element, I would say, there. Though, again, some of the very ancient Sri Lankan images are very impressive; not so much their modern ones. Then again, it would seem that the aesthetic sense finds whatever opening is available. Why do you have an efflorescence of the visual arts in [136] Renaissance Italy? And why, 100 to 200 years later, do you have an efflorescence of music in baroque Germany? Some people give purely political and economic explanations; for instance, in the case of Germany, they say that music was the principal outlet for creativity because the whole of Germany was subject to a variety of petty despotisms, so there was no outlet in the political field. Similarly, [there was] no outlet in the religious field because there had been the dreadful Wars of Religion, so you were either Catholic or Protestant; so there was no outlet in, say, religious debate or anything of that sort; it was just too dangerous. But there was music; so music was developed. A promising young man became a musician, a composer, just as nowadays he might go in for computers. I think it is a bit like that, actually.

Kuladeva: But then how do you explain the situation as in Athens during the fifth (?)century [BC?], when they had quite a lot of political freedom, but also the highest art increase developed there at that time?

S: Well; the Greeks were an exceptional people.

Kuladeva: But then in Sparta, by contrast, they had less freedom and less art.

S: But they had all sorts of wonderful ethical qualities! (Laughter.)

Kuladeva: Some of those are questionable!

S: You could even say that about Athens! But yes, it is quite a puzzling question, isn't it? Why have the English, on the whole, been poor where the visual arts were concerned, say, in comparison with Italy? Some people would put it down to the climate lack of blue skies and sunshine. Maybe it is as simple as that. But we have been rather good at poetry; but why? If you just look at the English, their general character and temperament, you would almost think that they were the last people to produce a great poetry; but somehow or other, by some accident or fluke, they have managed to do it! Admittedly, they did much of it in the more swashbuckling Elizabethan time, but they have kept it up pretty well since. England, it seems, has always been a nest of singing birds, as somebody once said in the Middle Ages. So? But anyway, we have rather wandered away from the topic. Whose question was it?(Slight pause. Laughter.) What was the question? What have we wandered away from?

Cittapala: Well, I was asking about the extent to which Indian Vajrayana Buddhism had

developed or had not developed, in terms of

S: Yes, I think we agreed that basically there was no development, and that the Tibetan Vajrayana is really quite faithful to the Indian Vajrayana; but that there were certain elaborations and as it were cultural variations. I think it is fair to say that.

: There were also things like the Songs of Milarepa which definitely derive from Tibetan literature rather than, apparently, from

S: I am not so sure about that. I used to think that, but apparently material has been translated recently of Indian origin which comes quite close. [137]

: But the actual literature, the language, seems to be more Tibetan. There are quite a lot of Tibetan songs that have been found in Dunkwong(?), for instance, which date back to

S: I was thinking of the biographies into which these songs are incorporated. that sort of structure seems to have been of Indian origin.

: But the actual literature in Milarepa is very different from the translations of sutras, which is a particular kind of literature and, as literature, is not very exciting; a lot of people find it quite dull, in fact, as literature. But Milarepa is quite different.

S: Yes, I am not so sure about that. I think the gap is narrowing, as more and more material from Indian sources comes to be translated. For instance, I will give you an example. I read recently the translation of the Lalitavistara, which of course is a sutra; and I read the version which was translated from the Tibetan into French and again into English, and sort of polished and tidied up. I was really struck by the resemblance to The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava, and to some extent the Life of Milarepa, as though there were Indian models or semimodels, as it were, and there was less of a break as it were between Indian literature and Tibetan literature than one had thought.

: That may well have been so, but I think also there definitely seem to be Tibetan influences as well in that kind of literature.

S: I think there is no doubt that there were Tibetan influences, because after all the Songs of Milarepa are in Tibetan; the imagery is largely Tibetan. But I was thinking of the overall structure, the literary genre, as it were. It does seem to be not of Tibetan but of Indian origin. So there, too, perhaps, they were more faithful than appears at first sight. Has anyone recently read the Lalitavistara in that version? It is very interesting. The imagery is quite excessive, one might say, but here and there there are sort of lumps, almost undigested lumps, of much earlier tradition, and you really notice the difference when there is a transition from the one to the other. There is some material which parallels material in the Pali Canon; other material which is very typically Mahayanistic in its imagery and exaggeration and so on. OK, let's go on.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaprabha on Vajrayana as a quicker path.

Ratnaprabha: I was wondering why it is that we use Vajrayana practices in the FWBO. Is it that they are for us a quicker way to Enlightenment than the Paramitayana? If so, is it that the

Vajrayana introduced more effective practices that the Buddha had not thought up, or that changes that occurred in human personality, or something like that, necessitated new practices?

S: That's about six questions, isn't it? Let's have them one by one.

Ratnaprabha: Well, the first is simply: why do we use Vajrayana practices in the FWBO?

S: Well, we don't use only Vajrayana practices, do we? There is the metta bhavana; there is the Mindfulness of Breathing. What would you say were distinctively Vajrayanic practices? [138]

Ratnaprabha: I was thinking particularly of the visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and recitation of their mantras.

S: But they are Mahayanistic, aren't they, also? because you have the Amitayurdhyana Sutra and other such works. You do, of course, have visualisation in the Theravada; not in the form of figures but in, so to speak, an abstract form, as the visualisation of kasinas. So I think we don't introduce any as it were fullbloodedly Vajrayanic element, do we, except perhaps in a very modest sort of way the odd skull cup or something of that sort?

Ratnaprabha: I don't think I understand the distinction between the Vajrayana and the Mahayana well enough to know, but obviously we do, say, use the Foundation Yogas, for example

S: That's right, yes.

Ratnaprabha: and visualisations some of which are specifically Vajrayana.

S: In the case of the mula yogas, especially in the case of the Going for Refuge and Prostration practice, that does as it were accentuate or underline something that is of basic importance to us: that is to say, the Going for Refuge which doesn't seem to be accentuated or underlined in that way in other forms of Buddhism, but only in the Vajrayana.

Ratnaprabha: I think what was at the back of my mind was that we had a question a couple of days ago about this idea of stacking practices as new practices were developed, because the practice of a previous teaching had degenerated. So the question was whether some of these new practices were not simply necessary replacements for old practices which were no longer being done properly, but were genuine innovations something quite new, which nobody had thought of before and was in some sense, as the Vajrayana claims, a quicker path to Enlightenment.

S: But visualisation of figures is not exclusive to the Vajrayana and Mahayana, even. You do find examples in the Pali Canon where the Buddha appears in front of someone who is meditating. So when nowadays, say, we visualise the Buddha, we don't really do anything more than that. In a sense, it doesn't make any difference that the Buddha is no longer alive, because here and now he is remote from us in time, but at that time, when a disciple happened to see the Buddha in his meditation, he was distant from him in space. So the only difference is that now he is distant from us in time, but then the Buddha was distant from the meditator

in space. So, yes, the point is that the visualisation is not even peculiar to the Mahayana and Vajrayana. You could regard it as a practice that has just been handed down from the very beginning. It wasn't so much of a practice in the Buddha's day; perhaps it didn't need to be, because the Buddha figure just appeared as it were spontaneously before certain people who were meditating. They didn't have to make an effort, it would seem; it just happened. But somebody else later on, hearing that such a thing had happened, might make a sort of practice of it, and try as it were to see or visualise the Buddha.

Ratnaprabha: I seem to remember an instance in the Pali Canon of somebody asking the Buddha I can't remember the exact context, but the Buddha actually taught a practice, it seems, which was sort of a recollection of the Buddha; which might [139]

just have been of his qualities, but it could perhaps have been of his appearance as well.

S: Well, there are ten anusatis, according to Buddhaghosa, aren't there? one of which is the Buddha anusati, the recollection of the Buddha. But it is the qualities of the Buddha. As far as I remember, Buddhaghosa says nothing about visualising the Buddha. But then again, one might say that if you thought of or recollected the qualities of the Buddha very intensely, vividly, it would be difficult not to form some sort of picture of the Buddha in your mind, which would amount to a visualisation. So it may well be that the tradition of visualisation, in principle, was there in Buddhism through all the yanas from the very beginning, but that it became progressively more elaborate, and more and more importance came to be attached to it. There is quite a lot of visualisation meditation, I believe, in Chinese non-Tantric Buddhism.

: Isn't it the case I can't remember the name it might be Pingiya [who because of] old age and frailty couldn't visit the Buddha ?

S: That's right, yes.

: but said, 'I see him before me in my mind's eye.'

S: 'night and day.' I have quoted that in the Survey, haven't I, when I have discussed faith? Yes, indeed; that was a spontaneous experience. Through sheer force of his devotion, he can't help seeing the Buddha, so to speak, night and day. This is from the Sutta Nipata. So that was the first part of the question or questions: what about the next?

Ratnaprabha: Is it that the Vajrayana perhaps introduced more effective practices that the Buddha had not thought up, that do genuinely represent a quicker path to Enlightenment?

S: That's not, of course, the traditional Tibetan point of view. You realise that, according to the Tibetan tradition, the Buddha also taught the Vajrayana perhaps not in his form as Sakyamuni, but they would not agree that it was as it were, as we would say, a later development; not in the sense that we would attach to those terms. So just repeat that?

Ratnaprabha: Well, did the Vajrayana introduce later practices which perhaps did represent a quicker path to Enlightenment than the practices which had previously been available?

S: I think one should probably say 'more effective for certain people' rather than 'quicker' as

such; because we mustn't forget that, at the beginning, say, of the Satipatthana and Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the Buddha says 'One who practises like this for, I think, seven years', and then he brings it down to one year and then even to seven days, 'will gain Enlightenment'; so clearly a very efficacious or quick method. But apparently it didn't work for everybody, or doesn't work for everybody; and it does seem that, later on in the history of Buddhism, what seem to be new methods were developed, sometimes on the basis of the old methods, as people found apparently the old methods not working in the way that they used to perhaps due to changed cultural conditions; it is difficult to say. [140] I think one has to be very careful how one puts things, because you could say that the old practice was just old, it had got worn out; but all that is highly metaphorical speaking. Because the fact that, say, generations of people have practised that particular practice before does not mean that, for you, it is old; for you it is new. Do you see what I mean? It is not that 'It has been practised for a long time, it has got worn out' that is really quite nonsensical. It is as new as it ever was, and for you the first time you practise it is new. And if you are careful, it remains new. But it could be that human beings do change, and that they have different needs at different historical periods, and that new practices have to be devised or old practices have to be adapted to meet that change on the part of human beings. Perhaps people in medieval India were not the same, in many respects, as the people of 1000 or 1500 years earlier, in the Buddha's own time. One gets that sort of impression, sometimes.

: Bhante, I seem to remember you saying in *The Eternal Legacy of Nagarjuna* that, if his interpretation of the Dharma is somewhat different from the Buddha's, we just have to acknowledge that his contribution was perhaps greater than the Buddha's.

S: Right, yes. Which, in terms of traditional Buddhism, is nonsense, because Nagarjuna himself Goes for Refuge to the Buddha and praises the Buddha; so one can only assume he didn't go beyond him, but really gave a different presentation of the same truth; perhaps more elaborate, more sophisticated, but basically the same.

Ratnaprabha: I can't understand that point, because, although clearly well, presumably the as it were experience of later teachers in Buddhism did not excel that of the Buddha, that does not necessarily mean that they might [not] have come up with innovations that proved to be more effective, and would have perhaps proved to be more effective even if they were teaching in the same milieu that the Buddha was teaching in, for all we know.

S: That possibility can't be excluded. But we don't know for sure, do we?

Ratnaprabha: No.

S: Because there is that famous instance of the Buddha teaching the asubhabhavana to monks who were not prepared; perhaps one of the later methods would have suited them better.

Cittapala: In that case, in what sense does one understand the Buddha to be omniscient with respect to all yantras, if?

S: Well, there is no mention of the Buddha being omniscient with respect to all yantras in the Pali Canon, where we get as near as we probably can to the historical Buddha. But the historical Buddha does seem to have claimed to have been omniscient with regard to the Path and the Goal, as it were in principle, as we might say. But that clearly could not have

included omniscience with regard to whether a particular method would be the best method for a given person. The instance I quoted just now makes that clear. The Buddha knew that, for instance, he was omniscient with regard to Nirvana, because he had personally experienced it; also he had experienced the Path, and he knew what helped on the Path, he knew what hindered. He knew that, for instance, hatred and greed hindered. He knew that concentration and wisdom helped. But that did not, I think, imply that he was omniscient with regard to which particular concrete method would suit which [141] particular concrete person at a particular time. As I said, that is clear from that incident I mentioned or instance, in that particular case, what was the Buddha doing? He was trying to help them get rid of craving. So, yes, he was omniscient with regard to that; yes, craving is a hindrance. Those people, if they want to gain Enlightenment, have to get rid of craving. But was the asubhavadhana for them at that time the best method of doing it? No. So the Buddha was omniscient with regard to the need to get rid of craving; but not omniscient when it came to applying that principle to a concrete human individual whose reactions were not in fact predictable.

Ratnaprabha: That was as far as it went.

S: So is that clearer?

Ratnaprabha: I think so, yes.

S: You can come back at the end, if you like. So what's next?

Tejananda: Another one from Ratnaprabha

S: Oh, he's coming back again already!

Tejananda: on classifications of mantras.

Ratnaprabha: This is just an expansion point from the lecture. You mention in passing, at one point, I think, if I heard you correctly, that there are some systems for classifying mantras which you did not actually give in the lecture. Would you mind saying what principles are used to classify mantras?

S: I can't remember the principles, but I can tell you where the information is to be found. It is in Agehananda Bharati's *The Tantric Tradition* a big fat volume that we should have in the Order Library, if it hasn't disappeared. We used to have it.

: Yes, it's in there.

S: I think his classification is sometimes a bit fanciful, and is based on the Hindu rather than the Buddhist tradition; but, anyway, it does represent an

attempt at systematic classification and could be of interest. I think he ends up with all sorts of definitions of mantras which probably won't convey very much to you at all well, perhaps they will: they are couched in quite scientific language. They didn't mean very much to me; they didn't resonate for me, if you know what I mean. Agehananda Bharati also wrote *The Light at the Centre* you know, [about] which I wrote that review on 'Hedonism and the

Spiritual Life'. He hasn't been heard of since; I don't know whether it has anything to do with my review, but I haven't heard anything of him at all. Perhaps he is busy doing other things and can't be bothered to write books!

Ratnaprabha: Hedonism, perhaps?

S: Or asceticism, who knows?

Tejananda: Question No. 8 is from Saddhaloka on mantras and initiation. [142]

Saddhaloka: This question, Bhante, follows on from comments made by you a few nights ago in relation to the Going for Refuge and the wongkur. We would just really like to check that certain conclusions drawn in our discussion group, based on your comments, are actually in line with your thinking. You mentioned in the talk that in the Tibetan tradition the mantra must be given by the guru, and that if it is not used for three years a new initiation is needed. If, however, the fundamental principle of the Tantra is the activation of one's energies and the galvanisation of them in the direction of Enlightenment and in the context of the FWBO one might say that this galvanisation takes place in the context of the Movement and is recognised by the guru, i.e. yourself, in the Going for Refuge ceremony, when the disciple is also given the added tool of a visualisation practice which he is now ready to use if you go along with that, it would suggest that you in fact would not yourself any longer go along with those points in the Tibetan tradition (that the mantra must be given by the guru and the threeyear lapse); and there would be the further implication that no actual initiation is needed for the first, or for further, use of the mantra, because the actual Going for Refuge is enough, if it is really effective, to activate those mantras.

S: I did say that, didn't I, previously? that inasmuch as all Buddhist practices were contained within the Going for Refuge, if you genuinely Went for Refuge (and perhaps there's the rub: genuinely, deeply, effectively, really), you wouldn't require any further as it were initiation for the purpose of practising any subsequent sadhana or reciting any mantra. From the point of view of existing tradition, that is a rather radical conclusion, but that is the direction in which it seems my thinking is pointing.

Abhaya: I had a question later in reference to that. I don't know whether you still do, but I have heard of you bestowing (this may be the wrong language to use) initiations in the Shrine Room, apart from ordination ceremonies; how an Order Member asked for a practice and has actually had initiation, and they have gone up to the Shrine Room and you have bestowed initiation.

S: No, not as far as I remember. It might have happened in the very early days, but I can't remember

Abhaya: You certainly did it at the time of our ordination. You gave Lokamitra an initiation into the Tara practice. That is the language you used at the time. And I think

S: Nowadays people do often ask me for an additional practice, or sometimes Mitras [do so], and I just say 'Go ahead,' as it were.

Abhaya: So you never do that now; you would never give a practice, apart from ordination,

in the Shrine Room?

S: No. I am trying just to think back, but I can't recollect; no. As I said, people do sometimes ask for additional practices. But I think more and more in terms of a real Going for Refuge as qualifying you for any practice.

Ratnaprabha: When you say 'a real Going for Refuge' do you mean that in your technical sense of Stream Entry, or do you ? [143]

S: No; no, I don't. A genuine [Going for Refuge], let us say. A heartfelt Going for Refuge. Of course, if you do Go for Refuge at the level of real Going for Refuge well, you are more qualified still, aren't you?

Saddhaloka: Just to get it absolutely clear, Bhante: so this would mean that it is not really necessary for you to additionally give the mantra, even at the time of Going for Refuge, if the

S: I suppose, logically, not; though you could see that as a continuation of the Going for Refuge, or even as part of the overall act of Going for Refuge. But you certainly wouldn't see it as adding anything to the Going for Refuge. I think that is the important point. It is not as though the Going for Refuge is incomplete and needs anything added to it. Just as the Ten Precepts that you take are not added to the Going for Refuge; you don't Go for Refuge and then, because something is still lacking, you take the Precepts. No, the Precepts are an expression of your Going for Refuge, and one could no doubt see the recitation of the mantra in that way a prolongation of the act of Going for Refuge.

Saddhaloka: So, taking that thinking a step further, one can even imagine a Going for Refuge ceremony which did not actually involve the imparting of a mantra or visualisation

S: Oh, yes, indeed. On the other hand, you could envisage, in the course of time, the whole process becoming much more elaborate and including many things that we do not do at present.

Kulananda: On the other hand, following on from Saddhaloka's point, it would seem to me that there is the Going for Refuge, which is one thing, and in a sense complete in itself; but on the other hand there is also the means of transformation, and in terms of the means of transformation that particular relationship between the disciple and the initiator or preceptor in relation to a mantra and a visualisation practice would seem, by the tradition, to be given a high level of importance, inasmuch as one is introduced to a particular quality of energy at that time and by that means, under highly significant circumstances.

S: Yes, but in principle, if one sees Going for Refuge in the way that we see it, it doesn't go beyond the Going for Refuge. I was also thinking that, with regard to the mantra, obviously the mantra relates to a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva, in other words to the deva, which of course is the esoteric form of the Dharma Refuge; so if you think in those terms, which are strictly traditional, you are not going beyond the Going for Refuge; you are deepening it, or exploring another aspect or another facet of it.

Kulananda: But the question is: is there not a highly effective means, and are we not in

danger of losing sight of that means, particularly in regard to the relationship between somebody who is more experienced in the practice forming a channel for somebody who is less experienced in the practice to make a connection with the deva of the practice not as an extension of the Going for Refuge, but as a means of practising, a means of working out the Going for Refuge?

S: But you still don't go beyond the Going for Refuge, do you? I think, so far as we are concerned, the important thing is to see the centrality, and therefore the importance, of the Going for Refuge, and see all these other traditional practices as in a way included within the Going for Refuge, or being an expression of it or a variation on it, and so on; not seeing them in terms of something further that [144] goes higher than the Going for Refuge, that you engage in when you have finished with Going for Refuge. That's the really important point. Does that meet your question?

Kulananda: Yes, thank you.

Tejananda: I've got a supplementary. In so far as Mitras who take up visualisation practices have not yet effectively Gone for Refuge, does this mean that, to that extent, they are not, so to speak, empowered with the practice in the sense that an Order Member is, and that, in the terms you use in the talk, the mantra is not a mantra in the full sense for them?

S: Yes, their doing of a visualisation practice is on the level of, say, their reciting the Refuges and Precepts in the context of the Sevenfold Puja; it is of that kind. Of course, one has to recognise that it could be that someone who is a Mitra, or even just a Friend, or someone outside the FWBO altogether, is doing that particular practice with a real feeling of Going for Refuge, and therefore that they are doing it in the full sense. So far as the Movement is concerned, normally one comes to the point of really Going for Refuge in the context of the ordination ceremony and so on, but one can't exclude the possibility, by any means, of someone actually Going for Refuge in spirit, as it were, before that ceremony has actually been undergone.

Side 3

Though the circumstances of the ceremony are such the way in which the ceremony is conducted and the way in which it is led up to make it highly conducive, to say the least, to the act of Going for Refuge, in a way and to an extent, and with a depth, that might not otherwise have been possible. ut certainly, though we emphasise the importance of Going for Refuge, we certainly don't have a monopoly of it. I think it is important to bear that in mind, even though in many other parts of the Buddhist world people don't give due recognition to the importance and centrality of the Going for Refuge which is unfortunate, but they could certainly do that if they woke up to the real significance of the Buddhist tradition, without necessarily joining the FWBO. But we at least have explicitly made that very central and given great importance to it, and therefore, within the context of the FWBO, people are more likely, we can say, to Go for Refuge in a deep and genuine sense, just because we do quite explicitly give more importance to that and make it more central.

Abhaya: I just wondered, I was curious, if you have actually, in your experience over the years, come across quite a lot of people apart from the Movement Buddhists who can you see have actually Gone for Refuge in this sense. I mean is it ?

S: Well, I don't have many contacts outside the Movement, do I? I don't have time for them. I can't say that I have actually met, within the last few years, anybody who I have felt really had Gone for Refuge. But I am sure such people exist, and I am quite sure that some of the people about whom I read in Buddhist magazines, or whose literature I read, have genuinely Gone for Refuge. It would be a terrible thing if nobody else in the Buddhist world had in fact succeeded in Going for Refuge; I am sure there are some who have. [145]

Cittapala: Do you feel that nowhere in the Buddhist tradition over the last 2000 years or so has anybody given expression to the Going for Refuge, perhaps in other terms than the explicit terms of Going for Refuge

S: Well, yes and no; because, in the case of the Mahayana, the arising of the Bodhicitta was equivalent to the Going for Refuge. So certainly much of what we mean by Going for Refuge was meant by the arising of the Bodhicitta. But we emphasise the Going for Refuge explicitly because that does go back right to the time of the Buddha, and we can see the Going for Refuge as being, in a sense, more basic and fundamental even than the arising of the Bodhicitta, which I have described as the positive or altruistic dimension of Going for Refuge. Because here we are, confronted by the Buddhist tradition, here we are with Going for Refuge mentioned in the Pali Canon, and with the arising of the Bodhicitta mentioned in the Mahayana; so in a way we have got to reconcile them, we have got to bring them together. So we can't really genuinely see Going for Refuge as an aspect of the arising of the Bodhicitta, because the Going for Refuge came first. If we are to connect them we have to see the arising of the Bodhicitta as an aspect of Going for Refuge. We reduce the arising of the Bodhicitta to Going for Refuge, not the other way round, because of the historical priority of the Going for Refuge. Otherwise we can only just leave them separate, as it were. Do you see what I mean?

Cittapala: In a similar way, would the Tantric initiation have been a sort of vehicle, explicitly in other terms, but which would have conveyed the same essence and meaning?

S: Oh yes, I have said as much, I think, on certain occasions, leaving aside the abhiseka. But years and years ago, before the FWBO, I gave four lectures called 'The Meaning of Conversion in Buddhism', one on Going for Refuge, one on Stream Entry, and one on the turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness, and what was the other one? (Voices prompting.) Ah, Bodhicitta, that's right. Then I have clearly treated them as all variants on conversion, and of course Going for Refuge comes first, historically. So, in a sense, the others can be seen as variants of that. So they are to be reduced to it, not it to any of them.

Tejananda: Is that purely on historical grounds, or is it on other grounds as well?

S: Partly on other grounds as well, because in the case of the Mahayana, the Bodhisattva ideal and the arising of the Bodhicitta represented, one might say, in a sense a highly exaggerated way not really exaggerated, but exaggerated if you think of the description or requirements of the Bodhisattva as applying as it were to the ordinary practising Buddhist; it is absolutely inconceivable. So if you think of the arising of the Bodhicitta in those sort of

terms as the propaedeutic to actually functioning in that sort of way, you can't even consider it seriously. It has got out of all proportion so far as you personally are concerned, or almost any individual human being is concerned. therefore, I see the Bodhisattva ideal and the Bodhicitta presented in that way on that scale as representing the archetype, as it were. Do you see what I mean? in which we participate to the extent that we can, but which we do not as it were take upon ourselves in its entirety; we can't possibly do that. So, in a way, the Bodhisattva ideal and the arising of the Bodhicitta in the Mahayana tradition have lost all connection with the individual practice of the individual Buddhist, and therefore I think it is all the more necessary to fall back on the Going for Refuge as the basic Buddhist act, not the arising of the Bodhicitta and becoming a Bodhisattva. [146] Though that is there as representing the archetype of it all, on a cosmic scale. have also said and it is something I have not elaborated that the Nam ryoho renyo kyo can be regarded as occupying the same place as the Going for Refuge well, maybe not the same place but as parallel to it or as a version of it, for a particular group of Buddhists or a particular Buddhist tradition: 'Salutation to the White Lotus Sutra'; you are saluting the sutra, you are recognising the greatness of the sutra and its teaching, and that in a way is equivalent to committing yourself to it, Going for Refuge to it, another variant of the same thing. But that has got so far away from the original Going for Refuge. I think they all have to be boiled down to the Going for Refuge.

Cittapala: But in something like Nam ryoho renyo kyo

S: Or Namo Buddhaya.

Cittapala: there is no equivalent of the effect of the ceremony of effectively Going for Refuge, or stage which marks that, or even, say, ordination as a bhikshu.

S: They do have their own ceremonies. I am not sure exactly where the repetition of that particular so to speak mantra comes in, but they do have a ceremony of, I think, being shown the mandala devised by Nichiren. ut basically what is the act of Going for Refuge? It is an act of going from the conditioned to the Unconditioned, or of wishing to go, or striving to go from the conditioned to the Unconditioned. So I am sure that, for those people who recite the Nam ryoho renyo kyo with full faith and conviction, it has much the same significance. It does represent a movement from the mundane to the Transcendental, for them, or at least for some of them.

Ratnaprabha: But, Bhante, if one accepts something so apparently extreme as the Nichiren approach to moving from the conditioned to the Unconditioned, doesn't that also let in all sorts of perhaps even nonBuddhist approaches, including theistic ones, which also seem some kind of a movement from ?

S: Well, yes, you could bring in the Upanishads; you have 'going from darkness to light, and from death to immortality'. The general principle is the same, in a way. But often it is mixed with other things, isn't it? For instance, you might think that you go from death to immortality by believing in a personal God who is going to save you and transport you there; well, then that would not be, probably, Going for Refuge in our sense, or even if there was some faint reflection of the principle it would be so obscured by other factors as to be virtually valueless. ut one does speak or I have spoken of a sort of cosmic Going for Refuge; I have identified in principle the whole principle of evolution and the Higher Evolution with the movement of Going for Refuge; so it is not just a little Buddhist practice,

or something that we do to show we are Buddhists; it is a reflection, within the context of Buddhism, of a principle that in a way governs the whole of life and attains greater and greater clarity of expression until perhaps it gains its greatest clarity of expression in the Going for Refuge on all levels. mentioning other religions and so on whatever their deformations and disasters, one cannot dismiss them completely, can one? Buried underneath them, at least so far as some people are concerned operating within that context, there is some [147] movement from what we would call the conditioned to the Unconditioned, however covered over by all sorts of other adventitious things. One can even see some such movement in the arts, the works of great artists, great writers. It doesn't have to be organised religion. You could even say this has just occurred to me that Going for Refuge is at the centre of Buddhism because evolution is at the centre of life, or at the centre of human existence. That does not mean that all human beings necessarily realise that. nyway, we have got a bit off the track, haven't we? Are you coming back on to it or straying even farther away?

: Probably straying!

S: Perhaps we had better finish the questions first.

Tejananda: OK. One from Kuladeva on the distinction between adhithana and abhiseka and the use of mantras.

Kuladeva: This question also comes out of our discussion in the study group, in relation to your comments the other evening, on equating Going for Refuge with Tantric initiation. I think we have already discussed this this evening to some extent, but I was wondering, that being the case trying to equate what you said with adhithana and abhiseka, whether perhaps abhiseka represented the practice well, let's say the recitation of mantras and visualisation practice within the Order after having Gone for Refuge, and adhithana was perhaps a recitation of mantras within the context of the FWBO by nonOrder Members. Do you think that would be ?

S: In Tibetan tradition, abhiseka, strictly speaking, is a term that should be used only in connection with the Anuttarayogatantra. I was told that, for the lower tantras in Tibet, only cema(?) was needed. Chinlap is adhithana, so it would seem to be something rather more than adhithana but rather less than abhiseka; but this is what I was told by my Tibetan teachers and informants.

Kuladeva: So what are your own views, in that case, on the distinction between adhithana and abhiseka?

S: They would seem to represent just different degrees of the same thing.

Kuladeva: So you would say that the abhiseka represents a deeper sense of Going for Refuge than the adhithana?

S: Right, yes.

Kuladeva: Perhaps deeper, say, than one generally recognises Going for Refuge into the Western Buddhist Order?

S: Well, one can't compare in that sort of way, because when you say 'Going for Refuge in the Western Buddhist Order', we recognise the four levels, don't we? the provisional, the effective, the real, the Absolute, even.

Kuladeva: Then how are we to distinguish between, say, adhisthana and abhiseka? [148]

S: Well, as those terms occur in Tibetan tradition, the distinction is as I have said: that the abhiseka is what you need if you want to practise the anuttarayogatantra, and the adhisthana is way below that, as it were; it is more like a blessing chinlap. But if you want to compare abhiseka with our understanding of Going for Refuge, there is a provisional abhiseka, there is an effective abhiseka, there is a real abhiseka do you see what I mean? Because someone could just take an abhiseka because it is the custom; that is just a provisional abhiseka. Someone could take it very seriously, but without any actual Transcendental realisation; well, that is an effective [abhiseka]. And in the same way, [someone] could take the abhiseka, or as a result of taking the abhiseka, could have a genuine Transcendental realisation well, that abhiseka is equivalent to the real Going for Refuge; it is a real receiving of an abhiseka.

Tejananda: Now Ratnaprabha has a question on the subtle hearing of mantras.

Ratnaprabha: You mention in the lecture something about hearing mantras with the subtle hearing in meditation and seeing visualised forms in meditation with subtle sight. Are these the same subtle senses that are said to be involved in clairvoyance, clairaudience and so on?

S: I don't think so. I can't say for sure I haven't thought about it before but it seems they are quite different. It would seem here I am just speaking off the cuff it would seem, if I just think back, so to speak, to my own experience, as though the experience of the subtle mantra and the subtle visualised form is of a more refined nature, more subtle and therefore of a higher nature. If you really do it, that is to say, not just if you vaguely think about the form of the Buddha but don't have a vivid experience of it. But perhaps it does require further consideration. That is my immediate response, as it were. Say there is no qualitative difference in the case, say, of clairvoyance; now I am looking at you, I see you, but supposing I have a clairvoyant vision and see someone 1,000 miles away; but it is all on the same level, actually; it is equally mundane, virtually, just a little bit more subtle. But if I actually see the Buddha, really visualise the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, that would seem to be qualitatively different. It would seem that the one is a horizontal experience and the other a vertical experience.

Ratnaprabha: Is that because it is the Buddha that you are seeing rather than because of the kind of application you give to the process in meditation?

S: Yes, but then that makes all the difference, doesn't it?

Ratnaprabha: So if one was, say, trying to apply one's concentration to a kasina disc, and achieved a vivid mental image of that, then that might be the same kind of sense operating as was operating in clairvoyance?

S: It might be, or it would be closer to it than it would be to, say, the visualisation of the Buddha.

Ratnaprabha: Is it really appropriate to use these terms, like 'subtle senses'? Because, in a way, surely, the mind as a sense is always experiencing things would could be considered to be equivalent to experiences with one of the senses, in that it experiences either images or verbal concepts or something like that; so aren't they all mindsense experiences, really?

S: But none the less there would be degrees of subtlety, wouldn't there? [149]

Ratnaprabha: I suppose what I am getting at is that

S: Because there is a difference between kamaloka and rupaloka.

Ratnaprabha: Yes. There are degrees of subtlety of experience within the mindsense, but there is no real meaning to speaking in terms of subtle senses, such as clairvoyance and clairaudience. All you have is mental experience or physical sense experience.

S: Well, then one just says that some mental experiences are more subtle than others. But in ordinary discourse it probably wouldn't be necessary to go to those lengths. That might invite argument because someone might want to argue that, yes, there was an objective material universe, it wasn't all in the mind; which might be all rather beside the point.

Ratnaprabha: I wasn't arguing that there wasn't any objective nature to one's experience with the physical senses, simply that it wasn't meaningful to speak in terms of experience with the subtle senses. That is merely mental experience which seems like experience with the physical senses.

S: That is clear; but maybe one shouldn't express oneself in too roundabout a fashion! discussing with perhaps people outside the Movement or outside Buddhism.

Tejananda: Question No. 11 is from Kulananda on clashing mantras.

S: Oh. What is a clashing mantra?

Kulananda: It's a lot more perhaps prosaic and practical than that suggests. It is actually a practical sort of personal problem. What I have discovered on taking up a second visualisation practice is that

S: Oh, I think I know what you are going to say; but anyway, carry on.

Kulananda: You have your initial mantra quite well embedded in your psyche, so to speak, and you take up a second mantra, and sometimes they bump into one another and knock each other over. Do you have any practical advice in this regard?

S: Only that you must be very mindful when you recite the mantra of the second practice, and make a conscious effort to put as much energy into it as you can. Otherwise the habit that you have formed of reciting the other mantra will just take over, the minute your mindfulness slips. It requires quite a strong effort.

Kulananda: Something that bothers me also is the possibility of losing touch with the first mantra by somehow superimposing the second on to it or is that beside the point? Could one

just let the first one go?

S: I think one can reactivate it without too much difficulty. What I think is very important is that you are very clear which particular mantra you are supposed to be reciting at any given moment, and don't just sort of slip or slide from one to the other without realising it, and after, say, two or three minutes, think: 'Oh, good heavens, I'm reciting the wrong mantra! I'm not supposed to be doing that one [150] this morning!' It is a test, in a way, of one's concentration and one's mindfulness, and one's ability to focus one's energy.

Kuladeva: So it looks as if one could put as much energy as one wanted into it, because the initial mantra could be reactivated at a later date?

S: Yes; though if you had formed as it were the habit of reciting the second mantra regularly, you would have the same difficulty, perhaps, over again.

Tejananda: The final question is from me.

Regarding your description of the Manjughosa practice at the end of the talk, two questions:

1) Was your description in the tape of a shortened version of the Manjughosa studi(?) sadhana, or was it another Manjughosa sadhana that you were describing?

S: I think, to the best of my recollection, it was a shortened version.

Tejananda: 2) The visualisation of the rainbowntinted cloud throne is not normally mentioned in the Manjughosa studi sadhana, yet pictures of Manjughosa often seem to associate him with them, for example the thangka in the Order Library. Do clouds have a particular association with Manjughosa? If so, do you know why, and is it OK for people who do the practice to add this sort of detail?

S: It is certainly OK to add that sort of detail. Whether the clouds have a particular association with Manjughosa I am not sure. Very often clouds are associated with the sambhogakaya, anyway, aren't they? the blue sky with the Dharmakaya, the clouds with the Sambhogakaya, and the rain that falls from the cloud with the Nirmanakaya. So you could say, or think, that the clouds represent the whole mass of sambhogakaya forms on which, as it were, Manjughosa sits, he being the particular sambhogakaya form with which you are especially or specifically concerned at that particular moment. ny little supplementary from you? You had something a little while ago.

Cittapala: I think maybe it would be better if I asked it tomorrow.

S: All right, fair enough! Then that's all? Good. [150]

15 December: THE MANDALA OF THE FIVE BUDDHAS, 'MALE' AND 'FEMALE'

Tejananda: We've got 14 questions tonight on the Symbolism of the Five Buddhas, Male and

Female. The first one is from me. In the first question on the first talk, I asked if you could recommend any introductory books on the Tantra. I wonder if you have thought any more about that.

Sangharakshita: I gave a little thought to it today, but I couldn't come up with any introductory books. It is almost as though an introductory book to the Tantra is a contradiction in terms. I did mention, didn't I, Snellgrove's Buddhist Himalaya? And then I also did mention that new book in two volumes. It is certainly not an introduction, but yes, maybe you could say an introduction for the really serious student.

Tejananda: That's by Snellgrove as well?

S: Yes. He does write well and clearly, always.

: Is that a new book, Bhante?

S: Yes.

Buddhadeva: Apparently it is a replacement of Buddhist Himalaya, so that won't be up to date.

S: But it is in two big volumes.

Buddhadeva: I have seen one of them.

S: I am not sure if Buddhist Himalaya is in print.

Buddhadeva: It is out of print, and that was a rewriting of Buddhist Himalaya, which turned into another work, apparently.

S: Well, perhaps one had better read them both, because the first would give one an introduction, in a way, to the second.

Tejananda: Do you know the title of that, Buddhadeva?

Buddhadeva: Not exactly. It is something like Taking Buddhism from India to Tibet.

S: Something like that, yes. It has been very well reviewed.

Tejananda: Question No. 2 is from Chakkhupala on the five vimokṣadvaras(?).

Chakkhupala: This concerns the vimokkhas and their relationship to the laksanas, the viparyayas and the principal protector Bodhisattvas. We have been discussing in the group aspects of one's particular orientation or direction of approach to Bodhi. On separate occasions, you have spoken of canonical references to an additional viparyaya, that is, subha, which is sometimes given, and also, on another occasion, to an additional [152] asamskrta laksana, that is santi nirvana, that is, peace. It occurred to me that, perhaps without too much stretching, these two, subha and santi, could be incorporated, along with the three usual ones, into the mandala scheme. There would then be five laksanas, five samadhis, five Protectors.

S: But in a sense one doesn't need five; one needs only four, because if one refers to the five jnanas, one sees that the fifth the one which is associated with Vairocana, taking Vairocana to be the central Buddha figure is the synthesis, as it were, of the other four. So that, strictly speaking, there are four rather than five. One doesn't need five different laksanas on that basis, or five viparyasas etc., because in fact the central item is always a sort of synthesis of the other four, so one wouldn't have to stretch quite as much after all!

Chakkhupala: Possibly. I did think about the place of centrality for that, but then I thought how they are usually correlated or associated with the three Protectors. One is associated with Manjusri, and that seems to be in line with the position of centrality and sunyata; the other two correspond to Vajrapani and Avalokitesvara. So there you have the Padma and the Vajra families. So I had it in mind to place the other two, subha and santi, in respectively the Ratna and Visyavajra or Karma families. So, just to run through it, the two new ones as it were would be: in the Ratna family, the samskrta laksana would be asubha, the viparyasa, subha; the asamskrta laksana, subha; the Pala, Ratnapani; and asubha samadhi.

S: Subha would seem to go with the Ratna family inasmuch as it seems to stand for creativity and so on. Yes.

Chakkhupala: And the next, in Amoghasiddhi's family perhaps this is stretching it a little but to have the samskrta laksana of bhaya, fear; to have the viparyasa, abhaya; and the asamskrta laksana either abhaya or santi; the Pala, Visvapani; and asanti samadhi.

S: One could speak of santi in connection with action, because one could speak perhaps of the action of nonaction. I have mentioned that somewhere, I believe. And as regards bhaya, there is a bhaya jnana, a knowledge of fear, isn't there, mentioned in the Pali texts? knowledge of fear or terror. I forget the exact context, but you could look it up.

Chakkhupala: I was thinking perhaps of peace, santi, as appropriate to Amoghasiddhi in two senses: peace as lack of fear, lack of troubles, and also peace in the sense of lack of inappropriate activity.

S: Right; being at rest, when no action was called for. Also, of course, the colour green is associated with peace or peacefulness, isn't it? Yes. That is quite ingenious.

Chakkhupala: Just a wee bit more on that. It seems in a way that having the three laksanas corresponding to three of the families, it did sort of exclude approaches to Bodhi that are represented by the other two families, and it seemed that those two, in fact, seemed to embody in some degree aspects of an approach to spiritual development that you have particularly emphasised in your own teaching.

S: Subha certainly, yes. [153]

Chakkhupala: one being aesthetic development, and the other being the heroic virtues.

S: Ah, right, yes.

Chakkhupala: So perhaps we should give them more prominence.

S: Well, perhaps you should write a little essay or article. But, of course, one mustn't forget that the fivefold structure is a sort of basis for practice; one somehow has to correlate it with practice, if only, so to speak, on the level of Insight. I think it would need thinking about. Maybe you ought to produce a chart, at least, so that people can give thought to it and see whether it works for them or whether it as a totality makes sense. But it would seem to, from the account that you have given. Santi is said to be the fourth of the four dharmamudras, as they are called, seals of the Dharma. If any teaching is stamped or sealed with those four signs or characteristics, then you can regard it as the Buddha's teaching: it is sealed with his distinctive stamp, as it were.

Chakkhupala: The other three dharmamudras also being the other three laksanas.

S: Right.

Tejananda: Now a question from Susiddhi on nirmanakaya and rupakaya.

Susiddhi: Bhante, as the founder member of the 'Nutsandbolts Buddhism movement', it feels important to me that Sakyamuni Buddha had a conditioned human body similar to mine, rather than a phantom or even Transcendental body. Would it be illogical to accept the Trikaya doctrine, retaining the realistic rupakaya instead of replacing it with the magical nirmanakaya?

S: Did you say 'useful'?

Susiddhi: I said 'illogical'.

S: Illogical. Say that again, then.

Susiddhi: Would it be illogical to accept the Trikaya doctrine, retaining the unrealistic rupakaya instead of having it replaced with the magical nirmanakaya?

S: If one goes back far enough, one does encounter a rupakaya, though it isn't the rupakaya of a Buddha. If one goes back to well, I suppose in the case of Sakyamuni Buddha, back to Sumedha, the ascetic who first met Dipankara and formed the resolution to attain Supreme Enlightenment he had a human physical body, just like you and all the other nutsandbolts men! But, according to the full Mahayana doctrine, having made his vow he was reborn hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of times, and eventually reached the final bhumi in which he developed his magical body, or something that could be transformed very quickly into a magical body, something very, very subtle indeed; and that was reborn in the Tusita Devaloka. And that descended to earth and then, as the last final step, gained Enlightenment; whereupon that very, very subtle body that had descended from the Tusita Devaloka became his nirmanakaya. So even if you accept the fully fledged Mahayana doctrine of the Trikaya, you have still got a human physical body [154] to begin with; do you see what I mean? even though it may seem a bit remote. I don't know whether that would suffice. You may have noticed that in my own writings I don't stress the magical nature of the nirmanakaya; I usually tend to equate the human historical Buddha, in the full sense, with the nirmanakaya. Whether that is logical, I haven't really considered. If you see what I mean, in a way it's a bit of concession; because if you look at this whole question of magical well, from the standpoint of the Perfection of Wisdom, every phenomenon is magical in that way;

every phenomenon is a nirmanakaya. So in that sense the Buddha's body is no exception. So perhaps you can reconcile its full historicity and humanity with its being a nirmanakaya, without being illogical. But probably this is something that requires quite a bit more exploration from, so to speak, a metaphysical point of view. Does that seem sufficiently nutsandboltslike, or does it seem still a bit airyfairy?

Susiddhi: I must admit I don't see the necessity for any explanation other than that Siddhartha Gautama was a conditioned human body, and then he developed an Unconditioned one.

S: Well, you can see how it all began, because, to begin with, Buddhists started seeing a vast difference between the Buddha and his ordinary followers; so they started thinking that the Buddha had attained a much, much higher level of Enlightenment. They took notice of the fact that his personal disciples gained Enlightenment, in the sense of arahantship, in just one lifetime, sometimes in the course of a few hours. But at the same time, they saw that the Buddha apparently had gained something much greater. So they felt he could not possibly have achieved that degree of Enlightenment in one lifetime; the whole process must have been spread over many, many, many lifetimes. So they went on as it were enlarging on the conception of the Buddha's Enlightenment, as distinct from the arahants', and lengthening as it were and making more elaborate the process by which he attained that over a period of three aeons, or three not even three aeons but three asamkhyeyas, three unreckonables, of aeons, in the end. That seems to become associated with the idea of the magical body, because even in the Pali scriptures the Buddha refers to a manomayakaya, a mindmade body. So it came to be felt that somewhere on the way, somewhere in the course of those three asamkhyeyas of kalpas, the Buddha must have developed all these great psychic and Transcendental powers, and amongst them must have developed a much more subtle and rarefied personality kaya means something more like personality than body and that, by the time he reached his last birth prior to this one, he could not have been an ordinary human being at all, though he started off as an ordinary human being, and resided in the Tusita Devaloka in this supranormal, even arguably Transcendental, personality, and it was that personality which descended to earth and only appeared to be an ordinary human being. That is the way the Mahayana doctrine seems to have developed. But, as I said, it is all based on the fact, or the supposed fact, of the vast difference between the Buddha's Enlightenment and that of his disciples. If you deny that, which is in a sense what I tend to do if you, following certain passages in the Pali texts, identify the Buddha's Enlightenment with that of his disciples with regard to its actual spiritual content, then of course you obviate the necessity of having all those previous lives to account for the difference [155] between the Buddha's Enlightenment and that of his disciples, and you are left with an at least apparently ordinary human historical personality.

Susiddhi: [Wasn't that](?) the value of all the previous lives, where he was developing the paramitas, which is why he became fully and perfectly Enlightened the first time he tried vipassana meditation? Isn't that the culmination of the lives? ?

S: Yes and no, because so many of the Buddha's own disciples gained Enlightenment in this lifetime, apparently not having practised the paramitas; Samla(?) Angulimala gained Enlightenment in this lifetime after a very disastrous and unethical career. So it would seem that it isn't necessary to have a history of the practice of paramitas in order to gain Enlightenment.

Susiddhi: I had come to the conclusion that the difference between the Buddha and his even Enlightened disciples it was the vessel that was different, it wasn't the liquid in it.

S: But what do you mean by the vessel?

Susiddhi: Well, the Buddha had practised the paramitas through thousands of lifetimes.

S: Right, well, this is the Mahayana teaching; and this is where it comes in, as I said, that among other things the Buddha had developed himself to such a pitch that his mundane personality was virtually transformed into a Transcendental personality, so that he was virtually almost Enlightened before he even descended for the last time to earth. But there is a sort of logical connection between the practice of the paramitas over all those kalpas and the possession of a nirmanakaya in the strict sense. If you do away with the one, you do away with the other, because they hang together. Do you see what I mean?

Susiddhi: No, I haven't got it. Sorry; there is a straight connection between practising the paramitas and having a nirmanakaya?

S: Yes, for so many Yes, because in the course of the practice of the paramitas over that vast period of time, one of the things that one does, one particular bhumi of the Bodhisattva Path, is to develop that kind of virtually Transcendental personality, in which one thereafter exists; so that one isn't an ordinary being. And therefore one does not, as an ordinary being, become reborn in the Tusita Devaloka, nor does one as an ordinary being descend into this world for the last time. o the paramita doctrine, in the sense of the practice of the paramitas over three asamkhyeyas of kalpas, and the development of a Transcendental personality, go together. If you refer to the Pali texts, where we seem to get nearer to the historical Buddha than anywhere else, usually, you don't find any reference to the Bodhisattva ideal. You do, but it is in works which are very obviously quite late compositions, like the Buddhavamsa, which comes in the Khuddaka Nikaya. There is very little reference, certainly no detailed reference, in the Nikayas.

Susiddhi: I don't find any difficulty in believing, for instance, that an advanced Bodhisattva would direct his rebirths; and also, obviously, he would have a tremendous influence on his body, as well as the rebirth. But I can't go to the length of, [156] I just can't accept that the whole of Siddhartha Gautama's life was in a way a charade, almost; even though it was all predetermined.

S: Right. Not only predetermined, but that he had done most of the work already in previous existences; though, yes, maybe some Mahayana texts do present it all as a play. The Mahayana biography of the Buddha is called Lalitavistara; what is lalita? It is a play. But one doesn't get the impression from the Pali Canon that it was all a play, a lalita; so perhaps that represents a metaphysical way of looking at it, not actually a historical way. Maybe it is an interpretation of the historical, which should not be confused with the historical itself. Do you see what I mean? A metaphysical interpretation does not negate the historical on its own level or instance, one can look around the room and see people and, metaphysically, they are all magical illusions; but you don't actually experience them as ghostlike or wraithlike; you can't actually see through them; you touch them, they are pretty solid. But metaphysically speaking, they are magical illusions. So maybe one has to look at it in that sort of way, and in that way reconcile the historicity and the metaphysical nature of that historical person as a

magical illusion.

Susiddhi: Kaya doesn't mean just physical body? It means something more ?

S: No, it seems to mean personality, for want of a better word. The word for 'body' in Sanskrit, in our sense, is deha. For instance, in the Indian languages now, they say dehantokya(?) he has cast off the body. Even 'personality' doesn't really render kaya, because 'personality' comes from persona, a mask, and kaya has none of those associations at all. But personality is near enough, I think, if you just leave aside those original associations of the mask. But the point you raised does illustrate the, in a sense, difficulty of reconciling the Hinayana, to use that term, with the Mahayana; the more historical and, if you like, phenomenological, approach with the more metaphysical and ahistorical approach. think the main point is that the metaphysical should not be allowed to negate the historical on its own level. But it does all require much more thorough explanation. I have just sketched a possible solution, that's all. So you can certainly go on thinking that had you been around and could have met the Buddha and could you have shaken hands with him, you would have felt something solid! Your hand wouldn't simply have passed through his!

Tejananda: Question No. 4 is from Cittapala, about the sambhogakaya.

Cittapala: In the lecture, Bhante, you refer to the sambhogakaya as meaning literally the body of mutual delight, or the body of mutual enjoyment, and say that it has a very profound meaning of its own, but it is not very helpful within the context of the lecture. I think this begs [raises?] an obvious question, which is: did you have anything particularly in mind in terms of the very profound meaning?

S: Again you push me beyond my memory! I can't think; sambhoga sam is 'together', bhoga is 'enjoyment'. It is 'mutual enjoyment': the Bodhisattvas', and the Buddhas' and the Bodhisattvas', and the Buddhas' and the Buddhas', mutual enjoyment of one another's company. I can't think what else I had in mind at that time. Just repeat the question, in case something comes to me. [157]

Cittapala: In the lecture you give a definition of the word sambhogakaya as literally 'body of mutual delight' or 'body of mutual enjoyment', and say that this term has its own very profound meaning, but it is not helpful within the context of the lecture. Then you go on to say that it is more interpretively rendered as 'ideal Buddha' or even 'archetypal Buddha'.

S: Yes, I think it must have been that more evocative term, archetypal or glorified, that I was referring to as constituting perhaps that deeper significance that was not relevant within this context. If you say it is 'body of mutual enjoyment', it doesn't really mean very much or go very far, but 'archetypal' and 'glorified' body seems to suggest something more, doesn't it? It has a more emotive value. I think I must have been referring to something like that.

Cittapala: I was wondering whether it had any particular significance in terms of visualisation the term 'mutual enjoyment'.

S: I don't think I had that in mind, no. Though, of course, if you visualise properly, you are on the sambhogakaya level, and you share that enjoyment when you are enjoying the Buddha or Bodhisattva you are visualising, and presumably he is enjoying you, or enjoying your

company. No, I can't recall anything else there.

Tejananda: Question No. 5 is from Sarvamitra, on the AdiBuddha.

Sarvamitra: Is the AdiBuddha to be identified with the Dharmakaya or with the svabhavikakaya? What is the svabhavikakaya?

S: Svabhavikakaya is usually considered to be the unity of the three kayas. I have explained this elsewhere. Apparently people started thinking of the three kayas as distinct, almost as distinct Buddhas, and the svabhavikakaya concept was introduced to make it clear that they were all united, they were all kayas of one Buddha. AdiBuddha would seem not to be a separate Buddha, but would seem to be a term intended to direct attention to the timelessness of Buddhahood; that it was without beginning or, you could say, existed from the beginning; that it was primeval, adi; which wasn't meant to suggest indefinite prolongation in time but transcendence of time altogether. So AdiBuddha is not a separate kind of Buddha so much as Buddhahood considered under its aspect of transcending time. Of course, in the mythology as it were of the Vajrayana, you do get references to 'AdiBuddha Soandso' and 'AdiBuddha Soandso'. That is not to be taken too literally. All Buddhas are AdiBuddhas, rightfully considered.

: In the Vajrasattva sadhana seminar, you mention that Vajrasattva can be considered as a sixth Buddha, behind the central Buddha; so would this be a manifestation of the svabhavikakaya, or am I wrong?

S: I believe Vajrasattva is sometimes referred to as AdiBuddha; but not that he is an AdiBuddha and others are not; it is not really quite so, in a way, simple as that. But if you want to consider or reflect upon the timelessness of Buddhahood, or reflect on the fact that it transcends time, you do that in connection with the figure of Vajrasattva. But, as I said, it is not that some Buddhas are AdiBuddhas and others are not. It is all in a way rather confusing. Again, one has to be very careful not to try to pin things down too much, or to be too literal-minded in one's approach. But sometimes it is difficult to avoid that.
[158]

Ratnaprabha: Is the Dharmakaya ever actually, at least supposedly, represented in Tantric art?

S: Oh yes; for instance, it is often said, with regard to the Nyingmapas, that Amitabha is the Dharmakaya, that the Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara is the Sambhogakaya, and that Padmasambhava is the Nirmanakaya. This is called the Nyingmapa Trikaya. Other traditions have other versions. So, yes, very often Amitabha is. Though he has a form; but if you want to represent the Dharmakaya in art you have to give some kind of form. So when the Trikayas are represented in art within the Nyingmapa tradition, that is how they are represented. That is why you often see this set.

Ratnaprabha: And would a Dharmakaya form normally be represented as naked, to indicate his Dharmakaya ?

S: That sometimes is the case, but then it is usually not Amitabha; then it seems to be Samantabhadra for the Nyingmapas.

Ratnaprabha: I was looking earlier this week at the book *Ageless Borobudur*, which describes the stupa at Borobudur; and as far as I could gather through a rather cursory look it seems to have the Mandala of the Five Buddhas represented in the upper tiers, with each of the Five Buddhas represented not in higher forms on the faces(?); and then a number of Buddhas inside stupas on the top. But it mentioned that inside the central, the largest stupa, at the top, hidden inside they had found an unfinished Buddha, which was in *bhumisparsa mudra*, apparently a deliberately unfinished sculpture. Would that have been a Dharmakaya representation, do you think?

S: I couldn't say. I am not even sure that it would have been deliberately unfinished. This is presumably all assumption.

Ratnaprabha: Well, it is based partly, according to the book, on the accounts of one of the Chinese pilgrims who, when he visited Bodhgaya, said that he observed there in the main temple an unfinished Buddha in *bhumisparsa mudra*, and so the parallel was drawn between his visit to Bodhgaya which was not so far away in time from the building of Borobudur and this central stupa at Borobudur.

S: I think we have to be careful about drawing conclusions, because one has to look at the Chinese word and make sure that it did actually mean 'unfinished' in the sense, say, that we speak of a Greek sculpture as unfinished. We know that the Greeks did sometimes leave things unfinished, don't we? We know the reason for that. But whether the same thing happened in the Buddhist East we can't be so sure. I think we would need to be on much firmer ground before we could be very definite that that was literally and deliberately an unfinished Buddha image. But if it was, that would certainly be interesting.

Ratnaprabha: Lama Govinda mentions it in his book on the stupa, and seems to accept that it represents the Dharmakaya or some such, and I think he says although obviously he is guessing that he feels it is *rupa* emerging from *sunyata* or something like that.

S: But then the question arises: what is the significance of [its being] unfinished? Perhaps one is thinking unconsciously of Michelangelo and his unfinished figures emerging from the block; but is there any evidence that Indians or Buddhists in the East thought like that? [159]

Ratnaprabha: It is not unfinished in that respect, anyway. There is a photograph of it in the book, and all that has happened is that they have not completed doing the curls of the hair and the fingers of the hand or the toes; that kind of thing. These are all left. The bits that would normally be delicately carved have been left uncarved.

S: I do remember seeing somewhere, I can't remember where, some reference to the fact that Borobudur was not finished.

Priyananda: That is one of the statements that they make in their books. They didn't have time to finish it, and they ran out of materials, and also the volcanic eruption cut off

S: So it could be that the image was unfinished just because Borobudur itself was unfinished, not for any sort of special as it were theological reason.

Ratnaprabha: This particular book actually contradicts that idea, I think, and says that it was

as a result of the prejudices of previous scholars who had felt that Borobudur ought to look like Indian stupas, and have a very large dome on the top; and therefore they had assumed that it was never finished.

S: Oh, then we have to leave it to the experts! We don't know. So we ought not really to attempt to explain a fact which is itself as yet, I think, not really established. No doubt it merits investigation, but it seems you need to be a scholar in that particular field to be able to contribute.

Tejananda: Dharmapriya now, with a question on the mythic origins of the five Buddhas.

Dharmapriya: In the Survey you mention the possible Iranian mythological origin of Amitabha in passing. Knowing more about a mandala figure, whether a Jina or not, especially about its mythic origin, such as the story of Tara's birth, can help strengthen one's feelings for the deity. Do you know more about the mythic origins, or anything about the historical origins, of any of the Jinas or other figures of the Mandala?

S: No, I am afraid I don't. All that occurs to me at the moment is that, for instance, Vairocana is a name that occurs in the Vedas, I think in the Rig Veda, as a name of the sun. No, I don't have any other associations, I am afraid.

Dharmapriya: Do you know of any sources or works that might go into that?

S: I don't know of any, no. I doubt if there has been much work done in this field. You might find that Snellgrove goes into it, because he does discuss, in Buddhist Himalaya, the Five Jinas. In his new book he might have incorporated fresh material, so it might be a good idea to look at that. When I speak of Amitabha being in a sense of Iranian origin, I don't mean that Amitabha himself is of Iranian origin, but that certain iconographic conventions, as it were, were taken from the Iranian tradition to represent the Buddhist conception of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. So it is the cultural form that is appropriated, not the spiritual substance, as it were. It is the same with the Vedic and postVedic Vajrapani and the Buddhist Bodhisattva Vajrapani; the iconography is almost identical, but the content, the meaning, is completely different. [160]

Dharmapriya: I asked in the hope that you could give accounts, perhaps not as full, but similarly to the account you gave of the origins of Sarasvati in the lectures in the 'Sutra of Golden Light' series.

S: Offhand, I can't, no. Sarasvati is much more of a Hindu figure than, say, Avalokitesvara or Manjughosa. Some scholars believe that Avalokitesvara is of Saivite origin that he is, so to speak, Shiva, or the Buddhist equivalent of Shiva. But one gets, I must say, a completely different impression or feeling from the figure of Shiva in any form from what one gets from the figure of Avalokitesvara, so at best there is a sort of remote similarity of origin from the cultural point of view.

Side 2

It is as though the Buddhists just took that material and moulded it in their own way.

Kulananda: Does that include them both being ?

S: Yes, that is one of the points of resemblance, though of course it is explained rather differently.

Tejananda: Saddhaloka now has a question on the splitting, so to speak, of the original Buddha into several Buddhas.

Saddhaloka: That is, not into several Buddhas but into the aspects of Wisdom, Compassion and Energy of which you spoke in the lecture, cognitive, emotional, volitional. The question is to do with when this came about historically and how this can be traced.

S: We know very little about the development of the Mahayana in that sort of detailed historical sense; but it does seem that quite early on you had representations, or descriptions in literature, of the Buddha flanked by his disciples say, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana for the Theravadins or Kasyapa and Ananda for the Sarvastivadins and clearly Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, or Ananda and Kasyapa, represent different types, different qualities, different aspects if you like of Enlightenment, even. So when Bodhisattvas came into prominence as disciples of the Buddha, I suppose it was natural to flank the Buddha by two Bodhisattvas in much the same way that previously he was flanked by two arahant disciples. So you got the Buddha, whether Sakyamuni or Amitabha, flanked by who was it? well, there was Mahastamaprapta(?) and Samantabhadra, and there were others well, Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani; among gods, by Brahma and Visnu. Then, instead of being flanked by Bodhisattvas, he was flanked by other Buddhas. Well, there were the Buddhas of the Three Times, to begin with: human historical Buddhas. And then, of course, Jinas in the sense of archetypal Buddhas. So you had three. And from three it wasn't a very big step to five, and then you had your Mandala. This seems to have been roughly the process of development, but we can't pin it down to definite historical periods or definite dates.

Saddhaloka: There isn't any reflection of this in the Abhidharma or the ?

S: Oh, you get nothing of that sort in the Abhidharma, really, at all. It is as we would say quite abstract. [161]

Saddhaloka: But then, to speak of cognition, volition and emotion is quite abstract.

S: Yes, but that of course you get from the beginning. It is not confined to the Abhidharma. There was a Theravadin teaching it is in one of the commentaries, I think to the effect that Buddhas were of different types: Buddhas in whom wisdom predominated, Buddhas in whom action predominated virya, energy and Buddhas in whom I think it was metta or

karuna predominated. So that gave you an idea of Buddhas as embodying predominantly different qualities, even before the rise of the Mahayana.

Saddhaloka: This was in which school?

S: In the Theravada. Of course, one could say they might have been influenced by the Mahayana; it is difficult to say, but probably not. And it was said in that tradition that our Buddha, Sakyamuni, was a Buddha in whom prajna predominated, and that in the case of the next Buddha, Metteya, in him maitri will predominate. In other words, our Buddha was comparatively intellectual or predominantly intellectual, and Metteya will be predominantly emotional.

: Was Dipankara given energy, in that case?.

S: This I don't remember. I don't think there was any such ascription. But Dipankara was not the immediate predecessor of Sakyamuni, was he? Though he often stands for the Buddhas of the past. I think the immediate predecessor was Krakucanda(?), wasn't it? You'd have to look that up and check it. Oh, Kanagamana(?), I think. But you had better check it.

Tejananda: Now Chakkhupala has a question on the hundredsyllable mantra and five Buddha families.

Chakkhupala: My question is: could those Order Members whose istadevata belonged to other Buddha families substitute their family name for 'Vajra' in the recitation of the mantra? for example, Padmasattva, Ratnasattva or possibly Gunasattva, Karmasattva or Siddhisattva, and Dharmasattva or Tathatasattva? Or is there a compelling reason to restrict the idea of progressive union with one's real, primordial nature to the symbol of the vajra? I am thinking that the Lotus, the Jewel etc. are equally symbolic of Bodhi.

S: What you suggest has already been done in tradition itself. You do sometimes get Padmasattva instead of Vajrasattva. I don't know whether anybody ever took that practice or a practice of that sort, but I have got, among the various practices I do have, one in which one recites Padmasattva instead of Vajrasattva. I haven't come across Ratnasattva, but clearly the precedent is established; so one could recite Padma, or Ratna, or Karma, or Buddha. Buddha probably would be better than Tathata easier to say and more evocative, perhaps. I think probably one recites Padmasattva in connection with some of the White Tara practices.

Chakkhupala: I thought that perhaps, if it was OK to do that, it might help relate the ritual of confession to one's own yidam, to one's own daily practice, because then you would be reciting

S: Though one mustn't forget that there is a definite association, a special association, of purification with the figure of Vajrasattva, and perhaps it would [162]

not be wise to dispense with that association, if one was reciting for purposes of confession and therefore of purification.

Chakkhupala: I suppose it was over that area that I still have the question, because why should the purification which takes place there, which one is striving towards, is not

psychological hygiene, it is a striving towards one's primordial purity, and

S: Well, Vajrasattva seems to be associated with, or to represent, that aspect especially; so therefore the corresponding associations as it were cluster around that particular figure more than around any other.

Chakkhupala: Do you think that there might be association simply by convention?

S: Well, associations by convention are still associations! As far as I remember, in the context of the White Tara practice (if it is the White Tara), Padmasattva was recited not in a context of purification. But I won't be sure of that, I'd have to check that. Maybe one needs to do a bit more exploration and find out whether there are any further precedents in the Vajrayana tradition itself. Certainly there is the precedent of Padmasattva, I can be sure of that. Maybe one should ask a learned lama; maybe Dardo Rinpoche would know whether one ever recited in any context Ratnasattva and so on. Next time someone goes to visit Dardo Rinpoche, one could ask them to ask him.

Kuladeva: What about the association of the 100syllable mantra with Yamantaka? I understand from somebody who was recently ordained that that association has been established; I think you even mentioned it to him.

S: No, I think there is a little confusion there.

Kuladeva: Well, he seemed to think that that was the case that you could substitute Yamantaka for Vajrasattva in that mantra.

S: No, I think there is some confusion there; either between you and him or between him and

Kuladeva: No, no, he definitely communicated that to me.

S: No, that's not correct. Not an association of the kind you imply.

Tejananda: Question No. 9 is from Saddhaloka, on the sword as symbol of the Action family.

Saddhaloka: It refers to a point that came out in the lecture where you run through the attributes of Amoghasiddhi; you mention the Action family and then say the sword is a symbol of action when the crossed vajra has already been established as the symbol of the family. Was that just something you threw in, or what is the connection with the sword?

S: The family is sometimes called the Khadga family, the sword family.

Saddhaloka: So it has two symbols?

S: It would seem so. Or not in the sense of having two simultaneously, but in certain contexts one, in certain contexts the other. Though I am not aware of any [163] principle why that should be the case. But there is an association of the sword with that family. It is khadga (spells it).

Cittapala: Would that be the sword of Wisdom?

S: Presumably Wisdom of a kind, yes. The sword of Manjusri is usually described as the sword that cuts off karmas, isn't it? In Nepalese mythology, Manjusri cuts a way for the waters to escape with his sword, so that the Kathmandu valley is drained. Maybe one should consult books on Tibetan iconography or the Vajrayana generally, and look up khadga in the index and see what you get.

Tejananda: The next question is from Cittapala on the colour of Tara.

Cittapala: Do you know whether the emergence of the form of Green Tara in Tantric and Mahayana practice preceded historically other forms of Tara, such as the White Tara?

S: Yes, it does seem that the Green preceded the White, because we have the account of the origin of the White Tara practice in the biography of a particular teacher. I am afraid I forget the details. But that is, or was, comparatively late. So the Green Tara, Sama(?) Tara, seems to have been the original one. Tara, in any case, is almost a generic term for female Buddha figures, and once you have got a pattern of five Buddha figures, you are bound to have a corresponding pattern of five female Buddha figures, and they are equally bound to take on various colours. Kurukule is often called the Red Tara, though she seems originally to have been a quite independent figure; but the figure of Tara was so popular that it seems there was a tendency in Tibet to gather all the different goddesses under that heading of Tara. We end up with 21 Taras, don't we?

Cittapala: I believe, in the lecture, you imply that Tara is green, or that

S: Well, yes, she is green, and she is all the other colours too! But usually one thinks of either green or white. They are definitely the common and popular forms, with perhaps the Red Tara Kurukule coming next.

Cittapala: I was just wondering whether there was any sort of well, the colour if you are trying to get in touch with the figure of Tara, it shouldn't matter what colour you visualise her in particularly, but

S: Not necessarily, because it depends what the name Tara means or evokes for you. I mentioned in a previous lecture that she is associated with Going for Refuge, because there is protection. Her very name suggests deliverance and protection, so it would seem that the most natural association, as regards colours, is with the colour green. Why white should be associated with long life is rather difficult to say: one would have thought perhaps that yellow was associated with it more. There is of course a Yellow Tara Vajratara is yellow. But she is not especially associated with long life; it is the White Tara that is. So these are not always susceptible of rational explanation. But if for you Tara is definitely white, or definitely blue, or definitely yellow, fine; one can go ahead on that basis. But usually she is green, and if she is to be identified with any colour in particular it does seem that it is the colour green and the colour of her general qualities. She seems to assume other colours when she takes on a specific function, like prolonging life. How are we going? [164]

Tejananda: We've got about five more to go. The next one is from Kuladeva, on the association of Ratnasambhava with the arts.

Kuladeva: Unfortunately, I haven't really had time to formulate this question properly today, but I will say what I have in mind. When you were describing the development of the Mandala of the Five Buddhas, it seemed to me I could quite easily identify with the Wisdom and the Love aspect that particular dissection. You associated Ratnasambhava with beauty in the lecture, and last night you were talking about the neglect of beauty in Buddhism as a whole, so I was wondering whether perhaps one could also, possibly to make this other dissection more prominent, make more of a definite association between Ratnasambhava and beauty and possibly the arts, as a way of emphasising that aspect and also bringing the arts, which are of some interest in the Movement, more into view and even into the Mandala. Another thing that occurred to me was the horse symbolism I think it was mentioned in the lecture as well that it is associated with creativity, but also there is the Windhorse which is sort of dissemination, so disseminating the Dharma through the arts.

S: But there is also the figure of Pegasus, and someone told me that in Finland the figure of Pegasus always stands for the arts. Correct? Or was I misinformed?

: I seem to remember something like that as well.

S: It is wind energy, energy raised to a higher level. And, of course, you know where Pegasus came from; where did Pegasus originate? How was he born? (Silence.)

Kulananda: Wasn't it from a shell from the sea?

S: No, that's Venus! Aphrodite. You have been seeing Equus or something like that!

Priyananda: I think Pegasus was from the blood of the Gorgon.

S: That's right, yes. And how did Perseus kill the Gorgon?

Priyananda: With a shield which he held up.

S: Yes, well, can't you associate that with Shakespeare's Art holding up a mirror to Nature? (Laughter.) It is a little farfetched, but there are things more farfetched than that in Buddhism, especially in the Vajrayana. But, yes, it is important, from the standpoint adopted by the Vajrayana on a certain level in a certain context, to spin this whole web, this whole network of associations which are not necessarily rational. So, yes, the horse is there as the animal, the vahana, of Ratnasambhava. And the more associations we can somehow bring in, the better. I am sure we can bring in Pegasus, and associate him with the arts.

: Wherever the Dharma has spread, it has spread culture, and the Windhorse carries the Three Jewels.

S: Yes. And no culture without money! [165]

: Right. As I am sure they know very well down at Brighton!

Saddhaloka: It did occur to me I know that you have said on a previous occasion that Amoghasiddhi is associated with work or action in quite a subtle way, but he does seem to form a balance between, say, the aesthetic and action.

S: Yes, that's true.

Saddhaloka: which is of some importance, I think, to the Movement.

S: So, yes, by all means spin all these webs of association. I have also noticed in the last couple of years that several Order Members have taken up the sadhana of Ratnasambhava, which wasn't the case before, ever. It is a very recent development. Perhaps it is of some significance!

Kulananda: What you are saying about no culture without money, you could say no culture without superfluity.

S: Right, yes, indeed. Yes, you have got to what shall I say? have enough to subsist on.

: an economic surplus.

S: Yes. The arts presuppose an economic surplus. It is not that the surplus creates the arts, but it makes the arts possible.

Tejananda: Now Dharmapriya has a question on tulkus.

S: The word tulku, by the way, translates nirmanakaya.

Dharmapriya: Exactly! That is the origin of the question, Bhante. I think I should leave the formulation I had of it out of the picture, then. Basically, my question is: Tulku translates the word nirmanakaya, but in practice it doesn't really seem to

S: That is correct.

Dharmapriya: and that is really the question. It seems, as far as I can see, that there are three different types of tulku in the Tibetan tradition: one, there is a person of high spiritual attainment who, through his own efforts in our language has become, let us say, an embodiment of the AValokitesvara aspect of Enlightenment; secondly, there is the figure who, according to current Tibetan Vajrayana myth, is Avalokitesvara or another such figure and is always reborn voluntarily, taking the Bodhisattva myth very literally; and, thirdly, it was an impression I had gotten from reading well, dipping into a mass of work from Recon(?), and confirmed by discussion with Kuladeva, that there are many people who are officially called tulkus who say more or less, well, this was chance; they had no special feelings about being spiritual in the least.

S: Yes, I have certainly met such tulkus myself, often identified for social rather than spiritual reasons. But I think it is important to distinguish between tulkus, or incarnate lamas as we often say, who are incarnations, so to speak, to use that term, of beings, let's use that neutral term, of high spiritual development, and [166] those who have simply been identified as the reincarnations of a particular abbot or leading religious personality not necessarily spiritually very advanced. The vast majority of so-called tulkus in Tibet belong to the second category. I once asked Dardo Rinpoche how many real incarnate Bodhisattvas did he think there were in Tibet, in the full sense; and he said: 'Not more than seven or eight.' I then asked him how many were recognised as tulkus in the reincarnation of the head of the local

monastery sort of sense, and he said 'A couple of thousand, besides unofficial ones.' In this connection, I do sometimes repeat a little anecdote about Christmas Humphreys, because he got a bit impatient with current talk, as it then was, about tulkus and incarnate lamas, and he said: 'What is all this talk about incarnate lamas? What is an incarnate lama? He is just the Buddhist equivalent of the local vicar reborn!' That really hit the nail on the head, as it were. But Tibetans themselves don't always make that distinction. Another theory of my own is that many of the tulkus turn out so well and they do turn out well, the vast majority of them, under the old system simply because of the excellent education they are given. They are brought up by people, by monks, who fully believe that they have a tremendous spiritual potential, and they are very carefully trained. They are treated with great kindness and given great consideration, and I think this brings out the best would bring the best out of almost anybody. I think this does account for the fact that usually a tulku, as far as I have observed and I have known about 100 altogether personally is a cut above the average monk. I think it is almost entirely due to the very special training they are given, and the fact that those who bring them up are convinced of their higher spiritual status, usually. Though some Tibetan monks are known to be a bit sceptical about it. I remember Dardo Rinpoche telling me that some of his geshe teachers who were not incarnate lamas used to scoff at him and other incarnate lamas when they were very small, and even say quite openly, 'What is all this talk about incarnate lamas? You little chaps, just playing around, who says you are incarnate lamas?' They were a bit dismissive about it! So there was some scepticism, even in traditional Tibetan circles, among these elderly tilokwa(?) geshe who had spent their lives studying logic and dialectic and philosophy and all the rest, and were not overimpressed by these little tiny incarnate lamas.

Dharmapriya: Bhante, going back to the original distinction you made: are there not figures who, at least theoretically, belong to both classes? let us say the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama in theory belong to both groups?

S: Oh yes, indeed. You also get multiple reincarnations. For instance, one of my own teachers, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, was believed to be simultaneously an incarnation of Manjusri and of Padmasambhava. It was never explained exactly how that came about at least, not explained to me but it means one mustn't take these things too literally or literalistically. But certainly, you cannot expect every so-called tulku, every so-called incarnate lama, to be a fully fledged incarnate Bodhisattva. No; the fact that one has been identified as a reincarnation does not mean that one has been identified as an incarnate Bodhisattva. After all, we are all reincarnations, and theoretically we could all be identified!

Dharmapriya: But, Bhante, they are identified, if I have understood it correctly, as reincarnations of someone who was a Bodhisattva.

S: No, not necessarily, not at all. [167]

Dharmapriya: Well, taking the case, say, of the Dalai Lama

S: Well, he is in a class by himself, almost. But there are lots and lots who are identified as the reincarnate local abbot, without that local abbot having himself been the incarnation of a Bodhisattva or manifestation of a Bodhisattva.

Dharmapriya: So, in a sense, it is a misuse of a translation of the term nirmanakaya, then?

S: In that case, yes. It seems that lines of nirmanakayas have really multiplied in the course of the history of Buddhism in Tibet. Some modern American Buddhist publications describe the tulku theory as a strategy for the preservation of a tradition. That is another matter. Or rather, a strategy for ensuring the continuity of a tradition.

: I have heard it said, Bhante, that in some parts of Tibet there were very often powerful families associated with certain monasteries, and that the tulku system was conceived originally, I think, by the Kagyupas, I am not sure which branch, in order to avoid squabbling over the succession for the abbot of a particular monastery and [by] rival families.

S: Yes, it may be so; but then there is still the question of locating the reincarnation. He has to be located within a particular family.

: That's right, but then if it can be felt that that choice has been made by a higher authority, perhaps that would prevent any kind of squabble.

S: Usually, of course, for a tulku to be recognised officially by the Tibet government, he has to be as it were validated by the Dalai Lama or at least by the Regent.

: I gather from the biography of one of the Dalai Lamas I can't remember which one but one who is also considered to be a tulku that he did not himself think that he really was. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama, apparently, just pulled the name out of a hat and put a pin in the names. That was

S: Well, that is a recognised way, isn't it, in Tibetan Buddhism, as in divination? I knew several tulkus who said that they just weren't, and didn't want to be, tulkus. They had just been identified, they felt, because they belonged to a very prominent family, a family in fact of two previous Dalai Lamas. None the less, one couldn't help recognising that tulkus were usually a cut above ordinary monks I think largely on account of their excellent education.

Tejananda: Now a question from Cittapala on the term Going for Refuge.

Cittapala: As we come to a deeper and clearer understanding of the connotation of the phrase Going for Refuge, I find myself increasingly dissatisfied with the more literal meaning which is conveyed by the term 'Going for Refuge'. I feel that it somehow doesn't lend itself very readily to the expanded meaning and understanding which people are coming to associate with that phrase. I was wondering whether you had given any thought to this, and possibly even come up with an alternative.

S: Sometimes we speak of 'commitment to the Three Jewels', which is a little existential, shall we say? But personally I feel quite happy and satisfied with [168]

saranagamana, Going for Refuge. To me it seems quite meaningful, and I don't feel any personal need to as it were rephrase that act or the description of that act. But maybe other people have other ideas. Anyone have any comments?

Abhaya: One thing that occurred to me: it seems to be a bit static. Whereas, like, evolution, committing oneself to that change of proceeding from lower form to higher form, ongoing; whereas Going for Refuge does have a sort of onthelevel as it were association of going

somewhere to protect yourself against

S: And just staying there. Of course, further dangers arise and you have to Go for Refuge again on a higher or as it were deeper level.

Abhaya: But can you see what I mean?

S: Oh yes, I do. But in that case, any suggestions? I am quite open to suggestions.

Abhaya: It is very difficult to think of any. Evolution is a good word, but then it has the wrong associations; all the associations of the Lower Evolution.

S: I do make it clear in exposition that Going for Refuge is an ongoing process; but the expression as such does not itself convey that.

Abhaya: What about 'launching'?

S: Launching? (Some laughter.)

: 'I am going to be launched'!

S: I did come across a treatise by Porphyry not so long ago called 'Launching Points of the Mind.' At least, that is how it was translated; I don't know what the original Greek was.

Kulananda: We talk about 'taking up the Dharma', 'taking up the practice'. It does seem as if we need to try well, it would be useful if we could include some heroic aspect, some heroic quality, in the idea; something expansive and outwardgoing. 'Take up the Dharma life' that sort of idea.

S: Brahmacharya, you know, 'sublime faring'. Not in the sense of celibacy, which is a more specific sense.

Kulananda: That of conscious evolution.

S: Right, yes! Yes, that comes pretty near. Conscious evolution, hm. But it doesn't contain a hint of the spiritual or Transcendental, does it? It could be merely humanistic in a quite narrow sense.

: Conscious spiritual evolution?

S: Conscious spiritual Transcendental evolution?! Maybe people will have to have a think about it.

Abhaya: And it does seem I was talking to Dharmapriya last night it doesn't translate very well into German, for instance. [169]

S: 'Going for Refuge'?

Abhaya: You can't say 'going', can you, you've got to say 'take'.

S: Oh, is that so?

Dharmapriya: Yes.

S: Ah, that is interesting. That is just what it isn't, in a sense. Though often we say 'Taking Refuge', and Guenther translates it as 'taking refuge'.

: What about something like 'striving for'?

S: Mm, yes, then it becomes close to pabbajja(?) doesn't it, 'going forth', which is yes, an aspect of Going for Refuge.

Abhaya: It is the same in Dutch, too; you can't say 'going', you have to say 'take'.

S: I hope whenever necessary a note is appended saying that in the original it is 'going', not 'taking'! Can't one ever say 'Going for Refuge' in German in any way?

: No, you can't.

S: You have to say 'I took refuge in the cave', not 'I went for refuge to the cave'? Hm. Oh dear.

Dharmapriya: I tend to sometimes apply what one might describe as a slightly exaggerated poetic licence to the German language, but in trying to saying 'Going for Refuge' in one public talk what came out was something a compound verb including the word 'go', but it was more like in 'committing' a crime

S: You had committed a Going for Refuge?

Dharmapriya: It was a very good joke with which to start the talk, but it wasn't meant as a joke.

S: I didn't know you had such a streak of poetry in you!

Dharmapriya: It only becomes illuminated after I have

S: What about Spanish? Does anybody know? We don't have Subhuti here. (Silence.) We must have had to handle this in Spanish. I have been talking about Going for Refuge. I will have to ask Subhuti how it was translated. So you can't say 'To the Buddha for refuge I go; you have to say 'The Buddha for refuge I take! (Laughter.)

: You would say: 'I take my refuge with the Buddha.'

S: Or would you say: 'I with the Buddha refuge take'? I believe the verb comes at the end, so I have been told!

: Not always. [170]

S: Or 'With the Buddha I refuge take.' Perhaps we should just stick to the Pali. It is an interesting point. Anyway, [we will] see what other suggestions for rendition come up.

: Presumably, if Pali had been like German, it would never have originated in the first place.....

S: Well, you do have gahana(?), 'taking', in Pali. You 'take' the Precepts. It is sarana gamana and sila gahana; 'going for refuge' and 'taking precepts'. So they could have said 'taking refuge' if they had wanted to. Anyway, let's proceed.

Priyananda: This is connected to the previous question. In the discussion on initiation, abhiseka, on the second night, you stated that initiation can be drawn back to the Going for Refuge, just as the arising of the Bodhicitta can be drawn back to the Going for Refuge; and further that 'the abhiseka refers to the actual energy inherent in the Going for Refuge itself'. Could the brahmacarya vow be similarly drawn back to the Going for Refuge, and if so which aspect of the Going for Refuge could this be referring to? In our study group, it was suggested that the aspects could be destruction of passion, Going Forth, purity, the transcendence of sexual clarity, and so on.

Side 3

That is the question could the brahmacarya vow be drawn back to the Going for Refuge in a similar way?

S: It would not be quite a drawing back as in the case of the bodhicitta utpada and the abhiseka, because brahmacarya was a term contemporaneous with Going for Refuge, so it is not a drawing back in a historical sense. But what one does notice is that, in the case of sarana gamana, Going for Refuge, you have a movement; you have a movement towards the Buddha, a movement towards the Dharma. And, similarly, in brahmacarya, you actually have a movement. It is acarya(?), from the verb carati, to fare, as in dharmacari; to fare, to move on. But, in the case of Going for Refuge, there was a reference to what you move towards, but that is not the case with brahmacarya. That describes more, one could say, the level on which you move; you move on the level of Brahma. You move forward on that higher spiritual level. Brahma is, for Buddhism, more a poetic than a sort of philosophical term. So there is certainly an analogy between the two, and the term brahmacarya occupies a quite important place in early Buddhism and it is usually translated as 'the spiritual life' or 'the holy life'. But you can even regard it as referring to an object, because if you want to be like Brahma, if you want to reach the Brahma state in the sense of a high spiritual state, you have to fare or proceed or move forward like Brahma himself; especially via the brahma viharas; you have to dwell again, viharati, another verb suggesting movement in those higher states. So you can certainly tie up brahmacarya with Going for Refuge. In the same way, you can tie up aryaparyesana, the Buddha's Noble Search. It is a going from the conditioned to the Unconditioned. You can tie up pabbajja(?), the Going Forth from the conditioned, from the world to a higher state, to a new way of life. In the same way you can tie up the alaya paravrtti, the turning about on the deepest level of consciousness. These are all expressive of

more or less the same thing. And, of course, dharmacarya: faring in accordance with the Dharma, moving forwards in accordance with the Dharma; in other words, spiritually progressing. [171] I had it in mind some time to write something on this term brahmacarya in the full sense, not just in the sense of celibacy. By the way, as you probably know, you do have other terms in Pali beginning with brahma and corresponding to dhamma. There is not only dhammacakkha, there is brahmacakkha. There is brahmakaya as well as dhammakaya in Pali. And brahmacariya as well as dhammacariya. This all requires investigation.

Tejananda: This is the final question, and it is from Ruchiraketu on the context of the whole series.

Ruchiraketu: That more or less suggests what the question is. I was thinking about when we are leading the Mitra study it would be quite nice to be able to fill in the background to the series to some extent, particularly like it was given in 1972. What sort of people were you trying to communicate with at that time and all that sort of thing?

S: I think you would have to ask the contemporaries. At lunch today we were talking about this very thing who was around at that time? Subhuti was around, Nagabodhi was around, Pap...raja was around, Buddhadasa was around. If you talk with some of those people they will probably be able to tell you. I don't remember very clearly because I have given so many lectures and even courses of lectures I have only very vague recollections of particular audiences. But I do remember at the Archway Centre, which is where I gave this series of lectures, that we often had a predominantly, for want of a better term, hippie audience; and I can remember walking into the Archway Centre at around the time that I was giving these lectures and finding dozens of people there literally strewn over the floor, just lying all over the place. This is how people behaved in those days; it was almost considered correct behaviour informal behaviour. You had to be informal at all costs! You had to just step over them, they were just strewn around; hats and coats in piles in the corner, and things like that. You sometimes strongly suspected that some of those people had been smoking dope, which was very often the case, I think; two-thirds of the people who came along were in the habit of smoking dope in those days. It wasn't considered anything unusual. If one went, say, to see a film at the Electric Cinema, which some of you may remember, there would be a queue, and there would be hanging over the queue a clearly visible pall of smoke from the joints that everybody was smoking! or virtually everybody. believe perhaps I shouldn't mention this that some people in those days used to think it was a good idea to come and listen to Bhante speaking, especially on things like Tantric symbols, when you were on an acid trip! You missed all that, didn't you! remember again this is on a slightly different note at the end of one of my lectures I forget which series it was; it might well have been one in this series a disappointed customer standing up at the back of the room afterwards and saying he was really disappointed with my talk; that it was more like a sermon than a lecture on Buddhism! He was really quite upset. ut, yes, this series was given at the Archway Centre. Ask Nagabodhi, ask Subhuti, they will have some recollections, I am sure.

: Bhante, just before coming up here, Padmaraja had one recollection of the time just a small incident, but obviously it stayed with him. It was immediately after you had given the lecture on 'Colours and Mantric Sound'; apparently, [172] immediately after this you came down and you approached him and said: 'In that lecture I have gone as far as I can with words.'

S: Mm. I don't remember that, but clearly he remembers it. I think I could go a bit further now! Perhaps I meant that one really needed to have recourse to colours, to the visual medium, because there were so many descriptions in this series. But we had good audiences for those talks. Formerly, before we got the Archway Centre, we used to have these lectures mainly at Centre House, but it was very good having them at our own centre. We could accommodate 70 to 80 people in that upstairs Shrine Room. We often did. Lectures were very popular. I really wish that around the Movement we had just more lectures, not by me but by Order Members, some of whom as you know are very good lecturers indeed. Some of them are actually present I am not looking at anyone in particular, but I really feel we need more lectures, because there are some people who really are attracted by lectures, and who will come and hear a lecture whereas they won't come to a meditation class to begin with.

Ruchiraketu: Another thing I was thinking was you mentioned the other night that some of the material wasn't really suitable for Mitras, so that made me wonder why you had been speaking in that way then.

S: I suppose it was the path of irregular steps, whereas in the case of the Mitras and the Mitra system, which wasn't [in existence] then, it is much more the path of regular steps. But, of course, we mustn't be so regular as to exclude entirely the possibility of irregularity, because some people at least I am not looking at anyone! thrive on irregularity! We mustn't deny them their natural nourishment! I was thinking, in connection with what I am writing at the moment, that I myself have followed the path of irregular steps through sheer force of circumstances; because it wasn't all neatly laid out for me by other people. So those who are more inclined to follow the path of regular steps are very fortunate inasmuch as in the FWBO we do provide a path of very regular steps. But we must be careful not to exclude the path of irregular steps, otherwise you will be excluding, probably, quite a lot of people who don't like to follow a very regular path or regular programme or to proceed very carefully step by step. Perhaps you could say that the path of regular steps is more for the tortoises, who are not to be despised, and the path of irregular steps more for the hares! By that time, of course, I myself was living up at Muswell Hill. I generally used to walk down the hill to Archway, passing quite near the Highgate Cemetery, and give my talk. I was also thinking talking about cremation grounds Balmore Street was a bit of a not exactly cremation ground but bomb site, almost, because there was demolition going on all around us; and in the end we were demolished, after moving out. So there was that sort of atmosphere all around. Do any of you remember? Were any of you around in those days?

Abhaya: I was involved and I used to visit occasionally.

S: But when Lokamitra comes to England, ask him to reminisce. He was very well acquainted with the Balmore Street scene. Nagabodhi and Subhuti were mentioning the various strange characters who were around in those days, like Irish Paul ?

Voices: Oh yes. [173]

S: And there was Neil, who went to prison, I gather. You were around in those days. You were one of the Balmore Street boys, right?

: That's right, yes. (Laughter.) What did we do?

S: Oh yes, I remember now. You and

: Ratnaguna, and Aryacitta.

S: Aryacitta, I was thinking of. Yes.

: And Devapriya was around.

S: Yes, I don't remember Devapriya from those days.

: I think he was more in with the Sufi bunch round the corner. They were next door as well, weren't they?

S: The which bunch?

: The Sufi people. They used to wear white clothes.

S: Oh yes, we had the what were they called? They had another name beginning with an R. Rash ?

: Rajneesh?

S: No, not Rajneesh. I forget now. But they were quite prominent, and they used to come along to us. We had the community at No. 3, didn't we, or Lokamitra did? So it was under those circumstances that I gave these talks. I can't remember preparing them at all. In the case of some of my lectures, I can remember preparing them, but I have no recollection of preparing these, and only the vaguest of recollections of giving them. I think I remember giving the lectures on the White Lotus Sutra more clearly. I think it was an earlier series. Anyway, if anyone has any reminiscences, write them down before you forget. OK, let's leave it there, then, shall we? Yes, I hope the ripples will spread. The Sanskrit for ripple, by the way, is ripu(?). (Laughter.)