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 Mitras. These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are now available in book form. However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Triratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas Triratna has acknowledged as unhelpful and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

THE VENERABLE SANGHARAKSHITA:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH STUDY GROUP LEADERS, 1985

LECTURE SERIES ON THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Day 1

Tape 1, Side 1

Sangharakshita: Have you had one study group, or have you divided into two?

Tejananda: We had one study group.

S: So there is one person putting the questions? Ah.

Tejananda: We had 14 questions come up, and a possible few supplementaries as well. The first one is from me.

S: These are all from the first lecture in the series?

Tejananda: These are all from the first lecture, yes. Near the beginning of the tape, you say that wherever Buddhism has gone, historically, references to the Noble Eightfold Path are found. I wonder to what extent the Eightfold Path is of practical importance in a) the Tibetan schools of Buddhism, b) Zen and Shin. Do these schools actually use the basic 'Hinayana' teachings at all? If not, what do they use?

S: Could we have that bit by bit?

Tejananda: Yes. 'Near the beginning of the tape, you say that wherever Buddhism has gone, historically, references to the Noble Eightfold Path are found.'

S: Yes, you notice I say 'references to the Noble Eightfold Path are found', and that is to be taken quite literally, one may say. I don't say: 'Wherever Buddhism went, the formula of the Noble Eightfold Path represented the basic structure of the spiritual life.' No: I say 'references to the Noble Eightfold Path are found.' So if one takes that statement quite literally, as it is meant to be taken, the implications are perhaps obvious. Anyway, let's go on and explore them, perhaps.

Tejananda: 'I wonder to what extent the Eightfold Path is of practical importance in a) the Tibetan schools of Buddhism.'

S: Yes, there is quite a difference between there being references to the Noble Eightfold Path and the Noble Eightfold Path being of practical importance. You mention Tibetan Buddhism: to the best of my knowledge, the Noble Eightfold Path as such is of very little importance indeed, in the sense that very few Tibetan Buddhists, if any, will consciously make that the basis of their whole spiritual life or think very much in those terms; even though learned Tibetan monks will certainly be familiar with that formulation and will have perhaps explained it and expounded it. But, to the best of my recollection, when I was in Kalimpong

and in contact with what one may describe as ordinary Tibetan Buddhists, they had in fact never heard of the Noble Eightfold Path!

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Tejananda: Then also the same with regard to the Zen and Shin schools.

S: I think the same applies to the Zen school; also to the Shin school, but for rather different reasons. The Shin school spoke in terms of there being two paths, the path of jiriki or self effort or self power, and the path of tariki or other power. So they regarded all other forms of Buddhism as pertaining to the path of self power, and they naturally regarded all such formulations and practices as the six or ten Paramitas and the Noble Eightfold Path as pertaining to the path of self power and therefore not to their path, the path of other power. So one doesn't find the Noble Eightfold Path playing any role of practical importance in the Shinshu, but for rather different doctrinal reasons. Having said that, one must also go on to make the point that probably the main reason why the Noble Eightfold Path was not of any great importance in Tibetan or Chinese or Japanese Buddhism was that that particular formula, as a formula, was superseded by the formula of the six or the ten Paramitas. The Noble Eightfold Path came to be regarded, perhaps, as pertaining to the Hinayana, whereas the six or the ten Paramitas, of course, pertained to the Mahayana, they represented the Bodhisattva Path. On the other hand, of course, one must not be misled by appearances. In many cases, Tibetan or Chinese or Japanese Buddhists may well have observed the greater part of the Eightfold Path in effect. For instance, one anga of the Eightfold Path is Perfect Speech; well, they might well have practised Perfect Speech. There is Perfect Samadhi; they might well have practised Perfect Samadhi. But they did not think primarily in terms of that particular formulation or structure.

Tejananda: I think you have effectively answered the last part, which is: 'If not, what do they use?'

S: Well, the answer is, broadly speaking, the six or the ten Paramitas. That, for them, is the basic formulation of the Path in practical terms. But, as I think I have tried to make clear in the Survey, there is quite a lot of overlap, quite a lot of common ground, as between the formulation of sila, samadhi, prajna, and the Eightfold Path; and therefore as between the Eightfold Path and the six Paramitas. One can't have completely different paths, obviously. So, even though, in many Buddhist countries, the Noble Eightfold Path as a formula does not occupy a very prominent position, one must not think that the content of that path is necessarily always lacking.

Tejananda: Bhante, with regard to the Shin school, do they acknowledge in some sense the basic teachings, or do they just regard those as completely not just their way, and simply concentrate on other power?

S: I think they would say that the path of relying on self power is not their path, and that all specific deliberate practices belong to that path of self power. They would say that they follow the path of relying on the other power, the power of Amitabha's Vow, and that they repeat the Nembutsu, the Salutation to Buddha Amitabha, out of gratitude for the fact that by fulfilling his vow Amitabha has already accomplished their birth in the Pure Land. They might go on to say though I am not definitely aware of this that, as an expression of their gratitude to Amitabha, they not only recite the Nembutsu but observe the six or ten Paramitas,

the Eightfold Path and so on. I don't know that they do actually say this, but it would not be surprising if they did; in which case they would, in a [3] sense, be following the Eightfold Path, though not by way of relying on their own power but as an expression of their gratitude to Amitabha.

Tejananda: The second question is from Ratnaprabha and concerns sub vocalization.

Ratnaprabha: This starts off from something you say in the lecture. In the lecture, you say: 'For some people, Perfect Vision arises as a result of deep and prolonged thought', and then, a few sentences later: 'Some people actually think their way through to Reality, to the Path of Vision.' I believe you also talked, on the Chairmen's Convention, about the involvement of the thinking faculty in Insight. You talked of the sub vocalization that occurs even during visualization. So my questions on this are: What is thinking in this context? Does it involve words? Is it thus a sort of internal hearing and speaking process?

S: You mean the thinking that can give rise to Insight?

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: Yes, it can imply words. It is not that one as it were hears words as though spoken by another person, but you are thinking in words, quite consciously, deliberately, and one can even say directedly, because one is very much interested in pursuing that particular subject. One might be reflecting on impermanence, or reflecting on death, or reflecting on the mutual interpenetration of all phenomena; but your thinking, your reflecting, can be so intense, so concentrated, and have so much energy behind it, that it does bring you to Insight; it does develop into Insight.

Ratnaprabha: I think, if I understood correctly, on the Chairmen's event you even said that some kind of thinking process was necessary for the attainment of Insight, and this is how people got on to asking you about visualization and whether there was any thought present in visualization. So the kind of thinking I was asking about is this perhaps very, very subtle sub vocalization: is this something that is connected, on a subtle and mental level, with the hearing and speaking process particularly? And does this mean there is something unusual about the hearing and speaking process, when you internalize it, that gives it more power than just the imaging process?

S: I don't quite remember the connection on the Chairmen's event. In some ways, I don't quite see what the question is, or whether there is a question, if you see what I mean.

Kuladeva: How is sub vocalization different from thinking, in the sense that you were just talking about, in terms of developing Insight? Is it different?

S: It isn't different at all, no. Sub vocalization means thinking to oneself, not thinking aloud; not expressing your thoughts in actual speech. And there are degrees of that. I think perhaps what I was getting at on the Chairmen's event was that, when you visualize, you may tend to think, to so speak, that you are not thinking; but actually you are thinking, but the thinking is very subtle. So perhaps I used then the term sub vocalization to indicate that very subtle mental activity that went on, almost against your will as it were; because when you are visualizing you are very often trying just to visualize. But I think usually you can't help there

being a very, very subtle thought, almost in spite of yourself; a [4] very subtle thinking process. So that is different though perhaps only different in degree from that very definite, purposeful, directed, intense thinking or reflection that can lead to the development of Insight without very much experience, say, of the dhyanas, almost as an independent practice, almost as a practice in its own right. But it this way: the more usual procedure is that you, say, go through the dhyanas, or at least you have some experience of the dhyanas. That brings your whole being, all your energies, very much together; so any thinking process that starts up after you have had some dhyana experience will be very unified, very integrated, concentrated. So you will be in a better position to develop Insight. But there are some people whose interest in, as it were, intellectual matters, intellectual problems, is so intense that it is as though the thinking process carries concentration along with it, rather than concentration providing a base for the thinking process. Do you see what I am getting at? Some people have a very intense interest in intellectual problems, let us say, whereas others find it very difficult to work up much enthusiasm for them, or to think about them very intensely or very deeply. They need the support of concentration, i.e. the dhyanas, first. But, as I said, other people are not like that; they are so interested in intellectual problems that they become concentrated quite easily and naturally, and don't, perhaps, need to have a prior experience of the dhyanas to the same extent or possibly, on certain occasions or in certain cases, not at all.

Kulamitra: If we are talking about thinking which brings one to Insight, is it that, at the point of Insight, that goes beyond what we usually consider the thinking process? I am thinking of, say, in the Zen tradition you would have a koan, and that would bring you to a sort of crisis mentally; is it that, by pursuing an issue in sufficient depth and intensity, you sort of come to a crisis of your own limitation and then go beyond that?

S: That is certainly one way in which it can happen; but, on the other hand, you can also have an intellectual process, a thinking process, which is going deeper and deeper and becoming more and more refined. A koan is a special kind of intellectual problem, one may say. You can pursue a train of thought and arrive at a conclusion which you find deeply satisfying. On the other hand, you can pursue a train of thought to such an extent, especially in connection with a koan, that the thinking process is completely transcended in the end.

Kulamitra: I suppose what I am thinking is that it is usually said that the direct experience of Reality cannot be adequately translated into speech or concepts. So if that is the case, how could your thinking, as thinking, be an Insight? I don't quite understand.

S: Well, of course, that raises the question: what is Insight? You distinguish Insight, say, from meditative experience, so in what way can you distinguish it from meditative experience except by ascribing a thought content to it? It is as though the subtle and directed thought process becomes a basis for the development of Insight. One cannot say that Insight is exactly non conceptual, because when it comes to expressing it you have to express it in conceptual terms. If you say that it is completely non conceptual, what difference is there then between samatha and vipassana? On the other hand, it certainly isn't thinking in the ordinary sense. It is a vipassana, a clear vision. Perhaps it is best to think of it in terms of thinking, but a thinking greatly subtlized, and a thinking which it is quite difficult to reduce to words.

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Kulamitra: I know sometimes, just in the course of ordinary thought, what Ratnaprabha called sub vocalization provides a structure whereby you can keep a grasp of something. You may

suddenly see something, but unless you can form it into some structure you lose it very quickly. Is it that kind of process?

S: It is not that you capture it, but there is a basis for it. In a sense you capture it, but you don't sort of pin it down. Maybe it is best to speak in terms of it providing you a basis. But it does seem as though the Insight doesn't manifest, or isn't experienced, apart from that basis in sustained and concentrated thinking.

Kulamitra: So if you are this type of person anyway, thought for you is a door through to the Insight?

S: Yes, though again that is only a figure of speech. It is not that one, in a sense, leaves behind the thinking in the way that you pass through the door.

Kuladeva: Going back to visualization practices, is that sub vocalization, as he called it, a desirable thing in the context of visualization practice?

S: Ah, well, if you are trying to do the visualization simply as a, say, samatha practice, then it is not; it is to be eliminated. But if you are using the visualization as a basis for the development of Insight, then of course it needs to be cultivated. So I think one might say, broadly speaking, that initially you need to be able to visualize without any sub vocalization, or with as little sub vocalization as you can possibly manage, because that will ensure that the concentration is intense and that the visualized image is seen very clearly; but a further stage would be reflecting on the, so to speak, deeper significance of that visualized image.

Kuladeva: So it is on the deeper significance rather than thinking, 'I am actually visualizing, say, the blue sky or the lotus,' and thinking that

S: Yes, thinking: 'Oh, I am visualizing the blue sky, and now this is the lotus ' That is the sort of involuntary almost sub vocalization that you need to eliminate as much as possible.

Kuladeva: So that sort of sub vocalization [should] be eliminated, and thinking of the significance of the visualization is eventually to be cultivated? Is that right?

S: Yes, in the sense that you reflect, for instance, that that visualized form has been conjured up, therefore it depends upon certain causes and conditions. Therefore, essentially, it is void. Those sort of reflections would correspond to Insight, but are to be developed only on the basis of a quite firm and clear visualization of that particular form, not prematurely.

Ratnaprabha: So the other pole, the samatha pole, of experience when one has got beyond the first dhyana, does this mean that the complete absence of any kind of discursive thought means that if you have, for example, an as it were visual experience during meditation, there will be no labelling at all going on? You won't, at the time you have the experience, be aware of it as, say, a flower or the colour blue or anything like that? You will simply be purely aware of it, and only later, on reflection, will you call it blue or a flower?

S: You can perceive blue (as) blue and not red without sub-vocalizing the word 'blue'. So it is not that you will not know that it is blue; you will know that it is blue, but not know it in the sense of forming a thought which is associated with a particular word, but by having a direct experience of blue.

Ratnaprabha: So what exactly is it that you know?

S: In the sense that I have defined it, 'knowing' is inappropriate here. If by 'knowing' you mean perception, yes, you perceive, you know in that sense; but you do not know in the sense of forming concepts which are associated with words.

Ratnaprabha: But in that kind of state, it would not be possible to gain Insight is it correct to say that? for the very reason that there are no concepts associated with it?

S: Yes; in order to develop Insight, you would have to associate concepts with your experience, whatever it was, and develop sustained and directed thinking, using those concepts in a concentrated way; which you would be more easily able to do by virtue of the previous experience.

Tejananda: The third question is from Dhammaloka, on intellectual intuition and thinking one's way to Reality.

Dhammaloka: It is very much a continuation of Kulamitra's well, not really a continuation; partly it is the same question and maybe other aspects too. In the lecture you mention the possibility of Perfect Vision arising as a result of deep, prolonged and logical thought, and you refer to some people as actually 'thinking their way through to Reality'. From one of the seminar extracts, I understand that on both the mundane and the Transcendental levels of the Noble Eightfold Path an element of intuition, directness and immediateness is implied equally in 'Right View' to which you there refer as 'intellectual intuition' (with small initial letters) and in 'Perfect Vision', to which you refer as 'Intuitive Insight' (capital letters). Does this suggest that there is a sort of hiatus a gap, perhaps a break in the thinking process leaving room, so to speak, for intuition to come in? If so, is it to be compared with the way in which some scientific discoveries have been reported to come about (that is, after thinking, suddenly a solution appeared)? In what sense do the terms 'Vision' and 'seeing Reality' really apply to this way of 'thinking through to Reality'?

S: In some ways, one can regard the expression 'seeing' as metaphor, but on the other hand one does, at least sometimes, have that sort of experience, and one does actually see and that is the only way in which one can put it; even though one doesn't see any sight, in the ordinary sense, one doesn't perceive any form, none the less 'seeing' is appropriate. For instance, you explain something to someone and he says: 'Oh, yes, I see.' And that is exactly how it seems, isn't it that you see, even though you haven't actually visualized anything? So it does seem that the term 'see' or 'vision' or vipassana is appropriate. It is not merely a metaphor. It is rather more than a metaphor. Or you can say it is a

metaphor in the sense that it does reflect or embody Reality, in a sense. It is not a mere metaphor. But, to go back to the earlier part of the question, when you so to speak see something very big indeed, or you see something very clearly, it is as though there is a sort of

hiatus; but not always. I think it depends upon the intensity and clarity of the seeing. If that contrasts very strongly with the shallowness and feebleness of your previous insight or understanding, then you may well feel that there is a sort of hiatus, a sort of gap, you have made a jump. Or if a number of things which have hitherto been separate come together, suddenly in a flash, you may have the feeling of a hiatus, again as though you have made a great jump, a great leap. I think it depends on the particular nature of the process. I don't think that there is always that leap, but sometimes there is.

Tejananda: Another question from Dhammaloka, on Insight through communication.

Dhammaloka: In the lecture you did not mention communication as one of the ways in which Perfect Vision might arise. Leaving aside those examples in the Canon where people seem to immediately gain Insight when meeting the Buddha, would you consider it to be possible, even if not likely, for Perfect Vision to arise in the course of the sincere and honest communication between ordinary human beings who are on approximately the same level of development? Do you know of any examples of this?

S: I have actually spoken of this somewhere, in fact more than once. I am surprised I didn't mention it in that particular lecture. I have spoken about this on a number of occasions, in fact, and have said that this is indeed possible. And I have connected it with the experience of what I have called mutual self transcendence, that is to say when the experience of communication becomes so intense that each person is no longer limited, as it were, to his own individuality; that individuality, at least for an instant, is transcended, and you might have almost a glimpse of egolessness. So in that way you can have an Insight experience arising out of the sheer intensity of your communication, which is, of course, mutual.

Dhammaloka: Could that be a one-sided experience ?

S: No, I take that as mutual. Because, if it is one-sided, it is not communication; so Insight may arise, but it is a different kind of thing. I thought I referred to that usually when I spoke about communication and communication exercises. I believe a few people, at least, have actually had that experience in connection with doing the communication exercises.

Tejananda: And another question from Dhammaloka, on the FWBO as context for the arising of Perfect Vision.

Dhammaloka: It is a question with two premises: presumably one measure of the helpfulness of FWBO structures and activities lies in our successfully creating the conditions or perhaps 'fields of experience' within which Perfect Vision is more likely to arise than under more ordinary conditions. From one of the seminar extracts, again, I understand that to a large extent it is our deep-rooted micchaditthis which prevent us from attaining Perfect Vision. Could you, perhaps by way of going through the different ways of the arising of Perfect Vision [mentioned] in the lecture, please point out [8] those areas in our activities where you find particularly deep-rooted micchaditthis or other shortcomings that prevent Perfect Vision arising?

S: Perhaps that is going a little too quickly. Suppose one thinks in terms of that threefold formulation, that is to say ethics, meditation and wisdom. If one follows that path, well, that is the Path of the Higher Evolution, that is the path that leads to Enlightenment; so one may

say that the FWBO exists to create an environment, or to create facilities within which, or with the help of which, it is more easy, let us say, to follow that path of sila, samadhi, prajna than it is in the outside world; but one notices that prajna, which includes Insight, comes last. If there is to be any arising of Insight, there must first of all be concentration, samadhi. If there is to be any arising of concentration or samadhi, there must be the ethics. So, in that case, the FWBO needs to consist first of all of an ethical base; then, on that ethical base, there needs to be a superstructure of concentration and meditation; then upon that there needs to be a sort of pinnacle of prajna or Insight. So it is not that the micchaditthis get in the way once you start trying to develop Insight. Actually, the micchaditthis start getting in the way right from the beginning. Some people may question the very need for ethics. We know that in some Buddhist groups ethics is barely mentioned; it is certainly not stressed. Therefore I say that it is not just a question of looking at micchaditthis as obstacles to the development of Insight; it is more a question of looking at micchaditthis as obstacles to the leading of the entire spiritual life, beginning with ethics and proceeding through concentration and meditation and culminating in the development of prajna or Insight. I think to look at all the micchaditthis that get in the way of leading a spiritual life at all, which therefore get in the way of the FWBO, or hinder the setting up of the FWBO or an FWBO, is an enormous task, because there are so many of them. The whole modern world is just awash with them. Just recently, someone asked me to read a book recently published called Women of Wisdom, and they especially wanted me to read the Introduction, because they said that it was a quite popular book, and some Order Members were very happy with the Introduction but others were quite displeased and unhappy with it; so this particular person asked me to read it, and say what I thought. I have only dipped into it so far, but it does seem that the authoress has been a bit confused and that a few feminist micchaditthis have crept in. So that is just one example; one finds micchaditthis of all kinds creeping in from every direction, on all levels. So it is not that one can just go through them one by one, as though there were just a short and simple list. I am afraid not. I think it would require a vast separate study. But people might like to mention any micchaditthis they have come across recently in the course of, say, taking classes. Or perhaps they might like to mention views [about] which they are not sure whether they are micchaditthis or not, or that they are not clear about. Has anyone come across, in classes recently or talking with newcomers, any points of view which are perhaps especially prevalent or that can be regarded as micchaditthis that one has to deal with and try to sort out? There are some that we have dealt with in the past, but any more recent ones? Or is this a problem around centres, or when you get talking with people?

Kuladeva: Something I have observed I am uncertain about it personally there seems to be an interest at the moment in sort of therapeutic things such as counselling, psychotherapy etc.

S: Do you say an interest?

[9]
Kuladeva: Yes, there seems to be. There was somebody in my study group, for instance, last session, who actually went along and had counselling for about six sessions, and he was actually talking about it in the context of the study group, which was on 'Aspects of the Higher Evolution of Man'; and I wasn't really sure to what extent it should be encouraged in his case.

S: There is no doubt a difference between views, whether so to speak right or wrong, and actual practices or exercises or therapies. I think in the case of the practices, exercises or

therapies one needs to experiment with them, perhaps. I must say I am not too happy about Mitras or Friends experimenting, but I have certainly no objection to Order Members experimenting, because Order Members, inasmuch as they are committed to the spiritual life, will be able to see where that particular exercise or therapy fits in, whether in fact it is useful for this or that person. I don't think we can really tell, if we have to have recourse to someone way outside the Movement itself; but clearly there will be lots of exercises, therapies and techniques that Order Members do not as yet know, so I think probably we have to suspend judgement for the time being. You may remember that originally we had the same sort of problem in connection with, say, yoga classes and karate, because originally we had yoga taught at the Archway Centre by someone who wasn't a Buddhist and who mixed his yoga up all the time with Hinduism and chanting of Hindu mantras and bits and pieces of Vedanta. But now we have got Order Members teaching yoga, so we can say that yoga is helpful to someone trying to lead the spiritual life; it is certainly helpful in the preliminary stages. (By yoga I mean, of course, hatha yoga.) And we can say that that has been fully incorporated into the FWBO inasmuch as it is now possible for us to have yoga classes taught by Order Members or even by Mitras. So I think it is a question of Order Members learning these particular techniques, and either deciding on the basis of their own experience that, no, they don't actually help, or deciding, well, yes, they do help, at least under certain circumstances, in clarifying them and trying to establish why they work and how that connects up with Buddhism. For instance, I had a quite interesting experience of this recently in connection with the Alexander Technique, because Sobhana, as she now is, was following that, and she had not only been going to classes, as they are called not 'receiving treatment', [but] 'going to classes' she had not only been going to these classes, but she had been thinking about the Alexander Technique and trying to relate it to Buddhism, especially to mindfulness, and she in fact wrote a lecture, which she delivered on, I think, a women's retreat, and she gave me a copy; and I thought she had shown the connection, or the point of contact, between the Alexander Technique and Buddhism quite well. And after reading her lecture, I felt quite reassured that there was nothing inconsistent between following the Buddhist spiritual path and having recourse to the Alexander Technique; that there was no conflict between them at all that the Alexander Technique could be comfortably fitted in under the heading of Mindfulness of the Body, without any straining at all. So I think it is just a case of Order Members doing a bit of exploration and experimentation, and perhaps extending their repertoire of techniques and integrating them thoroughly with our own methods and approaches. Some techniques, some methods, some therapies, will be more assimilable than others. Some may be based on a completely different as it were philosophical foundation, and it would perhaps not be possible to incorporate them; and in that case we would not regard them as helpful to the leading of the spiritual life as understood by us.

[10]
Tape 1, Side 2

But, yes, we have to do more experimentation, I think; but, obviously, in a cautious way, not in a way that results in distraction or which results in any sort of dilution of one's commitment to a spiritual path in the full sense.

Kulamitra: Bhante it is certainly not that I have got a new micchaditthi to tell about; I just hear from time to time the old ones right from new people finding the Puja difficult onwards.

And I can certainly see what you mean about the micchaditthis being things that stop people; they stop people getting into something. They hold back. But something I have noticed, to do with Order Members and Mitras as much as the beginner, is just lack of having thought something through themselves. In other words, people are quite happy to do the FWBO things, but actually they don't know them that well. I was thinking particularly of communication exercises

S: [Yes.] For instance, Prajnananda recently has written a note on the subject which he has sent me, just a little summary of what the communication exercises are all about. It is quite short, but it is quite to the point. I have not gone through it with a tooth comb, but as far as I can see it is quite accurate and quite what shall I say? not only accurate but quite faithful to what I originally said.

Kulamitra: I was thinking, having led communication exercises quite a bit on previous LBC Battle retreats and beginners' retreats, I have noticed that sometimes Order Members' and Mitras' ability to help people is hindered by the lack of depth in their understanding of the exercises. They are certainly not doing anything bad or wrong, but they don't always see the full implications of how far the exercises could go, and I thought that was quite interesting and probably applied to other areas that people have taken something a bit for granted, haven't really explored it with their own thought and therefore are not aware of all the possibilities in that technique.

S: One of the things I have become rather aware of recently, and I have spoken about this once or twice, is the very limited extent to which people actually think about the Dharma

Kulamitra: Yes!

S: or even think about quite basic teachings. It is almost as though, in much the same way as when you are not in the Shrine room you forget all about mindfulness, when you are not actually in a study group you stop thinking about the Dharma. You only think about the Dharma when you have to, when you are forced to as it were. This is true of many people, even of Order Members. So I think one just has to cultivate this habit, almost, of thinking about the Dharma and trying to deepen one's understanding of it. One should be doing this, in a way, all the time. Just the other day, Subhuti was cross-examining me about some aspects of my own earlier life, and this was one of the points that I made: that I was always reflecting on the Dharma, I was always trying to understand this or that teaching. I was always turning something over in my mind, and trying to go more deeply into it. And this goes on even now. But I find that very few people do this. It means you have got to have an interest in these questions, these teachings; they have got to really mean something to you; they have got to be important to you.

[11]
Sudhana: In that case, does this not tie up with Dhammaloka's question about the FWBO providing the best facilities for the development of Insight? Do we actually encourage people to think

S: Well, I personally do!

Sudhana: for themselves, if they become dependent on our Movement, if people come into

the Movement and then just stop thinking?

S: No; the expression 'thinking for themselves' can be misunderstood. In some ways, that is the last thing I want them to do! I want them to reflect on the Dharma, whether as read or as heard, and just to try to go more deeply into it. I think if you tell people to think for themselves, that is quite dangerous, if you see what I mean. It is not that you want them just to believe whatever they are told; you want them to turn it over in their minds. There are these three levels of wisdom: there is the sutamaya panna, cintamaya panna and bhavana maya panna. First of all, you hear you learn, in other words, you take something in. Then you reflect upon it. And then you have an actual experience of it through meditation. I think a lot of people leave out this intermediate level or intermediate degree, that of thinking concentratedly on the Dharma which they learn, or the Dharma which they study.

Kulamitra: I think there is something in what Sudhana is saying, in that it seems that there are many people who have taken [things] in, because they have been Mitras for a long time and have now been Order Members maybe for a short time; but perhaps some people are still too much reliant on the more experienced Order Members in the situation. Do you think it is only when you have to teach pretty much on your own devices that you are forced to think, 'Why do we do this? Why do I do the mindfulness of breathing?', and so on.

S: To some extent. I am thinking of deeper issues than that. Yes, I think quite a few people can reproduce what they have heard, without really understanding it very deeply. I notice this when I listen to different people giving talks. There are as it were two distinct levels. There are those who reproduce, quite faithfully, what they have learned, either by studying my writings or listening to tapes or whatever who reproduce quite faithfully and who do understand what they say. And there are also those, the second category or second class, who are able to develop what they have learned: not just adding something of their own, but able to develop what they have learned or apply it further because they have understood it more deeply, or because they have understood the principles involved more deeply. There are a few who begin to be able to do this, but there are not many of them. It is a question of pondering on what one has learned, or perhaps exploring more deeply in discussion with somebody. It is not just a question of remembering what you have heard and being able to reproduce it; you have got to go deeper than that eventually. So, to begin with, you must learn faithfully that level, that stage, cannot be skipped. And sometimes, with very new people, you have got a situation in which they haven't learned properly, they are not really clear what it is that they have learned, it is a bit jumbled or a bit confused. At the same time, they are very keen to be original or add something of their own. So the result is great confusion. You should just try to understand more deeply. If you do try and if you can understand more deeply, quite naturally you will be able to develop things further or apply them in a different way, a new way, a more illuminating way, perhaps. [12] So I think people have to be encouraged to think more deeply, and to think for themselves only in this sense; not think for themselves in the sense of having thoughts which are 'their' thoughts, not somebody else's thoughts as though there was any particular merit in having thoughts which were your very own. This is part of the modern micchaditthi of the great value of originality; that you must be original at all costs.

Kulamitra: You have obviously had this faculty to pursue things in depth for a long time

S: I wouldn't say so much that I have had that faculty. I would say that I had the interest in those questions; and I developed the faculty if I do have such a faculty as the result of the

interest. I think you must be interested in these questions. You can't develop thinking as a sort of duty.

Kulamitra: That answers part of the question I was about to ask; but I am thinking, OK, if the faculty depends on the interest, and it would be all for the best if Order Members developed both the interest and the faculty, in what way can people be encouraged to develop the interest, so that it is a real interest and not just a duty?

S: Well, how does one develop an interest in anything?

Kulamitra: I don't know.

S: Well, there are certain things which one is interested in, but why is one interested in them? What makes one interested in them? What is an interest?

Sudhana: An emotional response. An emotional waking up.

S: It is partly that, but I think it is not just an emotional response. You have an interest in something, in a sense, because of a need, a sort of existential need. So your interest is related to your being. You can't develop an interest artificially, not a very deep interest. For instance, when a young man starts growing up, or when an adolescent grows up, he becomes interested, as we say, in women. He develops a profound interest in that particular subject, without any tuition, because it represents a sort of organic need. So you have got to have that sort of need at some other level.

Dhammaloka: That seems to suggest that we haven't quite succeeded in actually connecting the Dharma with the existential need.

S: Yes. Or that people themselves have not succeeded in making a connection between the Dharma and their existential needs. I will just give you an example a comparatively superficial one, drawn from India and my experience among the ex Untouchables. To put it crudely, in the old days if people's interest in your lecture was flagging, there was one absolutely sure-fire way of recapturing their attention: you just started abusing the brahmins. Because that was where the rub was, you see, because they had suffered under the caste system and in particular they had suffered under the brahmins. That was the point of as it were existential contact between them and the Dharma: that the Dharma was against caste, that the Dharma was a means of social uplift and liberation. So you had to make that sort of connection, at least initially, because that was what had drawn them. [13] So perhaps, in our case, we need to try to understand what has brought people; something must have brought them.

Dhammaloka: The need of a positive society in which to grow and develop.

S: If it is that well, it can vary; there can be hundreds of different reasons for which people come along to a centre. If they are looking for a new society, well, yes, talk to them about the new society; you will find that they are interested, they can cotton on to that, as we say. And once they have cottoned on to that, they can explore, from the angle of the idea or ideal of the new society, all the other aspects of the Dharma. But if they are interested, say, in the creation of a new society, and you insist in talking to them about the Abhidharma, they won't make the

connection; so they won't be so very interested. Or, for instance, supposing they have suffered a bereavement and they are very concerned with the whole problem of death: why someone should die prematurely, or why they should suffer. If they are concerned with that particular issue, and have come along looking for a solution, they may not be particularly interested in meditation; so if you talk a lot about meditation they may not make any connection.

Ratnaprabha: Do you have any suggestions as to how to capture people's interest in public lectures, where you can't go to the individual interests? I mean in this country, not in India.

S: I think you have to have a sufficient number of lectures by different speakers, covering a wide variety of topics, a wide variety of approaches to the Dharma. You must have a net with comparatively narrow meshes, as it were.

Ratnaprabha: So you attract them with the title, effectively, in that case?

S: The title will sometimes attract them. For instance, I had this experience years and years ago, when I was at Hampstead; I gave a series of lectures, I gave a lecture every fortnight at the College of Psychic Studies. And it was very interesting that the lecture which drew most people which means the title which drew most people was on the subject of death. And the same thing happened when I gave a series of talks at the Kingsway Hall my very first series of talks under the auspices of the FWBO that the best attended talk was very definitely that on The Tibetan Book of the Dead. So there are these areas of interest. This is why I have often said that I think it is not enough to have meditation classes to which new people can come. I think you have got to have public lectures. Because, though there are quite a lot of people interested in meditation and coming along on that account, there are others who have more as it were general intellectual concerns, who will not initially think of coming along to a Buddhist centre for the sake of the meditation, but they may think in terms of coming along to a lecture on Buddhism if it seems to have some connection with their intellectual concerns. This is one reason why I have been emphasizing recently that we should have far more public lectures on different aspects of the Dharma, or Dharma-related topics like the arts, for instance but at least different aspects of the Dharma. Good public lectures on, say, neutral territory, not at the centre but in a public hall somewhere. I am thinking especially of a place like London. We have got quite a few good speakers now.

[14]
Kulamitra: Although, obviously, we could approach more and more of the possible avenues on that beginners' level, I think really there is a sort of transition. As far as I can see, people who come to a centre are pretty interested in what we are doing, and pretty happy with what they are receiving. But when you talk about an interest in the Dharma, there does seem to be a gap between the interest in the FWBO and the practical things that we teach people, and, say, an interest to really try and find out what the Yogacara taught and why.

S: I think things like the Yogacara do represent a more specialized interest. I was thinking more in terms of a deeper understanding of things like conditioned co-production and impermanence, sunyata and so on, which you need to have if you are thinking in terms of developing Insight. So, very often, you can spark off interest in other people just because you are interested yourself, but I think you must be careful you are not running against a basic interest that they have got and which they want to follow up and satisfy. You must be very careful not to be talking about something just because it interests you, ignoring the fact that

the person you are talking to perhaps wants to talk about, or would like to talk about, something quite different, because he is interested in that. So I think, in the case of Order Members functioning at centres, it is a question of being quite sensitive to other people and trying to find out really what they are interested in and what has brought them along.

Dhammaloka: Bhante, when you say that you became more aware of the extent to which people don't think in the Movement, I understood that this was regarding people who are quite involved already

S: Even Order Members.

Dhammaloka: Yes, even Order Members, you said. So, thinking about myself, I very often, obviously, forget about the Dharma, don't think about the Dharma; and I wonder what you think is the main area which makes Mitras, makes Order Members, actually forget about it so that we more or less happily go on? Are there any main areas, any main things where we sort of settle in and just go on, not thinking, not really being interested in what we are doing?

S: As I mentioned earlier on, interest is really related to level or type of being. I suppose, in many cases, one is more interested in the world. (Someone laughs.) Or in, say, the structure of the FWBO, which is sort of halfway between the world and the sort of interests that I am speaking of.

Kulamitra: Sudhana mentioned a sort of new society, in a way, the positive group; and I think maybe even some Order Members still have a more emotional interest in the sort of positive group than in Insight.

S: Yes, perhaps it is a long, slow process. Perhaps it can't be hurried up unduly. Also, perhaps, most people in the Movement, even Order Members, are still relatively young, with lots of surging energies which perhaps they find difficult to put into reflection on more philosophical issues. Though I must say I didn't find it difficult; but maybe I was an exception it is difficult to say.

Tejananda: Bhante, could it be something to do with the fact that people aren't always living a particularly contemplative lifestyle?

[15]
S: Not necessarily; because I don't lead a very contemplative lifestyle. I am also quite busy with lots of quite practical things to think about and attend to; but none the less, I have all sorts of as it were theoretical questions, philosophical questions, at the back of my mind all the time.

Kulamitra: I am personally aware that it isn't really what Tejananda has described, because I think, if you do have a strong enough interest, you do have spare moments, but maybe in those spare moments you don't immediately think: 'Right, now I'll get out that book or think about that particular problem,' because the interest is not strong enough.

S: Right, yes. But just think back to that crude example that I gave from your own younger days, when you first started getting interested in women or you fell in love; well, you didn't find it very difficult to remember that particular woman. No one had to remind you; you

might have been thinking about her incessantly, because she corresponded to a strongly felt need. (Murmurs of assent.)

Sudhana: Going back to my first question about the FWBO being the right conditions, I wondered whether it gets too comfortable, and people don't have a kind of crucial need so that they are thrown back and say, 'Well, why is this?' and very often they might just be comfortable and be elated, and not concentrated at all. But if they were on their own more, or in a more difficult situation at times, they might have to think, to live on their wits as it were well, maybe wits is not the right word, but maybe would have to answer questions for themselves more deeply.

S: What you are saying boils down to what was just said about the positive group: most people experiencing the Movement even Order Members experiencing the Movement mainly as a positive group still. But I would suggest that, if anyone, any Order Member, does feel that he is having too comfortable an experience of the FWBO, he just goes out to India for a few months! You probably couldn't go out for more than a few months, unfortunately but just write to Lokamitra and offer your services for an initial three months, with a further three monthly extension if you can get the visa. Lokamitra at present is crying out for visits from Order Members. That is, those who have no great personal problems, of course, who can give talks, take study groups, and generally be useful in the way of propagating the Dharma, and who are willing to adapt to very different conditions. There are all sorts of opportunities in India at the moment that we are not able to take advantage of people offering us land, inviting us to give lectures, to hold retreats; there are not enough Order Members to go round. We are becoming quite well known now. So if you feel you need a slightly more difficult time, all right, off you go! Let yourself be winkled out of your snug community or your cosy centre! Or your smoothly running little coop!

Kulamitra: Bhante, Sudhana mentioned the 'comfortable' aspect; Tejananda talked about maybe having too much work and so on. Do you think that this approach, to blame inadequacies in the structure of the Movement, or one's experience of the Movement, rather than putting the emphasis on one's own lack of interest, one's own lack of energy to pursue something is it just a micchaditthi?

S: To some extent, yes. Recently I was recommending to one of the women Order Members the unfinished autobiography of Alice Bailey, who was a sort of Theosophist who developed her own wing of the theosophical movement. I recommended the autobiography mainly because it showed how she struggled against great difficulties. She was an Englishwoman by birth, and had an upbringing in a fairly [16] aristocratic family; led a very sheltered life; but anyway, to cut a long story short, she found herself, later on in life, unhappily married her husband left her with three young daughters to bring up on her own; she had to go and get a job in a canning factory! This was in the early years of this century, when ladies just didn't do that sort of thing. Then she met some Theosophists and got deeply involved in Theosophy, but she was having to work all during the day and look after her three daughters, and doing all the cooking and cleaning and housework and so on, in those days, without any servant. But what I wanted to draw this particular Order Member's attention to was the fact that she taught herself to study, to read quite serious books on philosophy and religion, while doing her housework. She developed the ability to read a book while doing her ironing! Yes, and also while knitting and sewing. She developed the ability to do the two things at the same time, without the one getting in the way of the other or detracting from the other. So this goes to

show, if you are really interested, if you are really determined, you can manage. You can make opportunities, you can make time, almost. Because, one might say, who would have thought that you could actually read a book while ironing not that she glanced at the book and then glanced back at the ironing; she trained herself literally to do both at the same time. And that is how she carried on her studies of the Eastern wisdom, for several years, and eventually developed a quite well-known wing or branch of the Theosophical movement. So where there is a will there really is a way. But there is only a will when there is interest. She wanted to find out certain things, she wanted to study philosophy and religion and so on. So there she was, studying The Secret Doctrine or whatever, while doing the ironing. And some people find it difficult to study The Secret Doctrine without doing anything else! She made the point that the ironing was always perfectly done; that she never had a single burn, all the years that she was ironing and studying at the same time, she never burned anything. She doesn't say that she never dropped a stitch while knitting, but one can well believe it. She seems to have been a very determined sort of woman.

: Haven't we have got rather a lot of questions to get through?

S: Come on, then!

Tejananda: Ratnaprabha is the next one, on the Path of Vision in dreams.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture, you talk of path of vision experiences occurring in dreams. There are three parts to this question. a) Could this only occur in lucid dreams, i.e. when you know that you are dreaming?

S: No, not necessarily. You may not know that you are dreaming. On waking up you will remember the Insight experience and, of course, you will know that you had this Insight experience in a dream; but at the time you may not know that.

Ratnaprabha: b) If not, does this imply that you can gain Insight when you are not possessed of self-awareness?

S: But you are possessed of self-awareness. You could say that you are aware of yourself as having the Insight. You could also say that, when you have an Insight, the concentration is so intense, you are so wrapped up in that, that you may not, even under ordinary conditions, when you are so to speak awake and conscious, know whether you are here or there, alive or dead, in this world or some other. St. Paul [17] says this, perhaps in a slightly different connection, of a certain experience he had: 'Whether in or out of the body I know not.' So one could say the Insight experience is very intense, can obliterate the consciousness, in a sense, the lower consciousness, that either that you are awake or that you are dreaming; even obliterate self-consciousness in the ordinary, referential sense.

Ratnaprabha: I was going to go on to ask: what sort of self-awareness is there in dreams, both ordinary dreams and these special dreams?

S: You can be aware of yourself in dreams as dreaming, and you could have an experience of Insight in a dream at the same time as you knew that you were dreaming. But equally, as I said, you could have an experience of Insight in a dream and not know that you were dreaming, possibly because of the sheer intensity of the Insight experience itself. One could

even say that, when you have an Insight experience in a dream, you are not dreaming. It is a different level of experience. Just as, when you have an Insight experience when you are awake, in a sense you are not in the waking state. In one of the schools of Hindu philosophy, they speak of the four states the waking state, the dream state, the state of deep dreamless sleep and what they call the fourth state. So one could say, from our point of view, that Insight pertains to that fourth state: you break through, whether from the waking state or from the dream state. Strictly speaking, it doesn't belong to either of those other three states; it is an independent state. So it is not so much that you have an Insight experience while dreaming. A dream experience becomes a basis for an Insight experience which transcends the dream state. Similarly, an experience that you have while waking, while conscious, becomes the basis of an Insight experience which may, if it is sufficiently intense, transcend that ordinary waking state of consciousness.

Ratnaprabha: What was the name of the fourth state of consciousness?

S: Turiya, which means simply 'the fourth'.

: Apart from waking and sleeping, what was the

S: Deep sleep, dreamless sleep.

Tejananda: The next one is from myself, about the correlation of duhkha and sraddha with Perfect Vision. This question occurred to me when I was writing the talk on Sariputta and Mahamoggallana for the men's event last weekend. I noticed that they developed a strong degree of sraddha on the basis of an understanding cum insight into duhkha, and I wondered whether it would be possible to correlate this with Perfect Vision presumably the arising of Perfect Vision in the mundane Eightfold Path, in so far as duhkha involves some sort of insight, or vision, into the conditioned, and sraddha into the Unconditioned, albeit at quite a few removes. Following on from this, can the inception of the Transcendental Eightfold Path be correlated with arising of the eighth nidana, Knowledge and Vision of things as they really are?

[18]
S: Oh yes. The knowledge and vision of things as they are represents Insight proper, Insight with a capital I.

Tejananda: So that is correlated with Stream Entry, presumably?

S: That corresponds to Stream Entry, yes. And immediately preceding Knowledge and Vision of things as they really are, what do we get?

Voices: Samadhi.

S: We get samadhi. And following on it, what do we get?

: Withdrawal.

S: Withdrawal. What's the term for withdrawal? nirveda. That is in Sanskrit; what is it in Pali? Not viraga; viraga follows. Nibbida. So nibbida is the sort of Transcendental

experience, but you can have a nibbida which precedes knowledge and vision of things as they are. It is as though, when Sariputta and Moggallana became fed up with that show, that is what they experienced; they experienced a sort of withdrawal, a sort of disgust. And that sort of anticipates knowledge and vision of things as they are. It is as if it is the sort of negative aspect of faith: you lose faith in, you are disillusioned with, what you normally or previously found enjoyable, and a glimmering of faith arises, at least by implication, in something higher. I think I have even mentioned that they became disillusioned, as distinct from disgruntled.

Tejananda: It did seem, from their response, that their experience was far more profound than the result of thinking that in a rather wishy-washy way.

S: Yes. So perhaps it was a sort of knowledge and vision, and nibbida and so on, but with small initial letters. Something approaching that; but it couldn't have been that, because we are told that the Eye of the Dharma arose for Sariputta on hearing that verse from Assaji, so he didn't gain Stream Entry till that point, didn't gain real Insight until that point. But he seems to have got very near. That is why perhaps that verse could have that tremendous effect on him.

Tejananda: So just to make it clear, if it fails to correlate the arising of Perfect Vision in the sense of the mundane path with the arising of sraddha in dependence on duhkha. (?)

S: It depends on the nature of the sraddha whether you regard sraddha as a mundane quality, or whether you regard it as the sort of emotional counterpart of Wisdom in the full sense, or the emotional counterpart of Insight with a capital I. It can be the one or the other.

Tape 2, Side 1

Tejananda: The next one is from Chakkhupala concerning the correlation of the Wheel, the Spiral and the Mandala.

Chakkhupala: It is a very simple one. Did the particular formulation that you use in the lecture of Wheel, Spiral and Mandala have a canonical basis, or was it purely your own arrangement of those ?

[19]
S: As far as I recollect, it was purely my own arrangement as regards that sort of visual presentation, though obviously the doctrinal content of that visual presentation, even the specific doctrinal connections, are found there in the tradition. But I don't remember seeing any sort of diagram of traditional origin quite of that type. I think my distinctive contribution simply consisted in seeing the Path in visual terms, and seeing the Path as the connecting link, because the visual representation of the Wheel of Life was already there in the tradition; the visual representation of the Mandala of the Five Buddhas was there in the tradition; but there wasn't a very clear-cut visual representation of the Path, especially as Spiral. So I saw the Path, especially the Path of the Spiral, in those visual terms, and I saw it as providing a link between the Round and the Mandala even in visual terms.

Chakkhupala: Was then the representation of the Path as Spiral your contribution, or is there actually a canonical reference to the form of the Path as a spiral?

S: Yes, there are one or two references, but to a very slight extent. For instance, if you take the symbolism of the conch shell the conch shell represents a spiral, doesn't it? And if you ask the Tibetans what is the symbolism of the spiral, they will say it represents the Right Path, because it goes round to the right. But at the same time it is a spiral. There are other things of this sort. But there is no full-fledged spiral representation of the Path, or representation of the Path in spiral terms, visually speaking. Except well, I won't even be quite sure of that, because you may well have, here and there, a representation of the Path as a spiral Path going up around the mountain. You might well find that. But I think there is no actual diagrammatic representation of the Path in those terms. Once I had seen the Path diagrammatically in those terms, I could think of that third diagram as providing a link between the previous two, which already did exist in tradition, even in that diagrammatic form.

Tejananda: Next, Kuladeva on craving in the Four Noble Truths.

Kuladeva: In the Four Noble Truths, craving rather than hatred or ignorance is cited as the cause of duhkha. Is there any particular reason for its apparent primacy here, either doctrinal or methodological?

S: I am not sure that there is any definite or specific doctrinal reason for its primacy here. It could be because it has a greater emotive value or emotive significance than avidya or moha, and anger or hatred or aversion is in any case regarded as a sort of secondary formation arising out of frustrated craving. We actually experience craving. We don't experience ignorance in quite the same way, do we? For instance, if you have got an overpowering craving for something, you are conscious of the craving, you are aware of the craving. You are not so aware perhaps not at all aware of the basis of that craving in ignorance. So I think craving is probably more prominent than the other two, more prominent than either moha or anger or hatred or aversion. Moha may be more basic, more fundamental, but the mere fact that it is more basic, more fundamental, means that in a way it is obscured; it is obscured by craving. And as for hatred, it is, as I said, a secondary formation. So for practical purposes, perhaps, craving is the most significant, the most prominent of those three akusalamulas.

Tejananda: The next one is from Chakkhupala ...

[20]
Chakkhupala: I wanted to ask really for clarification of the three dukkhata. In the lecture the edited version you give the second kind of suffering as being potential suffering, and it seems to emphasize(?) its potentiality as the significance of the second sort. It seemed, from Ratnaprabha's memory, that on another occasion the second kind of suffering had been given as being in proximity to the unpleasant or separation from the pleasant, and the first kind of suffering was merely bodily pain. So there seems to be a difference between

S: Ah, there are two lists. Usually, one speaks of dukkha dukkha, it is called, the suffering which is suffering, that is to say straightforward bodily or mental pain experienced here and now. Then viparinamadukkha viparinama means transformation, or what I have sometimes rendered as potential suffering; that means that an experience may be pleasurable now, but by the mere fact that it is transitory, and because you have become attached to it in the meanwhile, it becomes a source of pain and suffering later on. In other words, an experience, even though pleasurable now, is potentially painful; so this is what I have called potential suffering. And the third is, of course, kandha dukkha or the fact that the skandhas,

conditioned existence itself, is unsatisfactory, even painful, inasmuch as it does not represent absolute and unalloyed happiness and bliss. But there is another list of different kinds of suffering in connection with the Four Noble Truths. I don't remember the whole list it is pain, lamentation, despair, separation from the loved, being joined to the unloved there are seven or eight items enumerated. That is a longer and less, as it were, formal classification, but that is separate from this threefold classification, though of course they cover the same ground.

Chakkhupala: So just to recap on that, then: the first kind, dukkha dukkha, is that restricted to bodily pain, or would that include emotional

S: No, it can include emotional pain.

Chakkhupala: Any kind of immediate suffering?

S: Yes. Dukkha dukkha has a twofold meaning. It can mean either bodily pain, simply, in which case mental pain is called domanasya(?); or it can cover both bodily and mental pain; here, it covers both.

Ratnaprabha: So is this an exhaustive list? Does dukkha dukkha cover every kind of non bodily pain that is being experienced here and now apart from kandha dukkha?

S: Yes, one could say that, I think. It is pain actually experienced. The second is potential, you may say, and the third, you may, say, is absolute pain; the pain that is inherent in conditioned existence itself, by virtue of the fact that it is not Unconditioned existence.

Chakkhupala: The Pali Dictionary, I think, gave the third as sankhara dukkha, rather than kandha dukkha.

S: But sankhara is included in kandhas. Sometimes, of course, sankhara is used as more or less synonymous with kandha; as when it is said in the

Dhammapada: Sabbe sankhara dukkha 'ti, sabbe sankhara anicca 'ti, sabbe dhamma anatta 'ti, so sankhara here is tantamount to the five skandhas. But, again, another usage is samskaras as [21] subdivisions of kandha. But usually, when these three are mentioned that is, dukkha dukkha, viparinyama dukkha and kandha dukkha, kandha dukkha is definitely the term, not sankhara dukkha, though it could just as well be sankhara dukkha in the wider sense of sankhara.

Tejananda: Next, from Dhammaloka on true selfhood.

Dhammaloka: In one of the seminar extracts, you refer to your use of the term 'true selfhood' in the lecture as 'waving a red flag in a certain direction'. You then go on to suggest that we should not be afraid of allowing ourselves to employ the terminology of true self, true selfhood etc., as there are passages in the scriptures where the Buddha is referred to as maha-atta, 'possibly in a metaphysical sense', as well as other passages which seem to suggest something like 'Transcendental Selfhood'. In other contexts, you are reported to have made the point that the anatta doctrine can be regarded as a critique of a degenerated understanding of the atma, a sort of historical relativity. How are we to understand atma, then? Would you please comment on the term atma, and perhaps include some remarks on its connection with

the breath?

S: Etymologically, of course, it is connected with breath. I think that the difficulty is that one thinks traditionally in terms of anatta; but one must not think of that non self in purely nihilistic terms. It is not that, instead of there being somebody here, in fact, in truth, there is nobody; you don't want to go to that extreme. So, if there seems to be a danger of anyone going to that extreme, perhaps in a sort of poetic way you can employ the expression 'true self'; but you don't, at the same time, want people to start thinking that there is a fixed, unchanging personal identity in that sense of the term anatta which was negated in the anatta doctrine. In a way, you are caught in a sort of cleft stick. If you speak in terms of anatta, it may be understood nihilistically; if you speak in terms of the 'true self', it may be understood eternalistically. So I think it depends very much on who you are addressing, and which particular extreme they are more inclined to. The Sanskrit Mahaparinirvana Sutra has frequent references to the maha atma, but that is, of course, a 'later' work. I don't think you can speak in terms of there being definitely no self at all, or definitely a higher or truer self. You can't really encapsulate the reality of things, or the reality of the situation, in that particular way. But I think, on the lower level, you have to make it clear that there is no permanent unchanging self; and, on a higher level, you have perhaps to make it clear that the fact that there is no permanent unchanging self does not mean that there is merely a negation of selfhood. You have to make it clear that the concept of selfhood, when so to speak very refined, does have a sort of real residue. You are trying to avoid two extremes, and you can't apparently avoid the one without at least seeming to fall into the other. So no fixed formula is going to get you out of the difficulty; you have to be aware all the time of the relativity of words and concepts when talking to someone, trying to communicate this idea of anatta or sunyata, use the terms which seem to be the most skilful and which will in fact communicate your meaning best to that particular person. Someone may be terrified of the thought of having no soul or no self, so you have to assure them: 'No, no, there is in fact a real self, a true self, but it is not the one that appears to be, not the one we usually think of as the self.' You need sometimes to reassure people in that way. Others may have a very fixed and [22] definite idea of themselves, and then you have to point out that, in fact, they are changing all the time, and that there is no fixed, unchanging self. But the Buddha does say somewhere that to those who believe in a permanent, unchanging self he teaches anatta; to those who believe that life ends with death, he teaches a permanent soul or self; and to those who don't go to either extreme he teaches neither atmavada nor anatmavada. I think that is in a Mahayana sutra.

Dhammaloka: Which sutra, please?

S: I can't remember, I'm afraid. But you notice that he says he teaches neither atmavada nor anatmavada; that there is no sort of positive formulation of what he actually does teach at that level. It is as though you have to fluctuate between these two according to circumstances and according to whom you are addressing; but you can't say 'The Buddha teaches this.' You can only say that in the ultimate sense he doesn't teach either this or that.

Tejananda: The next one is from Ratnaprabha, and it is about the Buddha knowing other people's lives.

Ratnaprabha: Again I am quoting you from the lecture. You say: 'It is said of the Buddha and other Enlightened beings that on the night of their Enlightenment they saw passing before

their eyes a great panorama of births, deaths and rebirths; not only of themselves but also of other living beings.' Can we take it literally that the Buddha knew the details of other people's previous lives?

S: This is what the text actually says, and presumably we are to take that literally whatever that may mean, if you see what I mean! Clearly, the experience was as it were instantaneous, because if it wasn't instantaneous it would take a very long time to review all those previous lives of all those millions, even billions, of people. So perhaps in a sense it can't be taken literally though at the same time that is not to say he didn't have that experience; but perhaps one can only say that we are not to think of him having that experience in the way that it at present seems natural to us to have that experience. I have sometimes spoken of it in terms of the Buddha's having gained as it were a vantage point outside time, from which he could see, at the same time, as it were, the lives of all other beings in the universe; but that wouldn't be to have that sort of experience of knowing other people's existences quite in the way that we would envisage it.

Kulamitra: If you are going to use that term, 'a point outside time', couldn't you say in that case it is a point outside time and self?

S: You could; certainly outside self in the ordinary sense of self. So, yes, it is as though, if we are not careful, we think of the Buddha as retaining his ordinary sense of self and then looking back quite literally and seeing all the millions and billions of beings as it were quite separately, and separately tracking their previous lives back and back. But that is just our trying to reconstruct the Buddha's experience from our own limited point of view. And though those words may be the most accurate to describe it, perhaps in a sense it wasn't like that at all; that there wasn't the experience of individual self or if there was it wasn't an experience of himself in the way that one normally [23] experiences oneself well, he wouldn't have been experiencing other people in the way that one normally experiences other people; and in any case, millions and billions of beings were involved, and millions and perhaps billions of years; so it could not have been quite the experience that perhaps it seems to us to have been, as we read those words. It is not that the words are not to be taken literally; in a sense, they are to be taken literally, but they are to be understood rather more deeply.

Ratnaprabha: But if I take the words literally, and ignore for now trying to imagine what the experience would be like but just look at its implications and consequences, it would seem to imply that the Buddha could have called upon his memory, for want of a better word, and recalled the biographical details of an unlimited number of people, which seems to be rather close to omniscience in the Christian sense.

S: It does seem that the Buddha did claim, as far as the texts go, to be able to do that if he wished.

Ratnaprabha: And why should we not ascribe to him other kinds of omniscience, in that case, like knowing the number of leaves on trees and that kind of thing? ...

S: Perhaps he could have known the number of leaves on the trees if he had wished to; because well, why not? He had the power of telepathy and he could have transported himself there and perhaps could have counted them all simultaneously. The kind of omniscience which Mahavira the Jain claimed, and which the Buddha repudiated, was that he knew as it

were all mundane facts separately at the same time in a single moment, as it were, simultaneously; that the Buddha seems to have repudiated. But being able to find out something if one wished to know it, presumably, is a different kind of knowledge. It wouldn't be omniscience in the sense of Mahavira's omniscience, or even God's omniscience, of holding all mundane facts separately in your mind at the same time.

Sudhana: Forgive me if the question seems a bit not in very good taste, but I have heard it said that you think of all of the Order once a day. That would be a sort of similar kind of experience, I imagine, otherwise it would take you all day to think of each individual

S: No, you can visualize. When I say I think of the whole Order, I don't mean I think 'First of all there's So and so, and then there's old So and so, and then after him there's Such and such '. No, I sort of see them simultaneously just like I see you simultaneously now; except that, when I see you now, there is a sort of focus of my vision; I see you most clearly and others at the edges are blurred. But if one sees as it were mentally, that is not the case. One sees all equally clearly. So one can perhaps imagine that sort of seeing magnified a hundred and a thousand and even a million times. And also seeing in time as well as in space, because the Buddha, so it is said, sort of tracked previous lives, previous histories. But I would think of it as the Buddha seeing from, as I said, a vantage point outside space and outside time and therefore outside self. So perhaps there isn't anything in our experience really analogous to what the Buddha experienced on that occasion. Because after becoming Enlightened, did the Buddha really see other beings as other beings? In a sense he did, because, at least as far as we can see, he conversed with this disciple and that disciple; in a sense, on a certain level, he was perceiving them as other beings; but did he, in reality, perceive them as other beings? So even though we can speak perhaps of the Buddha seeing all these other millions [24] of beings and seeing all their previous lives, and though that is a correct way of speaking about his experience, none the less there is another dimension to that experience which perhaps alters its entire significance, which we don't perceive; just as we don't perceive what is really going on in the Buddha's mind, so to speak, when he is speaking to somebody else. He can't be speaking to them in the sense that an unenlightened person would be; he wouldn't have the same sense of difference, wouldn't have the same sense of 'Here am I and there is the other person, and I am speaking to him, I am Enlightened and he isn't Enlightened.' The Buddha, in the depths of his being, wouldn't be thinking like that. Similarly with these other experiences. We can as it were reconstruct them in our terms, but what they really meant to the Buddha himself, or for the Buddha himself, is much more difficult for us to see. Anyway, how are we getting on with the questions?

Tejananda: [Only] a double question from Ratnaprabha, on the meaning of sunyata.

Ratnaprabha: This is on the meaning of the word sunyata. Was the term sunyata (or sunya) used in the Pali Canon with a meaning different from that of the Mahayana?

S: It does seem that, in the Pali Canon, the term sunya or sunyata was not used in such a way as to bring out its full metaphysical significance. It was used generally in a more, let us say, narrowly psychological sense. The Mahayana itself expressed that by saying that, in the Hinayana, there was only the pudgala naratni(?) or pudgala sunyata, not the Dharma naratni or Dharma sunyata. That is expressing it schematically, but that does indicate the fact that, at least as regards terminology, in the Pali Canon the word sunyata has a more restricted meaning than it came to have in the Sanskrit Mahayana texts.

Ratnaprabha: I asked the question because I have come across several passages in which sunyata is mentioned in the Pali Canon, and in a couple of them for example, one entitled, I think, 'The Five Fears along the Way' in the Anguttara Nikaya it warns of the danger in the future of followers of the Dharma neglecting the deeper teachings concerning sunyata I think it says. At first sight, this looks very exciting, as if it is a confirmation of Mahayana ideas, but of course if the word is used in a different way, that would not be the case.

S: But again, it depends what one means by 'deeper' what is the significance of 'deeper'? I have discussed this particular passage somewhere it might have been in the Survey because I have raised the question: 'Well, where are these deeper questions and deeper teachings about sunyata?' and I make the point that they do not seem to be found in the Pali Canon; but some of the early non Hinayana schools had a tradition of deeper teachings about sunyata which eventually found expression in the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. So perhaps this is how I argued we can say that those deeper teachings did exist in the Buddha's time but that the Theravada tradition lost them whereas the Mahayana tradition preserved and developed them. But perhaps a lot turns on exactly what 'deeper' means in this connection, in this particular passage. It surely can't mean 'more elaborate' in the Abhidhamma sense? Deeper khambhira(?) is the word would seem to suggest a more metaphysical dimension, one would have thought. And, of course, in the Heart Sutra it says of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Perfection of Wisdom is described as being khambhira, profound the same term is used.

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Ratnaprabha: Presumably the Theravadins explain these passages away in some other way?

S: I am not aware that they explain them particularly at all not the modern Theravadins, anyway. They might well say that the deeper teachings are yes, they probably would say that the deeper meaning of sunya or the deeper sunyata teachings are contained in the Abhidhamma Pitaka, which we cannot really regard as, historically speaking, the teaching of the Buddha. They might well say that.

Ratnaprabha: The second part of my question goes back to the lecture: In the lecture you say that sunyata 'can mean real or unreal or neither real nor unreal.' I was wondering what this variation of meaning refers to?

S: When you say that something is sunyata, you can refer to its underlying indefinable reality; in that case, sunyata means 'real'. Or you can refer to its emptiness its emptiness of the Unconditioned, in which case it is the unreal. Do you see what I mean? We find this in these four levels of sunyata: there is the emptiness of the conditioned, the emptiness of the Unconditioned. So when you speak in terms of the emptiness of the Unconditioned, sunyata means 'unreal'; when you speak in terms of the emptiness of the conditioned, sunyata means 'the Real'. When you speak of Mahasunyata, it is neither real nor unreal, you could say. And, of course, when you speak of sunyata sunyata, the emptiness of emptiness, you give up the concepts of real and unreal themselves. (Pause.)

Tejananda: That is it, in fact.

S: Ah, that's it; we've got through them all, then.?

Kulamitra: Not quite the end, though. I actually missed the study we did this morning. I was

hoping to ask a supplementary question, particularly on those four levels of sunyata. Although I can see their sort of practical usage in that form, it struck me that since the first two levels of sunyata are sort of subsumed into the third level, aren't they in a way just pedagogical are they not for the purposes of training living beings, since you later find out that there really is not the distinction that is claimed in the first two levels of sunyata?

S: Yes, I think you have to be very careful that you don't proceed merely theoretically. You have got to practise on the basis of each of these sunyatas in turn, because first of all you think that conditioned existence is real, so you have got to actually realize that conditioned existence is not real, in the sense that it does not bear the characteristics of the Unconditioned. So you have to base your practice on that, to begin with; in other words, you have to start giving up things and disentangling yourself from things. You can't base your practice directly on sunyata in the highest sense. But the fact that you know all about it theoretically may cause you to neglect the actual practice of the lower degree of sunyata. From that point of view, it is unfortunate that we can know about truths which we are in no position, as yet, to actually practise and realize. So the vast majority of people need not concern themselves with the second, third and fourth stages of sunyata at all, if they are still struggling to realize the first. One cannot go directly to the realization of the second or third or fourth; you have to proceed in proper order one realization is based on the one immediately preceding. [26] I won't say that you can't have the merest glimmering through a purely theoretical understanding, but nothing worth while; and, in any case, you have to come back to the first sunyata and realize that. And the fact that you have got some theoretical understanding of the other sunyatas may in fact inhibit you from doing what you need to do.

: But when, say, in the context of not a ... path, but when one has knowledge and vision of things as they really are,

S: Well, then too one needs to proceed in order. You first develop your Insight into the emptiness of the composite, then the emptiness of the incomposite, then the emptiness of the distinction between them, as a matter of practical procedure. You may pass, in some cases, comparatively rapidly through them; though, again, perhaps one shouldn't think so much in terms of four different levels, four different dimensions of sunyata. It is an ever deepening experience of, let us say, the one sunyata. And clearly you don't penetrate immediately to the full depth of sunyata. The Buddha says, in a well known passage: 'There is no sudden penetration to Insight.' So what is the content of Insight? Sunyata. Or the three lakshanas, the four viparyasas. So there is no sudden full penetration to any of those. The fact that you have got, in formal terms, the eight Holy Persons shows that progress is gradual; Insight deepens; the fetters are broken, so to speak, gradually, or at least seriatim. Some, of course, progress through them more quickly than others. In the case of Mogallana, it took him only a week to become an arhant after becoming a Stream Entrant; others might take years, or might not get there in this life at all. But it is not that the Stream Entrant has one kind of Insight and the arhant another, and the Once Returner and Non Returner other kinds of Insight; it is better, perhaps, to think of them in terms of deepening degrees, deepening levels of Insight. Otherwise we end up being quite literal minded. Anyway, perhaps we will leave it there for tonight.

[27]

Day 2

Tape 2, Side 2

Ratnaguna: In the lecture, in discussing the difficulty of putting our intellectual understanding into practice, you say (p. 4, third para.): 'There is another part of him ... and [it] is more unconscious than conscious.' 'Volition' seems to be an odd word to use in this context as, according to the Collins Dictionary, volition is 'the faculty of conscious choice, decision and intention.

Sangharakshita: That is not the definition I usually cite. I usually take 'volition' to mean the sum total of energy available to the conscious subject; this is the definition I have used a number of times.

Ratnaguna: But even that seems to be contradictory.

S: In what way?

Ratnaguna: Well, the point of the passage there seems to be that you are putting volition on the more unconscious side of man; whereas your definition just now seems to say that it is more conscious.

S: No, the sum total of the energy available to the conscious subject is the conscious subject that is conscious, but that conscious subject is being as it were fed by, or draws upon, a reservoir of unconscious energy. One might even say that the conscious subject as such is not even aware of the sources of its own energy; it is not aware of what it is drawing on or drawing from. I think, when one uses terms like 'instinct', 'emotion', 'volition', one is thinking of the whole aspect of drive, of conation; another word for volition is conation, and that suggests more the idea of drive; it is something dynamic, the greater part of which is not conscious. But it is that drive, that urge in various forms, that underlies our conscious life and our conscious decisions, one might say our conscious choices. So I think, in that passage, I am just trying to draw attention to the fact that, underlying the conscious mind, or in addition, say, to reason, there is a sort of drive, an urge, an energy which is largely unconscious, though it manifests in consciousness, and that that drive or that urge or that energy has to be brought more and more in accordance with those goals or those objectives which are set by the conscious, rational mind. I think this is what I am really getting at. The word 'emotion' comes from 'motion', doesn't it? And 'instinct' suggests a sort of pattern, if you like, of actual behaviour something that urges you to behave in a particular way, a drive. So all those terms instinct, emotion, volition refer to that more dynamic and on the whole less conscious side of our personalities or beings, which need to be integrated more and more with our conscious ideals and so on.

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Dhammaloka: Isn't the term 'volition' very much connected with 'will'? Isn't the will quite conscious? Isn't there in 'will' quite a conscious element implied? It's something

S: Well, there are degrees. You can do things against your own will, because there are unconscious factors at work, and inasmuch as those unconscious factors are active they can be spoken of as a will, or even as an unconscious will. Do you see what I mean? So you can't

say that there is such a thing as a will which is definitely either conscious or unconscious; you have this urge, or this striving, or this tendency, which is in varying degrees different aspects conscious as well as unconscious. I think that is all I am getting at in the opening of this talk: that, thanks to Perfect Vision, or at least Right Understanding, we have some idea of the goal, some idea of what we ought to be doing. But that is not enough: there is a whole as it were unconscious or partially conscious part of ourselves that needs to be brought into line with that understanding or that vision. And what needs to be brought in line is designated, on different levels or from different points of view, by such terms as 'instinct', 'emotion', 'volition', 'will', 'conation', 'drive'. Do you see what I mean?

Very often we do things but we don't really know why we do them. We do them on account of some more or less unconscious or blind urge.

Tejananda: The second question is from Ratnaprabha, concerning the Indian monk and emperor story.

Ratnaprabha: This is actually a question on several stories. I may as well deal with them all at once. We were thinking it might be a good idea if, during these sessions, we asked you if you could recall the sources of your stories, so that, if anyone uses them again, they can check out the originals.

S: Right, that's good.

Ratnaprabha: So there are three and a half or four in this lecture. a) There is the story of the Indian monk meeting the Chinese emperor.

S: That comes from a Zen source. I am not sure which particular monk it was, I can't remember now, but I vaguely recollect that that was from a Zen source or Ch'an source. I have been telling this story since my early days in Kalimpong; I came across it then. It might be in Suzuki, even.

Ratnaprabha: I was looking in Essays in Zen Buddhism, which Sudhana put me on to, because he recalls a story in there that is very similar. But there are two stories: one of them is on Bodhidharma's meeting with the Emperor Wu

S: Yes.

Ratnaprabha: but this one doesn't contain the same dialogue, although the context is very similar. The other one is of the meeting of Governor Pai, the poet of the Tang Dynasty, with a monk called Bird's Nest, who is a Zen monk who lives in a tree; and in that case the dialogue is identical but the context is different. I wonder if the two stories could have been combined?

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S: One does get all sorts of different versions of the same story. As far as I recollect, I heard the story about 'Even a child of three can understand, even an old man of 80 can't practise it' I heard that version in respect of a monk who did approach the Emperor, not a monk who approached a governor. I vaguely recollect it was either a Zen monk or the story was from a Zen source. But the other story, which is quite different, is when the Emperor asked Bodhidharma whether he had not earned great merit by building so many temples and

monasteries and permitting so many monks and nuns to be ordained; and then, of course, when Bodhidharma said 'No merit', and so on that is a quite separate story, and that does seem to refer definitely to Bodhidharma, though probably to an apocryphal life; it is very doubtful whether it is a historical account.

Ratnaprabha: Even in that story, though, the Emperor does ask Bodhidharma: 'What is the first principle of Buddhism?' and in response to that Bodhidharma talks about sunyata rather than about the Dhammapada verse. But at least in Suzuki's account, the account of the meeting of Governor Pai with this monk called Bird's Nest, who is living in a tree, does have the identical story in which he quotes the Dhammapada verse, and in response the Governor says: 'Well, even a child of three can understand that,' and the monk replies, 'But an old man of 80 finds it very difficult to put it into practice.'

S: There are probably a number of different sources referred to by a number of different writers. If you want to refer to an actual source not that it is all that necessary, because it is an illustrative story, it's not an as it were doctrinal point you can refer to that particular account, but making the point that it is a slightly different version.

Ratnaprabha: Shall I go on to the next story? b) The next one is, I think, also a Zen story, about a chess playing novice monk.

S: Ah, right. That definitely comes from Trevor Leggett; that comes from the First Zen Reader. It is right at the end, as far as I remember; that is where I found the story. So if you find my version departing from that, it is best to go back to that. I don't think I depart from it, but I may not tell the story in such great detail. I did say First Zen Reader; if it isn't, it is definitely his other book, The Tiger's Cave, but I am pretty certain it's the First Zen Reader, his earlier book. We have, or should have, both of those in the Order Library. I certainly did have them; I haven't looked at them for a long time.

Ratnaprabha: And the third and third and a half are of a slightly different nature: c) the origin of Avalokitesvara's Thousand Armed form, and also d) the birth of Tara from Avalokitesvara's tears.

S: I can't give any particular source. I heard or read these stories so many years ago, I don't really know what is the real source or the original source. I have seen several different versions also, I think. I think I read a new version not so very long ago; I am just trying to think where that was. I did read, not so long ago, another version in which a single tear dropped down from Avalokitesvara's eyes, and then that, after it touched the earth, gave birth to Tara; but the usual version or at least, the one I have encountered most often is that the tears of Avalokitesvara formed a lake, and then in the midst of that [30]lake a blue lotus appeared, and when that blue lotus opened the figure of Tara appeared within. You could refer to The Cult of Tara; that should give a version of that story of the birth of Tara. But, as far as I recollect, these are two quite separate stories: the story of Avalokitesvara's head splitting into eleven someone referred to this story in a talk recently; who was it? It was a slightly different version from what I had seen or heard.

Sudhana: Was it Saddhaloka, in his Angulimala talk?

S: Ah. What did he say?

Sudhana: I can't remember

S: What I originally read or heard was that Avalokitesvara was reflecting on, or just contemplating, the sufferings of beings in the world, and he felt such intense compassion that his head shivered into eleven fragments, and each one became a head.

Ratnaguna (?): In The Door of Liberation, there are two episodes: firstly, where he is looking over the world and he sees the suffering and he sheds tears and Tara is born. Then another episode where he is looking at the world, and he feels: 'Maybe I can't really help people,' and at that moment his body splits into a thousand. There are two separate incidents.

S: Yes. I remember them as two separate incidents.

Kulamitra: There is a version in Lama Govinda's Creative Meditation and Multidimensional Consciousness, in which Avalokitesvara is said to have made a vow that if he ever diverted from the Bodhisattva path, even for a moment, he should split into 1,000 pieces; and, just for a moment, it crosses his mind, and at that moment he splits. But then Amitabha puts him back together again in that particular form.

S: Yes, that is quite a different story, or quite a different version. No doubt there are many versions. It is difficult to say which was the original one. I think, especially when stories are repeated orally, you get all sorts of variations. The two main canonical texts for Avalokitesvara are, I think, the Karandavyuha Sutra and the Tibetan compilation the Mani Kabum.

Sudhana: Could you repeat those, please?

S: The Karandavyuha Sutra I have referred to it, of course, in my Eternal Legacy. There is also an account of it, I think, in Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought. And then there is the Mani Kabum the Mani being the Om Mani Padme Hum it describes its origin, and there are a lot of stories about Avalokitesvara collected there. It is supposed to have been the first Buddhist work translated into Tibetan, though it is actually a compilation in Tibetan, probably from various sources in Sanskrit. Mani means Mani, you know, as in Om Mani Padme Hum; Kabum means 100,000 verses in other words, an anthology or a collection about the Mani, about the Om Mani Padme Hum. There is no translation of that into English. There is no translation of either into English; though Thomas I think it is Thomas in History of Buddhist Thought, has translated some extracts from the Karandavyuha, I think it is. You can check that.

[31]
Tejananda: The third question is again from Ratnaprabha, on the difference between avihimsa and ahimsa.

Ratnaprabha: That is about it, really: What is the distinction between ahimsa and avihimsa in Hindu and Buddhist thought?

S: There is a difference, which corresponds to the difference between himsa and vihimsa. Himsa is violence, one might say, broadly speaking. But the prefix vi is emphatic, so vihimsa is usually understood to represent not just violence but actual cruelty that is, the deliberate

infliction of pain and suffering, almost as an end in itself or for its own sake; in other words, malicious violence. If, for instance, you kill an animal because you are hungry and you need food, that is himsa; but if you are not hungry, you do not need food, but you torment an animal just for the sake of tormenting it, that would be vihimsa. So ahimsa is non-violence, and avihimsa is, one could say, non cruelty.

Ratnaprabha: It seems to be ahimsa which is most commonly seen in modern, at least Hindu, texts, but avihimsa which is most commonly seen in Buddhist texts. Is there a Hindu Buddhist difference on this?

S: I couldn't say; I can't say that I have noticed that. It may be so. One does find ahimsa, of course, in Buddhist texts. It could be that avihimsa is more common.

Tejananda: The next one is from Kulamitra on dana bhavana.

Kulamitra: Would the introduction of a formal, concrete dana bhavana practice within the FWBO help us to cultivate generosity? If so, what form might it take?

S: I am not so sure about a dana bhavana practice. I think I would be a bit concerned lest the dana bhavana became a sort of substitute for dana that you fantasized about giving, instead of actually giving. I think I would prefer just to encourage giving. The metta bhavana should be sufficient because, if you do develop metta, when you are confronted by someone in need the natural response is to give. So I would say that probably you don't require a specific dana bhavana; you require the practice of dana, which is an expression of metta.

Kulamitra: You mention in the lecture this tradition in the East that, if you ever visited someone, you would always take a small present with you to keep that, not just feeling but then action, flowing. I wonder if there isn't a case for something like that? Because, although there are many opportunities in our Movement for giving, it tends to be the dana bowl, or 'Could you help here?' or 'What about giving some money for this?' There are many objective needs, but perhaps that sort of more almost playful social side to giving would help ease people into the more demanding aspects.

S: (chuckles) 'Give till it hurts'! That could be so. I think some people are a little embarrassed about giving, or giving presents, because they might even sometimes think that, if you give someone a present, it might be taken as assuming a greater degree of intimacy than actually exists as though you only give presents to your close relations or very close friends; to give a present to someone who is not a close friend is almost presuming. Do you see what I mean? [32] There are all those sort of conditioned attitudes to be overcome. But I think, yes, it should be encouraged to give little gifts. I must say, something I have said before that I have noticed: that, broadly speaking, the women at least the women in the Movement are rather better at this sort of thing than the men. I noticed, for instance, on the occasion of ordinations and even Mitra ceremonies, that the woman who is being ordained or becoming a Mitra gets a little present at least a nice card, but usually a card and a present from every woman present. I have sometimes seen, on the occasion of ordinations, a new ordinand sitting there, getting a whole pile of presents, up to 75 or 80! Every single woman gives a little present, however small. The men seem a little bashful about doing that kind of thing. Of course, in connection with ordination, there is the fact that when most of them get ordained they are away in Tuscany you don't get a chance to give them a little present on that occasion. But you could

keep it until they came back. But, yes, I think it is quite a nice thing; except I did mention that, in some Buddhist circles in the East, it can become a little mechanical. So one should watch that. But perhaps there isn't really that danger, at this stage, anyway. Perhaps the danger is that you don't ever give anyone a present. But at least a nice card. Maybe even that is a bit unimaginative just to give someone a card, because there are so many cards around. Maybe one should try to go a step further than that, especially where the occasion seems to call for that. Maybe someone has been away a long time, or you haven't seen them for a long time; or it is an anniversary of some kind as when a chairman completes his twentieth year as a chairman! But I must say that expressions of generosity in the form of presents have certainly become much more widespread in the FWBO than ever before. I think every year it is on the increase, which is a very good thing. By the way, I got a quite pitiful appeal from Lokamitra only today I don't know if anyone else has seen it yet I think he sent it to all the chapters. It is on behalf of or in connection with Bodhisen, who is in very serious difficulties as regards accommodation, and Lokamitra has written quite a pathetic account, in a way, because Bodhisen has been in such difficulties, and Lokamitra noticed there was something wrong and probed, in the way that Lokamitra does actually Bodhisen didn't want to tell Lokamitra about it because he felt Lokamitra had enough to worry about, but Lokamitra insisted, and in the end Bodhisen just sort of broke down and told the whole story; so Lokamitra was very shocked and he has written this letter which I believe is going to all chapters, asking them, if they can, to help. It means trying to buy him a little flat somewhere. But there are apparently very serious difficulties, not only for him but for his wife and children and so on. I hope that this letter is read out to every chapter and we can do something to help. Anyway, that is just in passing. If the letter doesn't come to your chapter, perhaps just make inquiries. I have got a copy here in case anyone doesn't get to see it.

Tejananda: A question from Ratnaprabha about an extra stage in the metta bhavana practice.

Ratnaprabha: In his description of the metta bhavana, Buddhaghosa, in his Visuddhi Magga, gives a version of the practice where, having directed metta to oneself, one goes on to direct it to one's teacher or preceptor, or someone in a similar position. Would it be beneficial to introduce a specific additional stage into the practice, when led, for Order Members and perhaps Mitras who have asked for ordination?

[33]
S: Hm! It might be. It would require serious thought, and would clearly not be appropriate for newcomers; but, yes, it could be considered. In the East, parents and teachers, both secular and spiritual, are often included specifically in the practice of the metta bhavana. Parents are as it were officially classified as teachers; they are often referred to as puranacarya(?), that is to say one's original teachers, because after all, they are! Your parents are your first teachers, in the sense that you learn from them before you learn anything from anybody else. So there are the parents as teachers in that sense, secular teachers; and then spiritual teachers. Very often they are all called to mind in the course of metta bhavana practice.

Dhammaloka: You said it needs to be seriously considered. That seems to suggest you may not want to say immediately yes or no to it. Can you, provisionally speaking, think of dangers or advantages which such inclusion

S: I think it would be good, for obvious reasons, if people could do it. But, first of all, there is the question of not unsettling people by introducing a variation of an established existing

practice. And then also one must consider how people possibly would feel about doing it in that particular way that also would have to be taken into consideration. Also, there may be various factors to be considered that don't occur to one just on the spot, as it were; so it would be best to think it over before coming to any definite conclusion, to give oneself time.
Tejananda: Presumably, there would be no objection to Order Members introducing that informally into their own practice?

S: No, not at all. If any Order Member felt like doing it, that would be fine. The four or five stage practice is, so to speak, to help you get the metta flowing. Once you have got it flowing, you can let it flow wherever it wishes to flow. You can direct it towards animals, you can direct towards sick people, you can direct it towards old people, you can direct it towards famine victims, you can do whatever you like to strengthen it and also extend it more and more widely. So certainly one can include teachers of all kinds, in the same sort of way, on the same sort of principle.

Ratnaprabha: If I understand Buddhaghosa correctly, he seems to suggest that there is a sort of ordinary form of metta where, if you don't want to go through all the stages, you simply direct it towards yourself and then towards your teacher; but if you want to carry it further, or else you are finding difficulty, then he introduces the usual five stage metta bhavana. Now, if one did introduce one's teacher into the metta bhavana, whereabouts do you think one should introduce it?

S: There are different ways of practising the metta bhavana. The way that we practise, normally, which is more or less standard, is as you know self, friend, neutral, enemy, and then outward in wider and wider circles in various ways. The main thing is, as I said, to get the metta flowing, and going through the four persons and then equalizing those does that. And thereafter, you can either go all round the world, as it were country by country, from sort of East to West, or you can divide the globe into North, South, East and West and direct your metta to each quarter in turn. Or you can consider different categories of beings that is to say, animals, the sick, the old and so on. You can have recourse to any combination of these. So I would suggest that probably, if people want to include teachers or parents specifically, it probably would be best to include them after they have gone through the usual procedure of the four or five stages. [34] It doesn't really matter which particular method you follow once, as I have said, you have got the metta as it were flowing; and I assume that most people would find it difficult to get it really flowing without going through those four or five preliminary stages first. But if you sat down and found yourself immediately mettaful, no doubt you could direct your metta towards any class of beings that you wished. But I think very few people sit down and find themselves immediately full, not to say overflowing, with metta. Maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to include your parents, because a lot of people still have residual feelings of ill will, perhaps, towards their parents; those really do need to be resolved. If you are on very bad terms with your parents, you can always include them in your fourth stage. It is unfortunate if you have to do that, but sometimes perhaps you do.
Dhammaloka: I find it sometimes very stimulating to include you in my metta bhavana very much in the beginning; but now, since you say it might be better to do it after the fourth stage, I wonder whether perhaps it was very subjective. I just felt a sort of warmth or

S: I mentioned the desirability of going through all four or five stages to begin with, on the assumption, as I said, that people don't find it easy to get metta flowing towards anybody; but if you do find that that is in fact the case, whether towards teacher, parents, the sick, or well,

yes, you can make that your starting point, without necessarily going through those four stages. Some people are particularly stimulated by this or that person or this or that class of persons. That may provide a sort of natural starting point.

Ratnaguna: Sometimes people who come to classes beginners, regulars, Mitras ask if they can change the practice a bit maybe in this sort of way; they find they would like to put a certain person in a stage which doesn't fit into any one of those categories. Would it be OK for people to do that?

S: Give me an example not self, because there is only one person who can do that. Friend?

Ratnaguna: Well, what about people who wouldn't like to start with themselves? that's one I've heard: that people like to do the last stage first, because if they do [that], they can then do their self stage much more easily. I've heard that a number of times.

S: I am a bit suspicious. I think there are some people who like to sort of play around with a practice or method, and not do it in the established way almost to assert their own independence and freedom. I think one must be very cautious with people who claim that they can feel metta towards somebody else but not towards themselves. They may have a definite feeling for somebody else, but that may not be metta in the Buddhist sense; it may be quite projective, it may be something sentimental, perhaps they may be a bit in love with them or something of that sort.

Ratnaguna: But what about if they say it does help them feel metta towards themselves?

S: Perhaps you need to discuss this with them in some depth, and then arrive at your own conclusions.

[35]
Ratnaguna: So would the principle be: it's OK to change the stages a bit, but be careful and question especially beginners?

S: I think if it is known in a class that somebody else is doing it in a different way, sometimes it has a quite unsettling effect, and some people [may think]: 'Maybe I should change it around. Maybe if I changed it around it would be more successful and also it would work better.' You see what I mean? People are quite easily unsettled in this way. If you do generally come to the conclusion that someone could change it around, you might say: 'OK, do it your way when you are at home, but do it our way when you come to the class.' You see what I mean? And don't tell other people that you are doing it in a slightly modified way. Or, if they are relatively new people, say: 'Look, just have a bit of trust in us that this is actually the standard way, and in the long run it does work better. Just try it at least, say, for three months, and come and see me at the end of that period if you still feel that some other way would be better.' Because can one feel real metta you know? for another person, some other person, without feeling it for yourself?

Ratnaguna: We do doubt this, don't we? but many people claim that they do.

S: But perhaps it is because they don't really understand, to begin with, what is meant by metta. They think of it as some strong, what they think of as positive feeling, they just

identify that as metta. I remember there was one woman coming along in my Hampstead Vihara days, and she was clearly a rather short tempered, disagreeable woman, but she said: 'I don't need to practise metta bhavana! I'm full of metta. I'm radiating it all the time!' And she seemed to believe this; but she obviously wasn't in that state, full of metta. So I think sometimes people just can't identify the state at all. They think you know what you mean when you talk about metta, but actually they don't know what you mean, because there perhaps isn't anything in their experience corresponding to that. They might think metta is liking someone very much, and that if you like someone very much, you have got metta towards them; so they perhaps want to think first of someone that they like very much. But that isn't metta.

Tejananda: Another question on that, Bhante. Sometimes when I teach the practice, people say that they can't think always of someone to put in the fourth stage; they don't happen to feel animosity towards anybody at that particular time, which seems quite fair enough. And occasionally I tell them well, just put in another neutral person. Does that seem fair enough?

S: In the old days, when I was teaching, I used to be very suspicious about that; and I would say: 'If you really think there is no one that you dislike, put a close relation there'! Because sometimes there are these disguised negative feelings in the case of close relations. Or you can put some historical person there, or some political figure that you don't like. If they are very Left-wing, Labour type people, ask them to put Mrs Thatcher there.

Ratnaguna: Oh, that's OK, is it?

S: Well, why not? Surely one wishes her also well, even if one does disagree with her policies?

[36]
Ratnaguna: I kind of thought that someone like Margaret Thatcher had become such a figure that it wasn't really a person any more to people, it was just a big projection.

S: Well, perhaps it would help them to withdraw their projections! Obviously, one doesn't know her personally, one only forms an impression from what one reads, but if you have a negative feeling, a negative feeling is a negative feeling; whether

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directed towards an actual person or what you think is an actual person, it still needs to be withdrawn or resolved. So you could do that. Or, if it is someone who is very Right-wing, ask them to feel some metta towards, say, Mr Scargill. I say that because, according to the radio, Mr Scargill has been very unpleasant and awkward again today!

Kulamitra: If people come up with that when I am teaching metta, I tell them the story which Jury Squiff told me years and years ago. He said that, when he first learned the metta bhavana, that was his attitude: that he had no enemies. After a week, he said he discovered he did have one or two. After a month, he realized he had a dozen! And that usually forces people to recognize, well, maybe there is someone after all.

S: I think very often people or even ourselves do not always realize that actually we dislike

someone. We don't allow it to come to full consciousness., if you live in a community, you can ask yourself whether there isn't someone in the community that you actually dislike, at least slightly. If it is a reasonably large community, I am sure there is almost always someone that you don't quite like, that you have slightly negative feelings towards or that you don't particularly want to be friends with. Well, you could put them in the fourth place. They are certainly not neutral, or you're certainly not neutral with regard to them; there is a tinge, at least, of dislike, or a tinge almost of repulsion, let us say, on a quite basic sort of level.

: It seems to be a rule, actually, that no matter who is in a community there will be someone you dislike. That person leaves, and then there is another person!

Ratnaguna: It seems that if we put our teacher into the metta bhavana, we would be adding an element of sraddha.

S: That is true, yes.

Ratnaguna: That would be OK in the metta bhavana it wouldn't be a complicating factor to the sequence (?)?

S: It might be; it could be. Not that what you would experience would be unskilful or negative, but it might be something different, a different kind of positive emotion. And if you are intending to develop metta, you should just develop metta. Do you see what I mean? It is just a question of being clear as to what it is you are actually trying to do. Some people might regard their teacher more as just a friend; others might regard him in a very different sort of way. Occasionally, you might regard him as an enemy! That hasn't been unknown.

[37]
Dhammaloka: Could one say that the difference is really so very clear-cut between metta and sraddha, because defining it as an overwhelming desire for the spiritual welfare of another seems to suggest an element of something overlapping with sraddha?

S: I would say, in my own experience, I would not think in terms of developing metta, say, for someone like Dardo Rimpoche; I would consider that to be rather inappropriate. I definitely think in terms of sraddha, and not metta. Even though, in a way, yes, perhaps metta is the basic sentiment, and when you with metta look up to someone, that turns into sraddha, just as when you regard someone who is suffering, it turns into compassion. But I would not say from my own experience that I would think in terms of developing metta as such towards a teacher. I would think in terms of developing metta to begin with, and then, if the teacher was to be brought into it at all, regarding him in such a way that the metta was transmuted into sraddha.

Ratnaguna: Perhaps one could do a sraddha bhavana. You think of your own teacher first, and then his teachers

S: Well, you can do, but then again you must be clear what it is you are doing: whether you are trying to develop metta or trying to develop sraddha. And inasmuch as sraddha, like compassion, is a sort of application of metta, you probably would be well advised to start off with a metta bhavana, an ordinary so to speak metta bhavana.

Ratnaguna: In a sense, in doing the Puja, we are doing a kind of sraddha bhavana. Could one not do a formalized meditation where one thinks of one's teacher and then other teachers?

S: Well, yes, one can do, for instance, the Guru Yoga, where one does exactly that. But that is not to be confused with, I think, metta bhavana as such. It is just a question of making up your mind what it is you are actually doing. You can certainly proceed from one to the other, but one should do so deliberately and as it were with mindfulness and awareness, not just sort of drift around.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, you spoke earlier, when Ratnaguna raised the issue of beginners wanting to change the metta bhavana around, of the danger of people confusing a projection type emotion with metta. Obviously, we guard against this to some extent by dissuading people from choosing someone of the same sex or of a very different age or who is dead for the second stage. Do you think we should warn people more specifically about the dangers of projection, which is clearly there even towards someone whom you regard as a good friend?

S: Yes, perhaps there is something to be said for that. Perhaps in our introductory talk before the metta bhavana, we could mention that. It is always good if people understand the reason why something is not done or is done, rather simply being told, 'You do this or you don't do that.' But I think, if you go into this question of projection in connection with the opposite sex, you have to be quite careful; if you are not careful, you could get into a discussion, not to say argument, with certain people. They might deny that there is any projection in such situations, and then that would undercut, so far as they were concerned, that particular qualification that you don't put someone of the opposite sex into the place of the near and dear friend. perhaps you shouldn't mention projection at all; perhaps you should just say that [38] sexual attraction is quite different from metta, and leave out the question of psychological projection. Just put it in straightforward sexual terms, because no one could dispute that. It would be a very obtuse person who could not understand the difference between a genuine, warm feeling of friendliness and a sexual attraction, even though you might admit that the two very often went along together or were felt towards the same person to some extent; but none the less one is wanting to develop just metta. I think probably, if you explained it in terms of projection, it could involve you in an unnecessary argument.

Ratnaguna: Is that why you have asked us to say, in the second stage, 'Not someone of the opposite sex'? because often we have homosexuals coming along; but you don't say, 'Not someone ' I think I asked you in Tuscany about this

S: Yes, I have been asked this question several times, even in the old Archway days. I used to say, 'Well, just think of someone of whom you are fond, of around your age, but towards whom you definitely don't have a sexual attraction. If you are a homosexual, you can very easily think of someone of the opposite sex, perhaps avoiding someone of the same sex.' And once someone said: 'Suppose we are bisexual?' I said, 'Well, in that case you just have to do the best you can!'

Ratnaprabha: There was somebody on a recent retreat here, wasn't there, who said he felt sexual attraction towards everybody.

S: In that case, a person towards whom you feel friendliness with the minimum of sexual feeling.

Ratnaguna: Is it the sexual feeling that is the complicating factor, or is the projection?

S: I think probably, especially with young people, it is the sexual factor which is a bigger complicating factor. Projection isn't such an important matter, perhaps. Though, very often, projection does go along with sexual feeling, especially in the case of the opposite sex; so if you don't put in the place of the near and dear friend someone of the opposite sex, i.e. someone to whom you are sexually attracted, the likelihood is that projection will automatically be excluded, or at least certain kinds of projection.

Tejananda: We don't usually say that with regard to the stage of the neutral person. Could it apply there also, that sexual attraction could be diverting or distracting?

S: In the case of the neutral person, it is unlikely that you will put in the place of the neutral person someone to whom you could easily be sexually attracted. I think it is usually some nondescript, rather unattractive, person. Do you see what I mean? Some not very appealing person, a drab person; though who may at the same time actually be a very worthy person who would be worthy of your friendship, but they have got no very obvious charm or attractiveness, so you tend not to have any particular reaction towards them at all. Supposing you were a man and started thinking of a woman as your neutral person; you wouldn't start thinking of some very glamorous blonde, because by very definition you couldn't regard her as neutral! If it was a woman, it ought to be some drab, mousy sort of 40 year old woman that you hadn't really noticed before, so you would be very unlikely to develop feelings of sexual attraction towards her; you might start feeling a bit [39] friendly, feel a bit of metta, and perhaps feel a bit sorry for her, but it must be quite unlikely that you would start feeling sexual feelings towards her. If you were capable of feeling sexual feelings towards her, she would to that extent have attracted your attention and, to that extent, would not have been in the position of being a neutral person.

Surata: On the Spring Retreat, I seem to recall that I put in this thing about not choosing somebody to whom you are sexually attracted, and some more experienced people from I don't remember which centre said that they hadn't actually heard that before; that was a surprise to them.

S: They should have done.

Surata: Well, that's what I thought.

S: Maybe they happened to have learned their metta bhavana on an evening when someone forgot to mention that.

Surata: So we should always include that?

S: Oh yes, always. I have sometimes discovered that Mitras have been practising we usually discover these things on Tuscanies slightly wrongly for years, having either not understood properly the first time they heard, or perhaps not having actually heard the correct explanation, or a full explanation.

Ratnaguna: Am I right in thinking that we should say, in the second stage, not just: 'Not someone of the opposite sex '

S: Yes, perhaps if you say: 'Not someone to whom you are sexually attracted'; 'the opposite sex' in the case of those who are attracted by the opposite sex would be included, but those who happen to be of a different kind of inclination, let us say, would also not be excluded. In other words, it covers everybody! though, of course, you might put the poor bisexual in difficulties because he might say, 'Please, teacher, there isn't anyone!'

Surata(?): So one should say: 'Don't choose someone whom you are likely to feel sexually attracted towards.'

S: Yes, I think leave it at that. If someone does ask about bisexuals, just say: 'Well, think of someone to whom you are sexually attracted to a very limited degree,' but indicate that he might have a bit of difficulty developing metta.

Surata(?): I thought you weren't happy with that, and I thought that you recommended that we say 'someone of the opposite sex'

S: That was true originally, because originally very few people ever raised the question of homosexuality or bisexuality, but it does seem that the question is raised more and more frequently; perhaps because people are now more outspoken about these matters. So perhaps we have to take that into consideration.

Tejananda: Having discussed the metta practice, Ratnaguna now has a question on the other three Brahma viharas.

[40]
Ratnaguna: It's two questions, really. 1) Why is it that we in the Movement don't make more use of the Brahma viharas other than the metta bhavana? I understand that the metta bhavana practice is the basis of the other three, but as there are separate practices for developing karuna, mudita and Upeksha, could we not make use of them? Are there any dangers in practising them? Could Mitras practise them if they wanted to?

S: Well, first of all, it is not just the FWBO. I certainly get the impression that, in the East, the other three Brahma viharas are not practised. Even the metta bhavana is practised much less than one might have expected. But personally I see no reason why the other three Brahma viharas should not be practised. In fact, I would go so far as to say it was probably desirable, especially in the case of the Upeksha bhavana, which is traditionally regarded as carrying one a little further than the previous three. So if anybody wanted to extend their practice of the Brahma viharas, I would certainly encourage them to do that. But they must keep the metta bhavana as their basis all the time. Before doing, say, the karuna bhavana or the mudita bhavana, it is desirable to go through the metta bhavana first.

Ratnaguna: Do you think one should try to perfect the metta bhavana first, even?

S: Well, that's going to take one a long time, isn't it?

Ratnaguna: So if your metta bhavana practice is in a reasonable state, you can do the others?

S: Yes. Buddhaghosa does give instructions in the Visuddhi Magga; one could read up those, they are quite simple. His instructions on those three Brahma viharas are much shorter and

simpler than those on the metta bhavana, for obvious reasons.

Ratnaguna: And there are no dangers in practising these?

S: I would say not if they are based on the practice of the metta bhavana. If you were to practise, let us say, the karuna bhavana, without a firm basis in the metta bhavana, you could be overcome by depression. Or if you were to practise the mudita bhavana without a firm basis in metta, you could get into a slightly hysterical state, a frothy, bubbly sort of state; and similarly if you were practise the upekha bhavana without a basis in the metta bhavana, you could develop a sort of indifference. Those are all the near enemies of those states. So metta bhavana must be the basis anyway.

Ratnaguna: Would you say Mitras could practise them?

S: Yes, if they were sufficiently based on the metta bhavana, but not if they were not getting on well with the metta and they thought maybe they would get on better with one of the others; not in that kind of case.

Dhammaloka: Would there be a natural [sequence] first metta bhavana, then karuna bhavana, etc.?

S: That is the usual sequence. Though, of course, actually if one has developed the metta bhavana, the other bhavanas, so to speak, arise naturally as one encounters different kinds of situation. Supposing you are in a state of natural

metta, you come across people who are suffering and at once you feel karuna; the metta is transformed into karuna. Or you see people happy; at once you feel sympathetic joy. Do you see what I mean? But in terms of practice, it is definitely metta, karuna, mudita, upekha.

Ratnaguna: My second question was: 2) Why does the karuna bhavana come second? I would have thought that mudita would come second.

S: I suppose there is no logical reason. Either might come second, inasmuch as karuna arises when you see people suffering, and mudita arises when you see them happy. One might say that it is more important, perhaps, that you should pay attention to those who are suffering, inasmuch as they might need help, in a way that people who were happy would not need it. You could look at it like that. But, logically, there is no reason why mudita should not come second.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaprabha on the distinction between Upeksha and shanti

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture, you translate Upeksha as 'peace'. Is there any difference in meaning between Upeksha and shanti, and which of them is the Transcendental peace referred to in the line 'Nirvana alone is peace', and in the last line of the Transference of Merits and Self Surrender section of the Puja?

S: Let us take that bit by bit.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture, you translate Upeksha as 'peace'. Is there any difference in meaning between Upeksha and shanti?

S: In the very broad sense, there isn't. I don't think they are really technically distinguished. But shanti is, I think, a much more general, almost a literary, term, whereas upekha has a rather more technical significance. If one thinks of upekha in connection with the upekha bhavana, one must remember the way in which the upekha is to be developed. First of all you develop metta, but you remember, in that fifth stage, you start by developing metta equally towards all. In the same way you develop karuna equally towards all who suffer, regardless of whether they are friends or foes. Similarly with regard to mudita. So you develop upekha by dwelling on the element of equalness, or equality. Do you see what I mean? that your positive emotion is equal towards all. You don't make any distinction. You don't have greater metta for a friend and less for an enemy, and so on. So you dwell more and more on this element or this aspect of equality, until upekha, in that way, becomes the predominant emotion, the predominant bhavana. So clearly upekha has a rather special meaning, which does not seem to be conveyed by shanti. Shanti is more like a calming down of disturbance, but upekha involves an element of non-discrimination. That is why there is also upekha in another sense: there is upekha as tattramajita(?), as the mean, as the point of equilibrium. That goes perhaps even beyond upekha in the sense of the fourth Brahma vihara. I have pointed out that, among the Bodhyangas, upekha is the seventh and last; so if one regards that as a sort of all-inclusive series, a complete series leading right up to Nirvana, upekha must be a synonym for Nirvana, because Nirvana is the state of non-discrimination and non preference par excellence. Something of that [42] is hinted at in the apranihita vimoksha. The apranihita is the directionlessness, because there is no inclination or preference to lead you this way or that, to cause you to turn to this side or to that side. You are poised, you are in a state of equilibrium, of non preference. But then you went on to ask something else?

Ratnaprabha: You may have already answered this. 'Which of these is the Transcendental peace referred to in the line Nirvana alone is peace and in the last line of the Transference of Merits and Self Surrender section of the Puja?'

S: When it is said that Nirvana alone is peace, if I am not mistaken you need to check this I think the word is shanti, but I won't be absolutely certain of that. With regard to the Shanti Shanti Shanti at the end of the Puja, this is not specifically Buddhist; this is common to all Indian traditions, and is understood in a very general way, a very broad way, as representing peace of body, speech and mind. 'Peace', again, in the sense of the calming down of all disturbance; more in the Western sense of peace, you know, absence of disturbance and absence of hostility.

Ratnaprabha: I wasn't actually referring to the Shanti Shanti Shanti, but the last line of the Transference of Merits and Self Surrender section, which says: 'as long as all have not attained to peace.'

S: Ah, one would need to refer to Shantideva here. I don't know what the original term is it might even be nirvana or it might be nirodha but I think what it actually means, regardless of the actual term, is peace in the sense of Nirvana.

Tejananda: Now Kulamitra has some points on the Puja in general.

Kulamitra: I think, for the sake of clarity, I will split this into three questions, all on different aspects of the Puja; so maybe I will just read them as separate questions. a) While leading the Sevenfold Puja on a recent retreat, I enjoyed the experience very much as poetry, revealing something of the feelings of Shantideva. This seemed to produce a very positive and open attitude, which was not what I usually think of as devotional. To explain a bit further, I only realized as the feeling developed that this was not what I could actually think of in my own mind as devotional. So, since even for someone like me that has never had a Christian upbringing, devotion seems to be associated with a fixed, subservient state, should we use this word in connection with the Puja, or just explain sraddha in other ways?

S: I think it depends entirely on what one finds. If one finds, talking to people especially within the context of a class that the term 'devotion' does not have a very positive connotation for them, one need not insist on that term. One can perhaps mention it once or you might not need to mention it at all and try to convey the connotation, the feeling, of sraddha by some other means. You could say something about 'rejoicing in the good'; or the feeling of inspiration you get when you contemplate something sublime you could paraphrase in that sort of way. Possibly someone with a Roman Catholic background would not be very happy with the term 'devotion': it might have all sorts of associations for them not altogether of a pleasant or positive kind.

[43]
Kulamitra: Do you think, even with beginners, one could perhaps talk about the source of the Puja being the spontaneous verses of someone who had gained a very great spiritual experience, and trying to contact that experience through those verses? Do you think that might even be suitable for beginners?

S: You could: there are beginners and beginners, after all. You might, if it was appropriate. You could even compare Shantideva to Shelley it is not an altogether impossible comparison.

Kulamitra: [The second question] does really follow on: b) When read as poetry, the verses of the Puja seem to form a complete process, a whole; so why break them up with readings?

S: This is, of course, the Tibetan tradition. The Tibetans, as I know from my own experience with Dardo Rimpoche especially, break them up to a far greater degree than we do, because you might have what is basically a Sevenfold Puja going on for a couple of hours, but with all sorts of other mantras and chants and verses and ringings of bells and banging of gongs in between. So I have tended to use the Sevenfold Puja in that way as a framework; because sometimes you do want to go on longer than just the 10 minutes it would take you to recite those verses. I think you have to be quite mindful, in a way, what you fill in with, in the way of readings. It must be something that enhances the feeling. Occasionally I have been present when a reading has been quite dry. Also, several times, I have been present when the reading has been taken from the Precious Garland [?Bodhicaryavatara] and is virtually the Sevenfold Puja itself but that was not noticed by the person selecting the reading.

Kulamitra: I can understand that, but I think many of us, even Order Members, are only slowly experiencing the full import of the Puja [few have?] got anywhere near that yet and maybe, for many people, it is not really possible to use it as a framework, since it is only possible for them to concentrate on the whole over a relatively short period of time. I notice that in the Shrine Room, often, when there is a reading, people use it as an opportunity to

stretch their legs. In a way, they slightly withdraw from the Puja. After all, they are less active during that period, they are less involved with the actual process of chanting; and I feel it can break the rhythm of the experience of the Puja as a whole.

S: Well, one could experiment with having all those two chapters the chapters from which the verses are taken. One could experiment, perhaps, on the occasion of an Order evening, a chapter meeting, just to try it; because the verses are available. In fact, I could look out Mrs Bennett's translation of all those chapters.

Kulamitra: That would be really excellent, yes.

S: Unfortunately, before her death, she had only finished revising the first four chapters, but I do have all of those somewhere; I don't know it would take me some time to find them; but that would be possible.

Kulamitra: I would appreciate that.

Kuladeva: This is a slighter side. I remember, a few years ago I think it was after you had given the Golden Light series you were thinking in terms of writing another Puja on the basis of those lectures.

[44]
S: That's true, yes.

Kuladeva: Have you had any more thoughts about it?

S: I have thought about it several times; in fact, I wanted to do it in time for the Order Convention this year, but I just didn't have time to do it. But I still do have it in mind. I think of that as a sort of alternative Sevenfold Puja, but with a special emphasis on confession, because those earlier chapters of the Sutra of Golden Light are especially concerned with confession that is the nucleus of the whole sutra. So I think that could be used on those occasions where one or more people wanted to emphasize the aspect of confession, or when perhaps they had actually something that they wanted to confess, whether just to themselves or in front of other people. Apart from that, the verses are extremely beautiful.

Ratnaprabha: You mentioned the possibility of confessing to oneself in a Puja.

S: I was thinking that, when you might be doing your ordinary, say, daily Puja in the morning or the evening and you were conscious that you have committed some fault and you wanted to confess that, so to speak, to yourself at least admit it quite consciously to oneself. If it is something a little serious, it is probably better you confess it to other people; but, in the Mahayana especially, there is the tradition well, even in the Theravada, come to that of confessing faults to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

Ratnaprabha: And is that what you mean by confessing to oneself?

S: Yes; by oneself, perhaps, would be more correct. There is a verse in the Theravada daily Puja, which I used to recite myself: Kayena vaca cittena (?) I can't remember it all now. 'Whatever faults of body, speech and mind I have committed, I confess them to the Buddha,

the Fully Enlightened One' there is a verse to that effect. Appamada mayakatam.(?) Yes, it goes like that: 'whatever heedlessnesses I have committed...'

Kulamitra: Shall I go on to the next section of the question? This is actually a little bit different, but: c) The principle of offering is expressed in Indian Buddhist culture as the seven or eight offerings to the honoured guest, as you mention in the lecture. But this does not seem to have the traditional or what I assume to be the traditional direct emotional impact in our own culture. In other words, I think it is very easy to understand when it is explained: 'These are the traditional ways in India,' but they are not our traditional ways. So could we find a better way to express the principle of offering in our own culture?

S: Well, Tibetans offer all sorts of things: they offer tea. Well, even in the Theravada, in this same daily office which I mentioned, there are all sorts of verses for all sorts of things, including pan, that is to say betel nut, which is tambulam(?) 'tambulam parikapitam ...[etc.]' meaning 'Please accept this betel out of compassion for your bhikkhu.' Yes; so in every country they have done this, really; these Pali verses are composed in Ceylon, not in India, as far as one [45] knows. So Tibetans, as I say, offer tea on the altar; they offer wine, too. There is no reason why you shouldn't offer tea to the Buddha. But you have to be careful how you do these things, otherwise people just take it as a bit of a joke, and it doesn't stimulate devotional feelings at all. Perhaps something more exotic is more likely to stimulate their devotional feelings.

Instead of rice, you could always have a piece of cake, or a cream bun!

Tape 3, Side 2

I think I have a recollection that in Kalimpong, even, sometimes, I used to put biscuits in one of the little bowls as an offering, rather than what the Tibetans used to offer, which was something made of tsampa.

Ratnaprabha: In the Japanese Nichiren shrine near the Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes, they used to place everything that people brought for them on it, so there were piles of tins of baked beans and even corned beef and spam ... piled on the altar!

S: In the West, what are the traditional offerings?

: A cup of tea.

S: if you think in terms of offerings to the honoured guest. But do we have the same sort of feelings towards the guest as people had in ancient India? So could you make that sort of connection? Could you transfer the feelings that you normally have towards the honoured guest to the Buddha himself? Would it seem to be appropriate to do that?

Kulamitra: No, I don't think you could. We did discuss it a little bit in the group earlier on, before agreeing to ask the question, and I thought maybe it would have to be more the sort of things that Shantideva comes up with in the Bodhicarya things which are pleasing to you: great forests, or

S: Yes. Beautiful things.

Kulamitra: Beautiful things, yes.

S: Precious things. It occurs to me that, as far as I can remember from my own experience within the context of Christianity, the only time when people really made offerings, say, in church was at the time of harvest festival. People did bring along loaves of bread and bunches of grapes and so on and so forth. And there was an actual offering well, offering of the first fruits, I suppose it was, really. Otherwise, a nice lady would arrange a vase of flowers on the altar or something like that before the service, and that was as near as you got to any kind of actual offering in the literal sense. So we don't really have any sort of tradition of that kind. If you go back to ancient Greece and ancient Rome, very often it is an offering of animals as, of course, it was with the Jews as well, wasn't it?

Dhammaloka: Don't we have the tradition of really making the guest welcome, and trying to look after him very well? It may not be expressed so much in giving things to him, but really trying to feel -

[46]
S: Well, you do find this here and there, but it is not very popular or common in the modern world, in the way that it was, perhaps, to some extent, formerly. Christian monasteries have this: Christian monasteries were instructed, or monks were instructed, that they should regard the guest as Christ himself come to take shelter among them. This was a regular feature of monastic life. Very often, perhaps, they didn't live up to it, but at least that ideal was in the background; but we don't feel like that about guests nowadays, do we? I am not so sure that even they would feel much like that in all monasteries nowadays those that are left. For instance, the word for 'guest' in Sanskrit and Northern Indian languages is atithi(?). I have explained the meaning of this before, haven't it? You know what tithi is: tithi is a division of time, like our hour, so atithi is one who doesn't come at any particular time. A guest is not someone whom you invite and who turns up at the appointed hour for a meal; no, an atithi is the untimely guest, the stranger who just turns up and to whom you are bound to give hospitality, just because he is a stranger and he needs food, he needs drink, he needs shelter. There was something of this sort in ancient Greece, when Zeus was regarded, wasn't he, as the special patron or protector of the traveller and the guest? But we don't really have those sort of associations nowadays, do we? I think we just have to start from scratch and build up from the bottom. Some people don't like guests. They are awkward, they get in the way, especially if they come unexpectedly. Because, again, you don't usually keep great stores of food by you, as perhaps they did in the old days. You [have to] quickly dash down to the corner shop and buy something! Nowadays our timing is very often compartmentalized. We've got something to do at 9 o'clock and something to do at 10, and something to do at 11, and if a person turns up unexpectedly and expects to be treated as a guest it disrupts our entire schedule. Life is not so leisurely, not so spacious, as it was a few centuries ago. I can remember, even in my own case in Kalimpong, some people often used to turn up quite unexpectedly, and as a matter of course you would take them in, you would feed them and find them a place to stay, and they would stay a few days perhaps; you thought nothing of it. It was part of your regular life, your regular routine, almost. In fact, in ancient India, in Hinduism, they carried this so far as to say that the only justification for the household life was that by setting up a household complete with wife and family you were thereby enabled to give entertainment to guests. That was the justification for your household life a very different point of view. So I think we have to start in our centres and communities by making the newcomer, by making the guest, as welcome as we possibly can, by not being too busy to

see people, not being too busy to say hello or to greet them, welcome them, show them around. I think it creates a very definite impression all the more so because people very often are not used to this sort of treatment, don't usually encounter this sort of treatment. For instance, I heard a rather dreadful story about a certain Buddhist centre in the States which Vajradaka visited with an old friend of ours called Anne Parkes(?). Apparently they had visited the centre there were a few people there and it was a very rainy night; so Anne asked the person there, the monk or whoever it was, if they could use the phone to call a taxi, because she didn't want to get wet; it was raining very heavily. He refused to let them use the phone. So then she said, and Vajradaka said: 'Well, please at least call the taxi for us yourself. We will pay for the call.' He still refused. And Vajradaka expostulated with that person and said: 'Look, it's raining heavily. Anne isn't very well and she wants not to risk catching a chill' because if they left they would have to walk for [47] some time in the pouring rain. So Vajradaka expostulated very strongly as you know Vajradaka can but no, they just wouldn't allow them to use the phone and wouldn't themselves make that call for a taxi. And this is a Buddhist centre in the States. This I thought was really extraordinary. It was a Tibetan Buddhist centre. I don't know whether it was because of their form of Buddhism or whether it was because they were Americans though I must say the Americans that I have encountered are very hospitable indeed. So one doesn't really know what to make of this. And Anne was really very upset; and actually they did have to walk for about 10 minutes in the pouring rain and she did catch a chill, and she had this chill for about a month and was in bed. This story Vajradaka told me quite recently. I was actually praising that particular centre, and he said: 'No! This was my experience of that particular centre.' Anne Parkes will never forget that, you see; she will never forget. She is someone who is on the fringes of Buddhism, on the fringes of the FWBO, and she will certainly never forget that treatment. Vajradaka won't forget it, either. But in the case of a new person, to be treated in that way at a Buddhist centre, what impression must it give them about Buddhism? But, conversely, if they are received with warmth and shown real hospitality and friendliness, that can give them an impression that will last the rest of their lives, even if that is their only contact ever with Buddhism. At least they will go away with the impression that Buddhists are friendly, open, hospitable people. At the very least, they will be left with that impression, even if you never see them again. And they might pass that impression on to other people. It is extraordinary the sort of impressions people do have about Buddhism. You know that just recently I went to Thames Television for my seven little talks, and I found that the women working there it was mainly women, apart from the technician knew only one thing about Buddhism and about Buddhists. They had gathered this little piece of knowledge from one of their number who had a friend who was a Buddhist who goes along to Chithurst. Their one piece of information about Buddhism was that, in Buddhism, monks weren't allowed to touch women! That was all that they knew. So before my arrival they were a bit anxious lest they should inadvertently touch me! And we talked about this, and I explained my own point of view and the point of view of the FWBO, and one of the women told me that as I arrived she deliberately kept her hands behind her back so that she wouldn't involuntarily try to shake hands with me but actually, of course, I put my hand out to shake hands with her! They weren't feminist or anything like that, but then what could their impression of Buddhism have been if all they knew about it was that monks aren't allowed to touch women or women aren't allowed to touch monks? So I explained that we didn't altogether agree with that, but on the other hand I did say that it was undesirable for young monks, let us say, to come into physical contact with women. But, rather to my surprise, they were quite unable to see the connection, as if they couldn't understand that, in the case of a young celibate monk, to touch women might give rise to strong sexual feelings. They seemed quite unable to realize that; they thought it quite odd. I think it is probably

because, in our present-day society, those sort of feelings are so accepted and so usual that some people find it quite difficult to imagine what someone who is trying to lead a celibate life is actually trying to do, and in a way how difficult it is, and what sort of precautions he needs to take. I think people are quite out of touch with that sort of ideal, as it were. They were clearly unable to see why a monk who is celibate just because he is celibate shouldn't touch women or be touched by them. It seemed quite odd. Anyway, that's by the by. How are we getting on?

[48]
Tejananda: We've got four more questions. The next one is from Dhammaloka, on Puja: collective versus individual practice.

Dhammaloka: In the lecture, you introduced the Puja as 'a practice for the development of faith and devotion', a formulation which perhaps points to the Puja as an individual practice in order to develop certain positive emotions. In one of the seminar extracts you emphasize the 'collective' aspect, when saying that the Puja is a 'collective act of individuals' who are 'not just doing their own thing'. In this context you mention the Russian term sobornost. In the same context you connect some remarks on the Christian Orthodox idea of the service as 'a reflection of the archetypal heavenly liturgy' with our present seating arrangements in which each person is 'actually part of the total structure'. This does suggest to me that it should be possible to put much more emphasis on this collective aspect, not only in order to help people to connect with the Puja but even more in order to bring its transindividual implications to life. Do you agree?

S: Yes. 'Collective' with single inverted commas. Yes, I think that is so. I think, though, if one is thinking of 'collective', clearly there has got to be individual devotion before there can be 'collective' devotion. In a way you have got to be able to feel devotion as an individual, and even perhaps to perform the Puja as an individual, before you can join in with others. In other words, it is not a group proceeding, in the sense of a proceeding that negates the individual. It is a group proceeding in the sense of a proceeding engaged in by a number of individuals who are individually capable of engaging in that particular proceeding. But when the group, so to speak, engages in it, a whole new dimension is added; not because it is a group but because it pertains to something that we don't have a word for. That is why I bring in this Russian word sobornost.

Dhammaloka: I was particularly struck by this association with the heavenly liturgy, and perhaps rather confused images sprang to my mind, as seeing the Puja as something which is in a way much more than we usually seem to infer.

S: Yes. I think we have come to think of it as a devotional exercise, just a means of strengthening our devotional muscles, as it were. That's all right, but that is a quite limited way of looking at it looking at it in terms of individual development. But we can go further, we can go deeper than that. If one looks at some of the Mahayana sutras, you find the Bodhisattvas present all praising the Buddha with all sorts of hymns; so you could regard the Sevenfold Puja as a reflection of that kind of Bodhisattva activity on a very much lower level just as on the level of the Sambhogakaya, there is the Buddha surrounded by all the great Bodhisattvas who are singing his praises. In the same way, in this world, there is the image of the Buddha representing the Buddha himself, and there are we the Sangha in a much more lowly sense gathered around that image and praising the Buddha to the best of our ability. In

other words, the scene of the Puja becomes a sort of reflection, on the mundane level, of what is happening on the level of the Sambhogakaya. It becomes a Nirmanakaya Puja!

Kulamitra: I think not only is that aspect very important, but maybe we underestimate how early it can be introduced if done really well. For instance, I have just come, as you know, from leading a beginners' retreat. We introduced the Puja quite early on to people who may have never even meditated before, so after maybe only a couple of days in meditation they are doing a full Sevenfold Puja. I think [49] what makes it work is that you have a strong team of people who regularly do the Puja and who can create that collective atmosphere.

S: And also who know how to create a beautiful shrine. That is also very necessary. The shrine should be really beautifully and effectively decorated. It should be a very pleasing composition, a very pleasing, harmonious arrangement of the images and the vases and flowers and the coloured hangings and so on. Because it is obvious then that a great deal of care and devotion and taste has gone into that. And that produces its own effect.

Kulamitra: People get into it obviously not in a group way, but I think they are much more easily able to have these individual feelings of devotion in that collective context.

S: Yes. They possess the individual capacity, but that is sparked off by the devotion that they see around them.

Kulamitra: It strikes me as being a bit like Sangha. You said in that extract being 'collective', but individually it is a bit but I was thinking in the sense that people often don't understand what Sangha is by explaining it to them, but when they see five people together they immediately recognize there is something special there. I think it is the same with the Puja: it is only when they really experience people who are enjoying it, who create that atmosphere

S: Yes, that is important.

Kulamitra: that they know what it really is, or feel something at least of what it is.

S: Yes, they must see people enjoying it. Not just winding up the day with it because that is the custom, and you've got to go through with it anyway, sort of thing, so you do in a rather dull sort of way. That isn't good enough. That is why I am not too happy about there being pujas very late at night at the end of the day, when everybody is tired. I think one should consider the timing of the Puja quite carefully, so that people are fresh and vigorous when they have the Puja.

Dhammaloka: There seems to be an element coming in of what I was aware a sort of statement, a sort of objective element, perhaps we could say. The Puja as a sort of statement of a certain truth, in a very beautiful and ritual way which

S: Well, it is like saying this is what we are concerned with, this is what we are devoted to or committed to. It is an enactment of that. We are trying to direct all our energies, all our activities, towards Enlightenment. So the Puja is a sort of microcosm of that, with the Buddha image representing or standing for the Ideal which you are seeking to realize and towards which all your energies are directed. So, in the course of the Puja, you should be enacting that, almost. Or certainly there should be that sort of feeling, that sort of atmosphere.

Kulamitra: So, when you gave that lecture series, I think it's the one on the White Lotus Sutra, you talked about the cosmic drama of Enlightenment. So the Puja is a sort of reflection of that aspect of the teaching. Would that be right? It is the sort of cosmic drama aspect, that you are in that -

[50]
S: Cosmic liturgy if one doesn't mind using a Christian term! Or cosmic Puja. Your little Puja at your centre or your retreat is a reflection of that cosmic Puja which is going on at the level of the Sambhogakaya.

Dhammaloka: Bhante, would you have any ideas how we could go more in that direction? I remember in the context of this seminar it was the question of introducing music into the Puja, and it didn't seem that we are ready for doing that.

S: Probably the best shrines I have seen, and the best Pujas I have taken part in, have been in Tuscany: not that they were all on the same level every year. Last year I thought that they were not quite up to standard well, perhaps quite noticeably so, compared with earlier years. I am not quite sure why that was, but I did feel that or think that. But, leaving that aside, on the whole the best Pujas I have witnessed or taken part in, I think, have been in Tuscany, where a lot of time and energy has usually been spent in setting up the shrine, decorating the shrine, arranging the flowers, and where obviously there has been a quite concentrated and devotional atmosphere.

: Suvajra and Buddhap... are back there this year, so I'm sure

Kulamitra: One thing I have noticed recently is that a literal close harmony in the chanting seems to reflect the harmony that one takes it at that collective Sambhogakaya

S: When you say 'close harmony', do you mean close harmony in the technical sense?

Kulamitra: Yes! That people all chant the same

S: Isn't there another meaning of the term 'close harmony', when you harmonize as it were?

Ratnaguna(?): You wouldn't be singing the same notes then, you'd be singing notes in harmony.

Kulamitra: No, I am thinking of everybody keeping the same rhythm

S: Chanting in unison. Yes, indeed.

Kulamitra: Chanting in unison, polishing their pronunciation

S: Yes, and not prolonging their mantra chanting beyond everybody else. Some individuals do that.

Kulamitra: Yes. If it comes together on that quite apparently mundane level, that does seem to reflect more the Sambhogakaya level, where a messy Puja doesn't seem to reflect it as well.

S: Yes, it's harmonious.

Kulamitra: Yes.

S: And also perhaps dress does play its part. If someone ambles up in a shabby old jacket it doesn't seem quite to belong, does it? All right, let's carry on.

[51]
Tejananda: A question from Ratnaguna on rejoicing in merits.

Ratnaguna: This is to do with the Rejoicing in Merits section itself. Is there not a case for rejoicing in one's own merits a bit here? It seems rather one-sided to confess one's own faults and then rejoice in others' merits. You may say that we need to balance our one-sided selfishness, but it seems that so many people in the West have a negative view of themselves that we have to err the other way, at least a bit.

S: I think you may well find that, in that chapter of the Bodhicaryavatara from which these verses are taken, there is some provision perhaps for rejoicing in one's own merits. Yes, perhaps there is a case for our doing that. Perhaps one could look at that, if one does get around to making use of the whole of that particular chapter in a Puja. You could think that, in the same way that you were rejoicing in other people's merits, the other people performing the Puja with you would be rejoicing in your merits. They rejoice in the merits of other people, because the others would include you. So your merits were being rejoiced in, even though you yourself were not rejoicing in them. But still, that doesn't even then answer your point that we should feel positively about the skilful actions we ourselves have performed that we should feel positive about them as well as other people.

Kulamitra: There is the line 'May those who have suffered be happy'. There is no reason why, when you say that, you should exclude yourself.

S: Yes. But perhaps one does need to bring oneself in quite explicitly!

Dhammaloka: The same seems to apply to 'I rejoice with delight in the good done by all beings', doesn't it? So that would include oneself.

S: Yes.

Tejananda: A question from Kulamitra on kalyana mitrata, art and literature.

S: What a big question this must be!

Kulamitra: No, just a little question!

S: I will probably be asked to give a lecture about it next year!

Kulamitra: No, a very simple little question. Given that we will be studying this with Mitras, would you like to add any areas of developing the emotions, such as kalyana mitrata or the impact of the arts, to this limb of the Eightfold Path?

S: I think one certainly could, yes; because one certainly does find these things helpful in developing positive emotion. Spiritual friendship, involvement with the arts the right kind of arts, of course and what else did you mention?

Kulamitra: Just those two, but I did wonder if you had any other things that maybe you -

[52]
S: I can't think of anything else at the moment. Perhaps enjoyment of nature?

Tejananda: The final question is from Dhammaloka on social emotions and the social nature of man.

Dhammaloka: In the lecture you have been referring to most of the positive emotions as being social emotions, which in one of the seminar extracts you have described as expansive in their very nature. In the same seminar extract you mentioned the fact that 'human beings are essentially social' as the starting point of the Mahayana, inasmuch as this social nature of man forces him to recognize that there are other 'selves' in the world, and, beyond that, it endows him with the possibility of expanding and eventually transcending his narrow selfhood. My question is twofold: a) To my knowledge, the question of how man can possibly gain unquestionable evidence of the existence of other people as 'alter egos' has been the subject of philosophical inquiry without satisfactory answers being found. Is this whole question in itself a result of alienation of the thinking faculty from healthy human experience? b) Would a healthy human being quite naturally possess an equal certainty of himself and other people as existing?

S: Well, one does experience other people as actually existing separately from oneself, regardless of whether that is a non solipsistic illusion or not. One certainly does experience people as existing separately from oneself. And regardless of whether what one is experiencing is a reality or a delusion, you have to overcome that dichotomy, whether it is a real dichotomy or only a dichotomy which you imagine; so, from the Buddhist point of view, it comes to exactly the same in the long run. You don't really need to answer that question.

Dhammaloka: Does one really experience other people as people, in the sense of being 'selves' to themselves?

S: I don't think one does immediately. I think that requires some degree of sophistication or even imagination. You usually experience to begin with other people as things, as a baby does. And perhaps there are some people who never really fully recognize others as selves. There are others, again, of course, who do recognize others as selves to a greater extent. But that, of course, still doesn't answer the question whether there are really selves there which they recognize or whether they merely imagine selves to be there, for one reason or another. But from the point of view of Buddhist spiritual practice it doesn't really, one might say, make any difference. What was the further question, then?

Dhammaloka: Whether a healthy human being would quite naturally possess a certainty of the existence of other people [equal to that which] he possesses of his own existence.

S: You mean that your own existence, your own subject of existence, is a matter of direct experience.

Dhammaloka: Yes.

[53]
S: On the ordinary human level, you can only infer the existence of a similar self in another person; because you can see him behaving in the sort of way that you see yourself behaving, so you can infer from the fact of his behaviour that behind that behaviour there is a self similar to the self that you know is behind your own behaviour. But perhaps there is not any conclusive way, any logically convincing way, of proving that. That may well be so. I am not prepared to say that it is so, but it may be so. But in that case it wouldn't, from the Buddhist point of view, really make any difference.

Dhammaloka: Isn't it that sometimes in communication maybe not even on the level of mutual self transcendence you sort of can experience another person without needing to infer the other person's existence?

S: That may be so, but perhaps you may have previously inferred the existence of a self, and that may have enabled you to perceive it more directly. But in a sense you can't perceive another person as a self; that is a contradiction in terms, because the fact that you perceive means you perceive as an object. You can only perhaps perceive the other person as a self, or not as an object, when you no longer perceive yourself or experience yourself as a self in the way that you usually do. In other words, you can only experience the other person as a self, so to speak, when there is that element of mutual self transcendence. Paradoxically, you can only perceive the other person as a self when you no longer perceive them as a self if you see what I mean! Because, strictly speaking taking the expression literally to perceive a self or to perceive another self is a contradiction in terms.

Dhammaloka: Yes. Usually it is termed 'perceive an alter ego' another ego.

S: Yes. But you don't actually perceive the other ego, really. [It is] not that you simply don't: you can't. Logically, it is impossible by very definition. Hence it is a contradiction in terms to speak in terms of oneself perceiving another. You don't ever perceive a self. That's it?

Ratnaguna: There was one thing, actually. I want to know about the source of you quoted something from, I think it's a Mahayana sutra; you didn't say which one. Do you remember what that quote was? Can you ... the source?

S: Recently?

Ratnaguna: In this lecture. Ah: 'The Buddha said in this sutra that the Bodhisattva shouldn't learn too much. All he needs to learn is compassion.'

S: Ah. I think this particular sutra is quoted in the Siksa Samuccaya(?) I think I am right in saying that a collection of extracts from different Mahayana sutras. I am almost certain that that is where I found it. There is a translation of this in the Order Library.(Brief discussion on timetable.)

[54]

Day 3

Tape 4, Side 1

Tejananda: We have got only 10 questions today on Perfect Speech. The first one is from Sudhana, and it is on mudra.

Sudhana: Early in the lecture you mention Mudra. Some Order Members have found it useful to adopt the mudra or gesture of their respective visualizations when meditating on that subject. Do you think that this is a good practice? Should Order Members do what comes naturally, or not adopt such gestures and just sit in Dhyana Mudra?

S: I think it depends where one is. If one is sitting on one's own, say in one's own room, I think one can very well spontaneously adopt any appropriate mudra that you feel like adopting. But if you are meditating, say, in a public centre, you should not do that; or even if you are meditating with others in a community where there are Mitras and Friends, perhaps, because if you do something a little out of the ordinary it tends sometimes to unsettle people, or they wonder why, or they question you, or they want to do it too, or something of that sort. But certainly there is no objection to an Order Member doing that when he is on his own.

Kuladeva: What about with other Order Members, in that case, at an Order gathering?

S: I am not sure about that. One wants to encourage unity, and while unity is certainly not the same thing as uniformity, if there is too much external diversity it can perhaps derogate from the feeling of unity. So I think one would need to be a little careful about that. Perhaps if it is a small gathering of Order Members, and you know the other Order Members well and they know you well, and perhaps if you have talked about it beforehand, perhaps it would be all right; but perhaps not on the bigger occasions, like Order weekends and so on. Unless, of course, you adopt the mudra under your blanket or whatever! Do many Order Members have such feelings, does anybody know such spontaneous feelings to adopt a particular mudra in that way?

Ratnaguna: I have seen one or two Order Members, especially on the Convention, do the Vajrasattva [mudra], and Tara, when they are meditating.

: It's only one or two, though, isn't it?

Tejananda: Somebody said they found it difficult to visualize themselves as Tara while sitting in dhyana mudra, and that is why they found it easier to visualize it with Tara's mudra.

S: No doubt it is easier to identify with that particular figure if one does adopt the mudra characteristic of that figure. You could, of course, develop it even further. I did talk some time ago, on another retreat, about possibly meditating in a room entirely decorated in the appropriate colour, and so on.

Ratnaguna: Would you go so far as to say one could even adopt the clothes?

S: I suppose one could or lack of clothes, as the case might be.

[55]
Ratnaguna: Sometimes if you are in a blanket it really does feel sort of heavy and not too appropriate to very refined silks even ...

S: Perhaps one should just try what it feels like to dress in refined silks, and bits of muslin and so on. Lots of jewellery, of course! It must have some psychological effect whether it would be entirely spiritual is, of course, another matter. It could be a point of departure, perhaps.

Ratnaguna: I don't suppose you bothered with any of that when you were ?

S: Well, when I was in India I was wearing yellow cotton bhikkhu robes, which are pretty flimsy anyway. But certainly no jewellery!

Tejananda: The second question is from Kulamitra, on the three centres, body, speech and mind.

Kulamitra: If the head, throat and heart centres do have some unarbitrary psycho physical basis, how can two separate systems share these chakras? In particular, how can such apparently different things as thought and body be associated with a common psychic centre?

S: In the case of mind, the third centre, it is not mind in the ordinary sense of the term. Citta can be translated as heart. It is more like the seat of your true being, as it were. It is not mind or thought or consciousness, in the sense in which we usually use those terms. What particular inconsistency were you thinking of?

Kulamitra: I was thinking more it's usually body, speech and mind, but in the lecture you also talk about thought, speech and feeling. Feeling is obviously easy to see with citta; speech remains the same; but then, thought and body?

S: I am not sure I can't remember what I was getting in that connection. Can you find the actual passage?

Kulamitra: Yes: 'The head or head centre represents not only body but also, in another set of correlations, the intellect or understanding.'

S: Yes, intellect or understanding as distinct from citta in the sense of that centre where one's self in the deeper sense is located. I think, in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, if I am not mistaken, the wrathful deities are associated with the head centre. I think Govinda connects that with the intellect in the narrower sense. But I think there is no doubt, at the same time, that the basic set of correlatives is that of body, speech and mind as represented by the head centre, the throat centre and the heart centre. With regard to feeling, if one thinks in terms not of three centres but of five, feelings are then shifted to the next two lower centres, with the higher feelings, so to speak, more in the heart and the lower feelings as it were more in the navel centre the more instinctual feelings, even, in the next, the sixth, centre.

Kulamitra: I suppose I was thinking that, if there was this apparent disparity between the connection of body and head centre, and also thought and the wrathful [56] deities and the head centre, did it mean that there was something rather arbitrary about the placing of one

thing in one place and

S: That is assuming that each place, as it were, was one aspect or one facet, which is not necessarily the case; though it might not be easy to work out the relationships between the different facets or aspects of one particular centre. In The Tibetan Book of the Dead, as far as I recollect, wrathful deities were associated with the head centre, vidyadharas with the throat centre, and peaceful deities with the heart centre. In other words, systems of correlations can be more complex than sometimes one thinks. But none the less, I think that the primary set of correlations, as I said, is that of the body with the head centre, speech with the throat centre, and mind or citta, consciousness, with the heart centre.

Kulamitra: Do you think, then, that maybe we, in our own talks or whatever, should avoid that sort of thought, speech and feeling correlation if we don't really understand it?

S: Yes, I think one should, unless one definitely explains it as having reference to a particular context. There is no need to confuse people. If you are giving a lecture on The Tibetan Book of the Dead, you can hardly avoid making that particular connection; but then perhaps you could make it clear that it is not the usual one. But if you are just talking about body, speech and mind and the centres, in a sort of standard way, then just refer to the standard set of correlations. I think that in this lecture I am just concerned to make the point that, from a certain point of view, speech or communication can be regarded as representing a sort of synthesis of the more as it were cognitive and the more as it were emotive aspects of our total being.

Kulamitra: Presumably we could do that without referring to any particular centres?

S: Oh yes, indeed, yes.

Surata: What was the name of the association with the speech centre that you mentioned?

S: You mean in connection with The Tibetan Book of the Dead? The vidyadharas; a third class of deity, as it were, neither Buddhas nor Bodhisattvas. They are specifically Tantric divinities, knowledge holders here knowledge represents specifically Tantric knowledge, intuitive knowledge or understanding or realization.

Dhammaloka: You mentioned the vidyadharas and the wrathful deities and the peaceful deities, and in their association with the three chakras, in one of your seminars, and in that context you suggested that perhaps the association of the wrathful deities with the intellect was in a sense that it was an alienated intellect, which makes you experience the reality in wrathful form.

S: Right, yes. Not that the wrathful deity itself represents the alienated state, but that is the way in which you, being in an alienated state, perceive the reality which people not in an alienated state perceive as a peaceful Buddha.

[57]
Dhammaloka: Now I wonder, Bhante: perhaps it is a bit far-fetched, but it made me think of the Mandala of the Five Jinas, and this rupa associated with Aksobhya; and it seems that the overcoming [of] alienated thinking is associated with Aksobhya as well, in a sense. So I

wonder whether there is a connection with alienated thinking, in the sense of reified thinking, making up one's reality, so to speak, creating even thoughts like rupa; could one make this connection, or is it just 'off'?

S: Alienation is basically seeing something or knowing something, but without the corresponding as it were natural feeling. This seems to be the essence of alienation, this alienation from feeling. But perhaps one should be careful about interpreting Jinas in as it were psychological terms. But you could say, if there is a connection with rupa, rupa represents concreteness, and to be in touch with that which is concrete rather than abstract is a feature, no doubt, of non alienation. In the alienated state you tend to be in touch more if 'in touch' is the term with what is abstract rather than with what is concrete, and the rupa represents what is concrete, one might say. So perhaps one could make a sort of connection in that way. So, in that way, one could speak of Aksobhya in terms of that aspect of Enlightenment or Buddhahood which consists in an overcoming of all alienation; but that is a bit of as it were an interpretation.

Tejananda: The third question is from Ratnaprabha on harmful speech.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture on Perfect Speech, you say: 'In Buddhist texts Perfect Speech is usually described as speech which is truthful, which is affectionate, which is helpful, and which promotes concord, harmony and unity. Similarly, wrong speech or imperfect speech is described in precisely opposite terms, as speech which is untruthful, harsh, harmful, and which promotes discord, disharmony and disunity.' So here you have harmful speech as the negative equivalent of helpful speech. Is it not more usually 'useless' speech (samphapalapavaca)?

S: I would have thought so, yes. What does the ?

Ratnaprabha: The lecture says 'harmful' rather than 'useless'.

S: I suppose one could speak in terms of harmful speech, because speech which does not help you, which is not useful that is just a negative characterization; whereas perhaps that which is harmful, or maybe detrimental would be a better word it is as though the harmful, 'detrimental', is the full opposite of helpful, in the way that 'unhelpful' perhaps is not quite, because something could be unhelpful without doing you any kind of harm or damage. So it would not be the full extreme opposite of helpful speech. If you give a merely negative force to 'unhelpful', it is not as it were the full opposite or the full contradictory of helpful or useful. So perhaps 'harmful' is appropriate, though probably 'detrimental' would be a better word. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaprabha: Yes; but samphapalapavaca is definitely 'useless' speech, is it?

S: It is, yes; it is definitely 'idle', 'useless', 'senseless', 'meaningless'. It is more like meaningless; babbling speech. Maybe even 'idle' [is a] good literal translation 'idle speech'.

Tejananda: Another question from Ratnaprabha on the use of 'we'.

[58]
Ratnaprabha: This is perhaps a rather trivial question on style in giving talks and in writing. It

is about the pronoun 'we'. The example is from your talk, but it is a general point. In one paragraph, abbreviating slightly, you say: 'You are not speaking the truth unless you speak the whole truth and say what you really think and feel.' The next paragraph reads: 'We may repeat what we have heard and read when we are required to do so, but we do all this without really knowing what we say. Since we do not really know what we think, how can we be truthful?' Now what this brought to mind was the feeling one sometimes gets that a person saying 'we' is not really including himself in the human deficiency or whatever [that is] being described. Does this matter sufficiently for us to avoid this usage in our talks where it is not strictly accurate?

S: I would have thought that the use of 'we' was intended to include everybody. When I write, or when I speak especially when I write a lecture I am quite conscious of the different usages of 'I', 'you' or 'one', or 'we', and I alternate between these more or less consciously, in the sense that one does seem definitely more appropriate. For instance, in the course of a talk or lecture, I may say: 'When I was in Kalimpong'; in other words, this means: 'I am now going to talk about something which is definitely my personal individual experience.' Or, for instance, I might, on another occasion, say: 'The first time that you came along to an FWBO centre.' So here it would be inappropriate to say 'I' or 'me'; inappropriate also to say 'we'. 'The first time you came along to an FWBO centre.' When it is a bit more general than that, I might use 'one': 'the more one reflects upon something, the better one understands it.' Or I might sometimes use 'you' instead; it might be just a stylistic decision. But when I want to indicate that what I am talking about refers to the whole of humanity, as it were possibly even to myself also; maybe not now, but perhaps years ago I say 'we': 'we often tend to forget such and such', or 'we are often unmindful in such and such situation.' I would say that, even though I did not think that I myself at present am, or would be, unmindful in that particular situation, but originally I certainly was. Do you see what I mean? So I sort of ring the changes between these different pronouns in this sort of way. Sometimes it isn't easy to make the transition; it is quite a difficult matter, sometimes, just from a purely stylistic point of view, so that there aren't any abrupt jumps or transitions. Sometimes 'one' instead of 'you' sounds quite impersonal; sometimes I have changed it, in editing, from 'one' to 'you'. But sometimes 'you' doesn't seem appropriate; 'one' does seem more appropriate, in certain instances.

Ratnaprabha: There is another usage of the word 'we', which doesn't occur in this talk, because it is a written usage where the writer refers, for example, for previous works of his and the like, by saying: 'As we have suggested in such and such an essay or book.'

S: Yes. This is the editorial or authorial 'we', and it is also, of course, the royal 'we'. The editorial or authorial 'we' is used when one is the mouthpiece in a sense the authoritative mouthpiece of views which are not just your personal views but represent, say, the school of thought or tradition or body to which you belong. I have tended to use 'we' quite a lot in the Survey, you may notice, whereas I use it much less in The Three Jewels, and I don't think I use it at all nowadays.

[59]
Ratnaprabha: I think you may still use it in a slightly different context, when you are simply referring back to your own previous works. You may say: 'As we stated in The Ten Pillars of Buddhism,' or something like that.

S: Possibly, but I think my tendency nowadays would be to avoid that usage. It may slip in

occasionally.

Ratnaprabha: It is perhaps a bit outdated, that usage?

S: I think it is, yes. I think it is outdated from a literary point of view. I think also I would not feel it appropriate now to speak in that way that is to say, using the authorial 'we'. I think I would only use it if I definitely wanted to suppress my own personality or my own views, or to make it clear that I was just acting as the mouthpiece of tradition, as it were, which I was trying to do in the Survey. But it would not be correct to do that if, in fact, I was presenting my own personal interpretation, which differed to some extent from what had come to be regarded as tradition. Though, if I was referring to the FWBO, I could say that, or you could say that: 'In the FWBO, we believe such and such.' There you are clearly referring to the collectivity of people within the FWBO. 'In the FWBO, we tend to stress the importance of daily meditation,' or 'In the FWBO, we place great importance on study.' So you would say that instead of saying 'The FWBO places great importance on study,' or 'attaches great importance to study'; because, if you spoke of 'the FWBO', you would be sort of distancing yourself from it, almost as though you didn't belong to it. But if you say: 'In the FWBO, we attach great importance to study,' you are being objective and subjective at the same time. I think these stylistic matters often need quite careful thought; they are not, probably, as trivial as they might appear if you don't have to actually write talks. An idiom which I have tried to discourage in the past is, to give an example: 'It has been decided that ...', because this doesn't give expression to any what shall I say? it doesn't identify any responsible person, which I think is undesirable. It is a way of escaping responsibility, or refusing to identify who is responsible. It is not good even to say: 'At the Council, it was decided that ' The Council decided! If you say 'It was decided', the more you suggest that the Council is shrinking from accepting the responsibility of that decision. But sometimes it is even more remote than that. You perhaps come to a community, and you find a notice: 'It has been decided that such and such meeting will be held at 4 o'clock.' Well, who decided? You don't even know whether it was a council or an individual, or two or three Order Members, or whoever. So you should identify the people or the body responsible for the decision, those who are accountable. You shouldn't be afraid of fixing accountability. You might come to Padmaloka and find a notice up though you shouldn't: 'It has been decided that there shall be no smoking in the house.' You shouldn't, actually, ever find such a notice. There could be a notice: 'Please refrain from smoking in the house. (Signed), The Council, FWBO', or '(Signed) (Such and such), Chairman.' Do you see what I mean? Always identify the source of the instruction or decision.

: Does that mean that we shouldn't just put up a sign saying 'No Smoking'?

S: I think if in a building frequented by the public you have a sign of that sort, the assumption is that it has been put up by those with authority to put up such notices. (Laughter.) But you can't be completely sure, because a guest or visitor [60] might put up a notice for his own benefit: 'No talking after 10 o'clock', which was not the decision of the Council. So one shouldn't put up notices like that if one is not in fact entitled to do so.

: In the case specifically of Council minutes, where those items agreed or points decided are obviously, by the nature of the document, the decision of the Council, presumably that is not necessary?

S: It isn't so necessary, no. It is clear from the context. What you should not do, for instance,

at, say, a public meeting, or on a Friends' night, get up and say: 'It has been decided that ...' Just say: 'The Council has decided,' or 'Such and such committee has decided,' or 'I have decided,' or 'The organizer has decided.' But not 'It has been decided.' In some ways it is a small point, but I think the tendency to evade responsibility is so strong in a bureaucratic society that we have to go against it at every point wherever we can. Perhaps you should even write out little exercises, just giving yourself practice in using 'I' and 'we' and so on! You might begin, for instance, a talk: 'No doubt we are all very happy to be gathered here together on this occasion,' and then make your transition to 'I': say 'I am certainly happy to be here, for such and such reasons.' Then go on to 'you': 'You will have noticed that ...' You see what I mean? Maybe write out little exercises of this sort, giving yourself practice in using all these pronouns and making the transition correctly from the use of one to the use of another.

Surata: Bhante, I have got a loosely related question which refers to a phrase which you use in the lecture, which I have noticed you use on other occasions. I will read a section out to put the phrase in context.

S: Oh dear!

Surata: '...In most cases, our so-called relationships are just a maze of such mutual projections, with no mutual knowledge, and no mutual understanding at all, what to speak of mutual love.' Is this phrase 'what to speak of' a standard English usage?

S: I think it is. It is a bit old-fashioned, perhaps.

Surata: Because we had a bit of a look round

S: 'What to speak of', or 'not to mention'.

Surata: Oh yes, the meaning is quite clear; but I have only ever seen it as 'not to speak of', as a rule.

S: I think I am probably a bit old-fashioned, sometimes!

Surata: It is as simple as that?

S: I think, possibly. I remember, in this connection, an experience I had in America. I was talking to one of my students shortly after my arrival, and we were going to meet later on, so I said: 'All right, I'll see you anon.' He said: 'You'll see me a what?' I said: 'I will see you anon.' So he was really sort of so pleased to hear this old-fashioned English, he said: 'Wow! This old-fashioned English! (Laughter.) To hear it spoken live, not just reading it in Shakespeare!' [61] But I think that is a bit old-fashioned, isn't it? I remember my father always used this expression; he always said 'anon', he always

: I think it's still used.

S: Is it? Ah. Well, not in America, not in the States.

Ratnaguna: While we are on this sort of subject, it just occurs to me that you use the phrase 'as it were' a lot. Why do you use that phrase?

S: I think it is because I am very conscious of the limitations of language, and that one cannot express things always very precisely; and also that one's language is, one might even say, essentially metaphorical and not to be taken literally. So that 'as it were' makes that point, or safeguards that point.

Dhammaloka: That would suggest that it is quite important, if we quote from somewhere where you said 'as it were', not to make just dots but to include [the phrase].

S: Right. Sometimes I qualify a statement heavily, and then people quote me perhaps verbally [?orally], and all my qualifications are left out. I say, for instance: 'You could do such and such a thing under such and such circumstances, and perhaps from a certain point of view it would be all right'; but I am just quoted as saying 'You could do such and such a thing'! which doesn't fully do justice to the meaning of what I actually said.

: Not truthful speech.

S: Yes, it is not really truthful speech; it is not correct reportage. I saw a rather dreadful example of this sort of thing in the paper only yesterday. You might know that, up in the Midlands, I think it is somewhere, there is a headmaster who was suspended for allegedly racist articles and so on in the press. Apparently, his articles or his remarks have created quite a lot of resentment among the local, I think it is Indian, community, mainly Sikh; and some parts of is articles were translated into Punjabi, I think it was, but have been translated back from Punjabi literally into English. It is quite interesting to compare what the headmaster actually said in English, and what he is represented as saying in Punjabi. For instance, he mentioned that among, I think, Asian families, there is a fairly high percentage of single parent families; that is translated as 'He called us all illegitimates' in other words, 'he called us all bastards'! You see? So there has been a correspondingly emotive reaction, because he has 'called them all illegitimates'. But the actual statement I am not quoting it quite correctly, but it was more or less that in the Asian community there was a certain percentage perhaps he said 'a fairly high percentage' or something like that of single parent families.

Kulamitra: In fact, as we were going through before this particular topic came up, it had crossed my mind that that whole first question on mudra in meditation I wouldn't even read that back to the Mitra group, because it is too open to misunderstanding. So often I find you have very heavily qualified what you have said, and I can just see someone who wanted to, just taking away: 'Oh, it's OK to do that.' I think that does happen quite a lot. Maybe we have a responsibility just to keep quiet about some things not in a dishonest way, but just because we don't think it's easy to clearly communicate what you really mean.

[62]
S: Right, yes, yes. With all the accompanying qualifications. The classic example, quite a few years ago now, was that someone asked about relationships, and I said: 'Well, under certain circumstances, if the people involved are mature people, a relationship' by which I meant a sexual relationship 'is not necessarily neurotic, and is not necessarily incompatible with spiritual development.' I was quoted as saying: 'Bhante says relationships are OK'! which wasn't quite what I was trying to say. And there is the other classic example, which I sometimes give you may have heard it before which is not quite the same sort of thing, but in the same class, when I have, for instance, asked somebody to go and ask somebody else if they could come and see me. So I say: 'Would you please go to So and so and just ask him, if

he isn't busy or if he can spare a minute, just to come and see me?' So they go rushing along to that person and say: 'Oi! Quick! Bhante wants you!' which is not actually what I said. I hasten to add it doesn't happen with the Order Office people! That was quite a few years ago. I think it was on a retreat, or something like that. But one must be so careful. I appreciated the fact that Tibetans were very, very scrupulous in this respect. I could send a verbal [?oral] message by a Tibetan and know that it would be repeated faithfully, with the exact emphasis that I had given it, and so on. They were very good in this way partly because they were more accustomed to [?oral] communication, or taking [?oral] messages, and I think partly because they just were much more scrupulous about what was said. I used to find, when negotiating with Tibetans, that it was very difficult to get them to agree to do something, but once they agreed they would absolutely stick to that; you could absolutely rely upon them. But they would be very careful to be quite clear exactly what they were promising to do. Sometimes they would be almost pedantic about it. But, in the end, when they had agreed to whatever it was that you wanted them to do, once they had given their word you could forget all about it: they would definitely do it. They definitely had that characteristic as distinct from the Indians, who would promise very easily and quickly, and in nine cases out of ten not keep their word. Tibetans invariably kept their word, but it was much more difficult to get them to give it. That could sometimes be a very difficult task indeed! But, again, once they had given it, you would have no further cause for worry. They seemed to take their word much more seriously than Indians usually did though Indians originally did have that tradition of taking one's word seriously; but in modern times they seem to have lost it to a great extent. They are very casual about giving their word. Anyway, let's carry on.

Tejananda: The next question is from Dhammaloka, about destructive criticism.

Dhammaloka: How is it to be understood that, in the lecture, you said: 'There is a time for ... even destructive criticism'?

S: Well, 'It is a bad book, a bad novel, a really badly written article.' I was probably thinking of things like that.

Dhammaloka: That is what you mean by 'destructive', there?

S: Can you give me a bit more context?

[63]
Dhammaloka: From the lecture?

S: It is from the lecture, I take it?

Dhammaloka: It is from the lecture. You said in the lecture: 'Criticism is obviously necessary, but the whole tendency should be appreciative. Be helpful, be encouraging in your criticism; but there is a time even for destructive criticism.'

S: Yes, I was thinking probably of those cases where there is nothing to be said for a particular point of view, or a misunderstanding or a micchaditthi; that it should not be spared, it should just be exposed, just be destroyed. I think I was thinking of destructive criticism of such things, not of a particular person. A person should never be destroyed through criticism, however wrong or however bad, in a sense, but just especially wrong or perverted views or

muddled thinking. (Pause.) I was trying to think of a good example of destructive criticism in the literary sense.

Tape 4, Side 2

She was an American writer, famous for her wit and her sharp tongue. There is a story that, when she was quite elderly, she was at a party and a rather beautiful film star turned up at the same time that she did, a woman. So the beautiful film star made way, with mock politeness, for Dorothy Parker, saying: 'Age before beauty!' So Dorothy Parker snapped: 'Pearls before swine!' and went straight in! So she had that sort of tongue. But she wrote a book review, and she was describing the book and making it clear how dreadful it was; and she ended the review by saying: 'At this point your reviewer frowed up'!

: 'Your reviewer' what?

S: 'Frowed up'! was sick, vomited. No, perhaps it wasn't a novel, perhaps it was a Broadway revue, or something of that sort* , but anyway 'at this point your reviewer frowed up'! You don't get that sort of review these days.

Ratnaprabha: There was a very good review by Alan Brien of one of the Carlos Castaneda books

S: Oh! huh!

Ratnaprabha: which completely destroyed it, using humour. In The Observer the other Sunday.

S: That's good! Only one? (Laughter.)

Ratnaprabha: He just gave a string of quotes from the book, and the various noises that Don Juan was said to have made at various points in the book, which made the whole thing look completely ludicrous.

S: I am afraid I wrote a very few destructive reviews in my earlier days very short ones which gave a certain amount of offence, I'm afraid but in the right quarters! (Laughter.) I reviewed once a translation of Tulsidas's version of the Ramayana, which is a very, very highly devotional work telling the story of the life [was it Peter Pan?] [64] of Rama who is believed, of course, to be an incarnation of Vishnu by Hindus and Tulsi is distinguished for his extreme support of Brahminical orthodoxy; and he brings this into the story of Rama at every conceivable opportunity, declaring that the brahmins are gods upon earth and so on. So I reviewed the translation of this Hindi epic, and I described it as what was it? 'a bladder of Brahminical egotism, inflated with devotional frenzy'! which gave a lot of offence, again in the right quarters! I don't seem able to do these things these days!

: I came across an extremely scathing review by you in The Maha Bodhi, [of] a book which came out on the Buddha Jayanti.

S: Oh yes, I can remember that now! Oh yes! By someone called Monibagchi(?). Yes, I remember it. Among other things, he cribbed a whole page from one of my books, without

any acknowledgements at all. And he did the same sort of thing with authors like Radhakrishnan. Yes, it was a dreadful work. Actually, he was quite a nice man; I knew him in the sense that I had seen him around. He was a quite inoffensive sort of man, personally; but his book was really dreadful. And sometimes I used to be not quite sure whether I should really speak my mind about a book on Buddhism which was really bad because, in a sense, that seemed necessary and whether I should risk hurting the author's feelings. In those days, I think, being younger, I tended to write the review and say what I thought, and be not quite so careful of the author's feelings. But I think now I probably err a little on the opposite side; whether I have got softer, or weaker, is difficult to say, but I find it a little more difficult now than I did then to be so scathing. Though I think it is quite justified to be scathing. It is difficult to be really scathing about somebody's book without risking hurting their feelings, because obviously they identify with their book. But, at the same time, you want to safeguard the integrity of the Dharma. It is very difficult to be really critical and kindly. You can say that a certain book is rubbish, but if you qualify that very heavily, or you make the point very gently, the person that you are addressing, even though you use the word 'rubbish', will not in fact realize that the book is rubbish; you will weaken the impact of that particular word, or whatever other words you have used in that way. So it isn't an easy decision to arrive at whether one should be scathing or not.

Ratnaguna: I suppose the fact that they had written a book and had it published puts them wide open to criticism, and they know that, and have to abide by it.

S: Yes, presumably they do.

Ratnaguna: My question I don't know if it is coming next, but it is related to this.

Tejananda: Oh, you might as well go ahead.

Ratnaguna: This one is to do with criticism of institutions. In criticizing an individual person, one should try to be truthful, affectionate and helpful. This means that we should know the person well, and a degree of trust should have been established, so that the person can take the criticism. Does the same criterion hold good when criticizing an institution, or should we regard institutions as impersonal things which one can criticize without being afraid of hurting the feelings of those people who are involved in that institution? I am thinking of Christianity, and other Buddhist groups.

[65]
S: I don't think one can really regard institutions as impersonal, especially religious ones, because they are made up of individuals who strongly identify with them. So, in a way, in criticizing or attacking institutions, you are criticizing or attacking individuals. I don't think one can avoid doing that. So what was the actual question?

Ratnaguna: 'In criticizing individual persons, one should try to be truthful, affectionate and helpful. Does the same criterion hold good when criticizing an institution?'

S: Perhaps one has to ask what one means by criticizing an institution. Just to take a common example the Catholic Church. If one is just criticizing the Catholic Church, presumably one is criticizing it in respect of its whole history, and criticizing it as it is throughout the world, if you just say 'the Catholic Church' without any qualification. So if you criticize in that way just

the Catholic Church, you have to be quite sure that what you are criticizing does characterize the Catholic Church as such, and isn't simply characteristic of it at a particular time or in a particular place. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise it is quite easy to evade your criticism by referring to a time or a place where your criticism of the Catholic Church is not applicable.

Ratnaguna: People do get quite hurt, don't they, in a talk, if you or another Order Member are criticizing Christianity? People do get hurt by that, don't they?

S: They seem to, to a surprising extent, even though they don't consider themselves Christians or Catholics. It is rather odd; I find it quite difficult to understand this, really, but they do.

Ratnaguna: Do you think that is simply weakness on their part, and we should not cater to that, or do you think that, say, we as Buddhists should be quite willing to take criticism ?

S: I think it is a weakness on their part, though I am not quite sure why the weakness is there. None the less, I think at the same time that, in dealing with newcomers or even relative newcomers within the centre context, you should try to avoid that sort of criticism, even though justified, just because it would lead perhaps to a lot of unnecessary argument, and result in the whole discussion being side-tracked. Do you see what I mean? I think perhaps one should keep that sort of criticism for when one knows certain individuals better, so that if there is any reaction or difficulty you can explain yourself more easily and more fully. You don't want to get side-tracked into discussions of that sort in a beginners' class or newcomers' class. So I think Order Members have to be quite careful to avoid casual throwaway remarks about Christianity, which you could certainly get away with within the context of the Order or even with Mitras, but which might seriously upset new people, who might then proceed to question you or criticize you, even, or disagree with you; whereas your remark had just been in passing and was not what you were really concerned to talk about.

Ratnaguna: We also got on to talking a bit about criticizing other Buddhist groups, and someone I can't remember who mentioned that Newsletter a while back where Subhuti criticized other Buddhist groups; and somebody I think it was Kulamitra questioned whether that was a good way of criticizing other people, or whether it wouldn't be best to do it personally, through another person. Do you think it is a valid thing to ...

[66]
S: I think in a way we can't help criticizing other Buddhist groups, just bearing in mind how the FWBO itself arose. If we are asked if, say, I am asked 'Why did you start the FWBO?' I have to say: 'Because I was dissatisfied with other Buddhist groups; that was the main reason. Otherwise why should I bother to start up something entirely new, with all the trouble and difficulty that that entails?' So then they might ask: 'In what way did you disagree with them? Where was it that you didn't see eye to eye?' So I may put it quite mildly and gently, but I have to make it clear that I criticize them. Do you see what I mean? If I tone down the criticism, I almost make it seem as though I started the FWBO in a slightly frivolous way, when I need not really have started up the FWBO, when I could just as well have continued functioning through the existing Buddhist groups. So I won't be doing justice to myself, I will be misrepresenting myself. So we need not go out of our way to criticize, but certainly, if called upon, we can make it clear where we differ and why, and make it clear that we believe that we are on the right track. But, again, we should not go out of our way to do this, especially with newcomers; perhaps they don't even need to know, because very often they

just take us as Buddhism. They don't need to know, they are not really interested in exactly how we differ from this or that other Buddhist group. They have found what they want within the FWBO and that is all they are really concerned with. So I think we need not bring in our differences with other Buddhist groups unless actually questioned or asked; and even then we should express ourselves as mildly as possible, though without as it were betraying our own cause, or undercutting ourselves in any way.

Kulamitra: I think one of the other things we were talking about in the group when this issue came up was where the line is between, say, a forum for honest intellectual debate, and criticism which seems to be more personal, or a bit unnecessary or whatever. Do you think it would be good if there was some Buddhist forum not necessarily run by us where, just on the level of ideas, people could put forward a certain point of view, have it criticized, criticize the criticism, in a sort of honest intellectual debate?

S: I think it would be good, but no Buddhist journal permits this; though there was a little bit of that sort of thing in a recent issue of Spring Wind

Kulamitra: I noticed that.

S: with regard to the Lumbini project. And they just invited the readers to read the two contributions and make up their own minds. That is rather unusual, but then Spring Wind is a particularly good publication. But, again, a certain amount of discussion of that sort goes on; for instance, at the meetings of the European Buddhist Union. Subhuti has just gone off now to attend the annual meeting, and he has gone with a very strong brief with regard to qualifications for membership; because, according to the constitution of the European Buddhist Union, member organizations must have at least 50 members who are Buddhists. Now there is at least one Buddhist organization that wants to rescind that, because their members, though it is a Buddhist organization, are mainly non Buddhists, and they do not have 50 Buddhist members; so they want that qualification amended. Subhuti is going to strongly oppose that, so there will certainly be discussion as to what makes a Buddhist, and so on, so Subhuti and I have discussed all that; so he has gone well prepared. Whether that point will be carried, it is difficult to say, but I have asked Subhuti to warn the president that, if that basis of membership is changed so that in effect Buddhists can be represented by non Buddhists, then the FWBO will probably withdraw from the European Buddhist Union, [67] because we cannot accept that. So I don't know which way it will go. Subhuti is going, Dharmapriya also is going; so there will be a serious debate on that issue, and there have been debates of that sort before, with Subhuti very much to the fore and often managing to persuade the other Buddhists present, at least to some extent. But there is no magazine to provide a forum of that sort. It probably would be a very good thing if there was, but there would need to be some very disinterested body, with sufficient money to finance and run the whole thing. There are a lot of things that I would like to say, that I would like to write, but which I am sure no Buddhist magazine, probably, would publish.

Ratnaprabha: Does The Middle Way not accept controversial material, then?

S: Well, within certain very definite limits. But I don't think they would accept anything as controversial as I would wish to write. But after all, everybody knows now we are going to turn the Newsletter into a magazine and some of our views are going to find expression in the new magazine.

Ratnaguna: I was just going to ask that: why not put them in the Newsletter?

S: This will be one of the features of the magazine into which the Newsletter is going to be turned early next year.

Ratnaguna: Will that mean that, if you say something controversial or even critical about a certain other Buddhist group, ...what is in your mind presumably they have got the right of reply?

S: Not necessarily. Our magazine is to give expression to our point of view, not to do otherwise than that, no. They presumably have got their own magazines, their own organs; they can give expression to their point of view. But we want to give expression to our point of view. If, by any chance, they could point out that we had actually made a mistake in a matter of fact, then we would be bound to publish a correction of that; but not to provide them with a forum for disagreeing with us. Why should we? They have got their own outlets. We don't attempt to prevent them expressing their own views in their own journals, their own magazines, writing their own books. Our magazine (even when it is a magazine), is not a general Buddhist magazine: it is an organ of the FWBO, to give expression to our particular way of looking at Buddhism.

Ratnaguna: I get the impression that other Buddhist groups are not all that interested in public debate.

S: I think they are probably afraid of it. I don't think a public verbal [?spoken] debate would be a good idea, but certainly an exchange of views in the correspondence columns of The Middle Way.

Ratnaguna: That's what I meant.

S: would perhaps be quite useful. The Middle Way does profess to be a sort of broad general platform, but actually it doesn't really work out like that. They are highly selective none the less. We are going to have, I hope, a comment section in the magazine which will give our comments from our own point of view on different matters of interest in the Buddhist world, with regard to Buddhism generally, and so on.

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Dhammaloka: Bhante, could I go back quite a bit to a point you made when we were talking about criticism? [You said that] someone may not be able to take the criticism. Say you write about a book: 'That's rubbish', and they may not be able to take it. In that context, you said that if that is so you weaken the impact of the word. This seems to be quite a general ...

S: Yes, you want to communicate, let us say, that a certain book is rubbish; so you want to communicate it kindly or with courtesy, but you mustn't communicate so kindly, as it were, and so courteously, that you are not in fact any longer saying that the book is rubbish.

Dhammaloka: Ah, that's what you meant. I thought you meant something quite different.

S: Occasionally one does find very highly critical in fact, quite dismissive and destructive film reviews. Reviewers of films are usually much more free in this respect, for some reason

or other. They sometimes really let themselves go whether rightly or wrongly one doesn't always know because one hasn't seen the film, but one suspects that in some cases they are right!

Tejananda: Now Ratnaprabha has some questions on sources.

S: Oh, sources. I thought you said saucers! flying saucers!

Ratnaprabha: Can you recall the sources of the stories of: (a) Jesus and the dead dog?

S: Ah, that was from a Gnostic source, a Gnostic gospel. I can't remember now which one it came from. I read this years and years ago, 25 or 30 years ago. It is definitely from either a Gnostic gospel or a Gnostic tradition of the teachings of Christ. I believe I read it when I was in Singapore, so that takes us back to 1945 or 1946, doesn't it? So that is 40 years ago. It was some such source. Just a minute. It is possible, though only just possible, that this tradition comes through an Islamic source, because Muslims have various traditions about sayings of Jesus which are not found in the Gospels and which are believed to have come to them, perhaps, through unorthodox, possibly Gnostic, sects. I think if one looked at Gnostic Christian literature, Gnostic gospels and so on, one would be pretty certain to find it. It is definitely from some such source.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture you say it is from an apocryphal gospel, but you don't go into any more details than that.

S: Yes. All the Gnostic gospels are regarded as apocryphal, from the standpoint of the orthodox church.

Ratnaprabha: (b) Mahakasyapa and the golden flower?

S: Suzuki gives this story. I can't tell you quite where, but it is, so to speak, apocryphal. It is a story that goes back to the T'ang dynasty only, it seems; it doesn't seem to have any historical basis at all. But Suzuki refers to it; I think probably he is my main source. That story has been quoted endlessly. I think Suzuki, somewhere or other because I think he himself mentions it more than once does give the actual source for the story. But if you look into Suzuki's work, look at the index, you know, Mahakasyapa, and just try to trace it in that way.

[69]
Ratnaprabha: And (c) The anecdote about Carlisle's 'Gospel of Silence by Mr Wordy'?

S: Well, that's somewhere in Carlisle's works. No, it's about Carlisle. Oh, I saw that somewhere quite recently.

: It wasn't Sydney Smith?

S: It could have been.

Ratnaguna: That was to do with Macaulay.

S: Yes, his 'flashes of silence'. Oh dear, I saw this saying about Carlisle in a slightly different

form quite recently, but I can't remember now where I did see it. It might have been Ruskin. You could look up a dictionary of quotations, say, under Carlisle. That might give you a clue. Or even under silence. Yes, I wish I had made a note of these things in my earlier days; the sayings stuck but the sources don't seem to have stuck. But Ruskin is a possibility. The remark about Macaulay is definitely Sydney Smith. I think he said: 'Macaulay is improving. He has flashes of silence.'

Ratnaprabha: You say in the lecture 'the younger Macaulay'. Does that just refer to Macaulay when he was young, or is there another Macaulay.

S: No, it was the young Macaulay not 'the younger Macaulay' but 'the young Macaulay'; Macaulay when he was a very young man; apparently rather brash. Are these quotations all from that particular lecture?

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: Oh.

Ratnaprabha: That's all.

Tejananda: Right, now we have a question from Sudhana on darshan.

Sudhana: Does the ancient practice of darshan have any relevant and practical use in the growth of individuals within the FWBO?

S: I suppose, in a way, we have communication exercises; that is a sort of mutual giving of darshan, isn't it, at least to begin with? In a sense, on a certain level, at least? Darshan, of course, means seeing, in the broadest sense, or going to see somebody. Usually, of course, as in the case of Ramana Maharshi, which was the instance I gave, you go to take darshan or have darshan from or with some spiritual personality, because Indians believe Buddhists also believe that the mere sight of someone of higher spiritual development than oneself brings a sort of blessing, or is a source of inspiration, even though he doesn't say anything, even though you don't actually receive any teaching from him; just to see him is good. It sort of confirms your faith that there are in the world people who are more highly developed than normal. And often people do feel a sort of intangible influence emanating from that kind of person; they don't feel any need to say anything or ask any questions, at least in some cases.

Sudhana: Do you think that is a relevant practice for us?

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S: It isn't exactly a practice, in the formal sense. It is more like being happy to see people, being happy to see your spiritual friends, especially those who you do feel are more developed than yourself; when you come, say, to an Order weekend, you can feel quite happy just sitting and looking around, and maybe looking particularly at those people that you feel are more highly developed than you, and just being glad to see them there. That is definitely a sort of darshan.

Sudhana: As it says in the Mangala Sutta.

S: Yes, right. It is not so much that it is a practice, but it is something that should be a natural part of life, so to speak, within the Order or within the Movement; you are just happy to have the sight of those to whom you can look up, because they are more developed than you, and you don't necessarily have to be talking to them or asking them questions or asking them how they are getting on. Just to see them is enough, at least on some occasions. As the Mangala Sutta says: Samana manca dassanam (?) you know, the sight, the darshan of the samanas, that is to say those who have gone forth, those who are leading a higher spiritual life.

Tejananda: Now Ratnaprabha has two linked questions regarding the three levels of communicating the Dharma and Insight.

Ratnaprabha: Are the three levels of communicating the Dharma by word, symbol and telepathy a hierarchy only in the mundane sphere, in terms of refinement? Or is Insight more likely on the higher than the lower levels? I have some more, but perhaps I'll leave it there and let you reply.

S: I think that is quite difficult to say. Perhaps Insight is more likely to be associated with the telepathic communication, not because there is necessarily any direct connection between them but because if you had developed your concentration, your meditation to the extent that you could function telepathically, there is probably a greater likelihood that you had also developed Insight than if you had not developed your concentration and meditation to that extent. Do you see what I mean? So perhaps one could say that there is that likelihood that the communication would be of a higher order, not just more subtle and more refined in the mundane sense but of a higher order in the sense that it was associated with or that its content was something of a Transcendental nature though not that there was any necessary connection between the two, but just a greater likelihood.

Ratnaguna: Can I ask this might be your next question, I'm not sure. Shall I ask it? (Laughter.) It comes out of what you have just said.

S: You need a bit of telepathy!

Ratnaguna: I will ask it. How does telepathy work, Bhante? Does it work if I did manage to communicate telepathically with Ratnaprabha, would it be through words or would it be in another way?

S: There seem to be different kinds of telepathy. Sometimes it seems actual words are imprinted on the mind of the other person. The other person either hears the words or becomes aware of the words. But it does seem that sometimes telepathy takes place without words; that you produce a direct impression on the mind of the other person, and that that other person as it were translates that impression [71] into words, his own words. There seem to be those two different kinds of telepathy.

Ratnaguna: It's probably yours coming next.

Ratnaprabha: So I have just asked 'Is Insight more likely on the higher than the lower levels?'

S: It is more likely, for the reasons I explained.

Ratnaprabha: If so, how does this connect with the need for very subtle 'thinking' in the experience of Insight, which seems to correspond to the lowest level, i.e. words or speech?

S: Hm. It connects with what I said a few evenings ago: that an Insight manifests on the basis of words, on the basis of concepts, but not that the Insight can actually be identified with the concepts. That would suggest that, when there was a transmission of Insight telepathically, there is transmitted at the same time telepathically the subtle concepts which are as it were the vehicle of the Insight; and that the two are transmitted and received simultaneously. One could put it in that way. I hope that is not to multiply entities without necessity!

Ratnaprabha: What do you mean by that, Bhante?

S: (chuckles) Well, I sometimes think it is a bit like the old Indian version of cosmology where one is asked: 'What does the world rest on?' the world, of course, being ...(?). 'Well, it rests on the ocean.' 'What does the ocean rest on?' 'Well, it rests on the back of four elephants.' 'And what do they rest on?' 'Well, they rest on the back of a big giant tortoise.' 'And what does he rest on?' Well, he is swimming in the ocean!' You see what I mean? That is, as I say, to multiply entities unnecessarily. That is the maxim of scholastic philosophy, also called Occam's razor because it was formulated or allegedly formulated by the English scholastic philosopher Occam, William of Ockham in Surrey, I believe.

Kulamitra: Does that mean this differentiation between Insight and some subtle thinking that goes with it should not be taken too literally in a way it is one experience? Is that what you mean?

S: Well, yes and no, because not that they are one experience in the sense of being indistinguishable, because presumably Insight does exist independently of concepts; but it is the question of the communication of that Insight to someone who doesn't already possess it. So it is not enough to communicate, or try to communicate, the Insight; you have also got to communicate the conceptual basis by which that Insight can be apprehended. So presumably the person to whom you are communicating, whether telepathically or otherwise, has got either to have his own conceptual support for the Insight ready and waiting, or his conceptual thinking has got to be developed to a point where you can engraft a little more conceptual thinking on to his, a somewhat more refined conceptual thinking, and have that as the basis of the Insight which you are trying to impart.

Ratnaprabha: So in the case of Mahakasyapa and the golden flower, could it be that he had his conceptual basis sort of ready and waiting?

S: One would have to postulate that. One would have to assume that. Whereas, in the case of some other person there are numberless instances of this - the [72] Buddha expounded the Dharma and, one might say, refined their conceptual understanding of things, and on the basis of that further refined conceptual understanding they were able to recognize, or he was able to communicate, the subtle Insight that was the essence of what he was trying to say.

Kulamitra: From what you were saying just now we were talking about telepathy I got the impression that you were saying that the Insight itself, rather than just the thinking which led to or goes with that Insight, could be transferred telepathically. Is that what you were saying?

S: Say that again?

Kulamitra: Well, let's say as you said, in the case of the Buddha, what we see anyway, on paper is that he communicated a certain amount of words, obviously with the full force of his being, and that that had an impact on the other person. Thinking telepathically, one could just think that, well, even though the words were not spoken they were directed telepathically; but you seemed to suggest, by the way you spoke, that over and above the 'words' what was telepathically transmitted was the Insight itself.

S: The words themselves don't bear the Insight; they don't really express the Insight. But, earlier on, talking to Ratnaguna or replying to his question, I made the point that there were two kinds of telepathy: one where words are impressed on the consciousness of the recipient, and the other there is just a sort of impression which is then translated by the person himself. But, in the second case, it suggests that the person is in a way more developed; his conceptual equipment is already waiting, as it were.

Kulamitra: Is it that kind of direct transmission of Insight from mind to mind that ideally takes place in a Vajrayana initiation ceremony?

S: Ideally, yes. This is what the Vajrayana tradition says. But I would say that, in principle, that kind of transmission can take place within other yanas as well. I think to try to confine it to the Vajrayana, and that particular situation within the Vajrayana, would be literalism in the extreme.

Tape 5, Side 1

Ratnaguna: But, presumably, the whole process of preparation that takes place in the context, and the ritual context itself, is a sort of equivalent to those words you were speaking about it's a sort of support for that transmission.

S: Yes, right, yes, yes. It is as though the support system, as it were, in the case of the Vajrayana, is particularly elaborate. Really one needs that sort of support system in all such situations.

Ratnaguna: To question a little bit further: is that sort of telepathic initiation to call it that

S: (interrupting) Yes, to call it that, because when one speaks of the three kinds of initiation or transmission, in the case of the third one is thinking of something quite dissociated from all ritual or even from all physical contact.

Ratnaguna: Mm. But is that always consciously directed by the more enlightened party?

[73]
S: Well, yes and no; because what one is trying to do is only to communicate. If one thinks in terms of 'I am going to direct this,' well, it isn't communication in the [full sense] you are already thinking in other terms. It gets in the way, just as if you think in meditation: 'Look how concentrated I'm getting,' the concentration is already broken. One has to think only in terms of communication.

Ratnaguna: So you said that, in that third thing just now, you were thinking more of things dissociated from ritual and even from direct contact; so what kind of situations are you thinking of?

S: In connection with what?

Ratnaguna: In connection with the telepathic communication of Insight. Is it as it were from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to ?

S: Well, yes, it includes that. Oh yes, it includes that. It would seem to be as it were quite free, and not depending on any particular set of conditions. In fact, it is especially applied to the beginning of particular lineages, where there is a transmission a telepathic transmission, say from a particular Buddha to the first guru in that particular series, in that particular lineage; where that guru, by very definition, by the very nature of the situation, has no physical, material contact with the Buddha that archetypal Buddha, that is to say.

Ratnaguna: Maybe it is not possible to pursue it much further, but in that case is it a bit as if the Buddha, or whichever particular aspect of Buddhahood, as it were, it is, is always trying to communicate, and a particular person makes himself unusually receptive to that?

S: Yes, because one couldn't really speak of a Buddha being as it were ready to communicate on one occasion and not on another. One might say it is like the sun shining: the sun is shining all the time; it is just a question of people opening their eyes to it, or making themselves available to it, or allowing themselves to experience the sunlight, just by coming out of doors. One speaks usually, by the way I must have mentioned this somewhere of the telepathic transmission of the Jinas, the sign transmission of the vidyadharas, the Tantric gurus, that is, and the word transmission of the alsariyas (?) this is the way it is usually put. So in every lineage, you usually get a Buddha, or Buddha and Bodhisattva, lineage, and then you get a vidyadhara lineage, and then you get the human lineage.

Ratnaguna: Bhante, could you think of telepathy as a skill, or is it just a more refined communication between people who are quite developed, who know each other very well?

S: I wouldn't describe it as a skill, if by skill one means something that can be exercised by one party to the communication only; through clearly he can as it were influence the other person's communication and guide that. But it is not really as though it is a skill you exercise almost regardless of the state or condition of the other person.

Ratnaguna: Is it a bit like when you know someone very well you can sort of read them a bit you can read their body language and so on but it goes just a little bit further, and it becomes so subtle that you don't even need to see them?

S: Yes, you could say that.

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Ratnaguna: In that case, then, there are sort of two different hierarchies we were discussing: there are the four levels of Perfect Speech, the fourth one being one that promotes concord and unity; and there are these three others, the highest being the telepathic. Are the top two somehow synonymous the telepathic, and the one that promotes concord?

S: To the best of my knowledge, that correlation has never been made, but one could reflect on it and see whether there is in fact a correlation. There may be.

Ratnaguna: They seem, in my mind, to become quite similar when one thinks of telepathy in terms just of knowing someone so well that you can read them.

S: Though, of course, usually, in the sutras where it speaks in terms of harmonious speech, the reference is very clearly to actually speaking to people in such a way that you unite people who formerly were disunited. You bring together, you create harmony between them by means of your speech. There is no reference, in this particular connection or context, to telepathy.

Ratnaguna: Though in your interpretation I think you say something like: 'When two people know each other so well, the need for words is less.'

S: That's true. But then harmonious speech is speech which promotes harmony; whereas you are referring to an existing state of harmony between two people. But harmonious speech is not just speech which is expressive of harmony, but speech which actively promotes harmony not just between you and one other person, but within the whole community.

Ratnaguna: But, Bhante, in the lecture you have made each of those Precepts a level of speech; and including(?) your harmonious level you sort of imply that that harmonizing speech leads to a more and more natural harmony without the need for speech.

S: I think this is true; but initially you have to work on it whether it is in the case of one other individual or a whole collection of individuals, or a group, a society, a community, to which you belong.

Ratnaprabha: I've got another part to the question, which continues this discussion, or it returns to the connection between Insight and the three levels of communication. In our discussion, we speculated from what you have said that the appropriate region of consciousness, so to speak, for gaining Insight is on the boundary between speech and symbol, or alternatively between the kamaloka and the rupaloka. Could you comment on this?

S: It does rather seem like that. It is interesting, because there you seem to have the levels of as it were artistic consciousness. You have got those gods what are they called? the gods that delight in their own creations and the gods that delight in the creations of others they occupy the higher levels of the kamaloka; so you could say they occupy a level between the kamaloka as known to us and the higher rupaloka levels, which are the levels of the dhyanas. That would, in a way, tie up with the conclusions at which you arrived.

Ratnaguna: Wouldn't that seem to say that, in terms of the track(?) of Insight, hierarchy of communication with, wouldn't be telepathic so much as the other two, really, combined, or be firmly between the other two? (?)

[75]
S: I am not quite sure what you are saying.

Ratnaguna: Well, I think the way that Ratnaprabha came to that conclusion was how did he

come to that conclusion? something to do with the level of speech and the level of symbol, isn't it? the level of speech being the kamaloka, the level of symbol being the rupaloka, and the boundary between the two being the

S: No, I doubt if you can make that correlation. One would have to reflect on it more, but initially I rather doubt it. Because where there is rupa, form, presumably there can be gesture, communication through signs, through symbols. In this particular context, communication through signs, as distinct from communication by words or telepathically, is communication by gesture; not communication by symbols in the sense in which we usually use the word symbols. I think it is sometimes rendered like that, but actually it means a gesture. Perhaps one could understand that a little metaphorically, but the literal meaning is definitely gesture as when the Buddha held up the flower, that was a gesture. Anyway, the flower is a symbol, but what the Buddha did was to hold up the flower; which was a gesture.

Ratnaprabha: So if we have the three levels of communication of the Dharma speech, gesture, and telepathy that would seem to leave out the whole area of using archetypal symbols or pictorial symbols for communication?

S: It would seem to be; though, of course, one can use those symbols. Perhaps that particular classification does not take them into account; unless one extends the meaning of gesture to include symbol.

Ratnaprabha: If one did extend the meaning in such a way, maybe you could correlate between the speech level and the kamaloka, and the symbolic level and the rupaloka, in the way that I suggested.

S: You could, perhaps, introduce a distinction between static symbols and dynamic symbols. A gesture would be a dynamic symbol, and something like an archetypal image would be, perhaps, a static symbol.

Ratnaguna: I am beginning not to see any more how one can communicate Insight without concepts. Is that possible to communicate Insight just through gesture, or through a symbol, without any conceptual formulations?

S: But if one thinks in terms of a hierarchy of modes of communication, it is not that they exist separately. You have done your work on the lower levels already. You have reached the limit of, say, communication through words, and then you might just make a little gesture, and that just carries the whole process further; but had those words not been there to begin with the gesture would have had no significance. It is not that you can drop words completely and as it were communicate entirely through gestures, and in that way communicate Insight. One finds that in communication with people: you don't all at once reach that wordless understanding, it often comes after a very long session of verbal communication, and you feel yourself getting nearer and nearer and nearer to the nonverbal communication, but you have to work on the verbal communication, very often, very hard first to get to that point.

[76]
Kuladeva: So would you say that conceptual or verbal [communication] as instrumental for

the arising of Insight is important at the low levels, and then once one has gone beyond that particular level one can go to some kind of transverbal level?

S: Yes, it is as though you have to work your way up to that through the verbal, through the conceptual. It seems like that, yes.

Kuladeva: So that, for us, it is more important, perhaps, in terms of Insight, to work on the conceptual level [which is] ultimately, perhaps, to be gone beyond?

S: Right, yes.

Kulamitra: Presumably not understanding the need to go through that process is one reason why Zen has been sort of debased in the West?

S: Right, yes. Supposing some pseudo Zen master comes along and sort of snaps his fingers and you are supposed to understand, and maybe just by virtue of the tradition that ..., he associates a definite meaning with that do you see what I mean? But he has not explained things to you in such a way that there has been a proper build-up to that level, even assuming that he himself is actually on that [level], and hasn't just been misled himself and is not taking it all much too literally.

Kulamitra: Westerners seem to play around with what they see as the dramatic gestures, without putting the hard graft into the significance.

S: Yes. Some years ago in The Middle Way there was a dreadful series of pseudo Zen stories which were subsequently published as a little booklet. They were really dreadful. I reviewed them in The Middle Way one of my slightly destructive reviews! But, yes, the title of the little booklet when they were published in that form was The Goose Is Out. They were sort of artificially manufactured Zen stories by someone called Mr Gabb, and I concluded my review by saying that 'The goose is not out'! It was so strange. I didn't know much about Zen at that time, but just reading this little booklet, I just knew at once it was completely a pastiche, it was completely artificial, there is not a bit of real Zen in it; these are just pseudo Zen stories written by this gentleman living somewhere in England, just writing some Suzuki like stories, but these were taken quite seriously as Zen stories and appeared in The Middle Way and then were reprinted in booklet form. I think the booklet is still available.

: I have heard of it.

S: Yes. The Goose Is Out, it's called. Oh yes: Tales of Tocsin. Maybe I am mixing [them up]: maybe there were two booklets. Maybe originally they were called Tales of Tocsin Tocsin being this 'Zen master' in these little stories. In much the same vein, Mr Humphreys once declared that Alice in Wonderland was a classic of Zen. It really makes one cringe, doesn't it?

Ratnaguna: And Don Quixote, too.

S: Possibly, yes. Well, this is to confuse Zen with the zany and irrational. It is all part of that popular confusion for which Dr Suzuki himself was, to a great extent, responsible unwittingly. He didn't always choose his words very carefully.

[77]
Tejananda: The final question comes from Kulamitra on the importance of literature.

S: Oh! What a big question!

Kulamitra: It is a fairly big question just on paper. It's got a few

S: You did hear my lecture, by the way?

Kulamitra: Oh yes! It's actually

S: Perhaps I should hand you a copy of it!

Kulamitra: It is the lecture that sparked me off; but it did seem relevant to this particular area of the Noble Eightfold Path. So the question (I have bought a copy!) [is]: In your recent lecture you suggest that the translation of great Eastern literature may lead to a second renaissance. Can the widespread availability of Buddhist ideas have as great an impact as the FWBO's current practical approach to the transformation of society? How important is the quality of the writing itself in spreading ideas through society? Do you expect such a renaissance to gather strength outside as well as inside the sphere of influence of the WBO?

S: Let us take those bit by bit. I will just answer very briefly, because there is so much that could be said.

Kulamitra: 'In your recent lecture you suggest that the translation of great Eastern literature may lead to a second renaissance. Can the widespread availability of Buddhist ideas have as great an impact as the FWBO's current practical approach to the transformation of society?'

S: It could do, in a way, on the level of ideas simply. But that influence might be just confined to ideas, and might not issue in any actual practice or any transformation with which we are particularly concerned.

Kulamitra: So you think that in itself that would not go deep enough, in other words?

S: It wouldn't go deep enough, but it would indirectly help us, because when people came into contact with us, say, and found us also familiar with those ideas or representing those ideas on the theoretical level, they would find it much more easy to understand what we were getting at. Just as the word meditation is so common and familiar now, in a way that it was not 20 years ago. Or we might even find that people outside the FWBO became very familiar with Buddhist ideas, from all sorts of sources, but then started asking themselves how they were to put these ideas into practice or what they meant practically; and they might then start looking around for a group or a movement that would help them to put those ideas into practice.

Kulamitra: So the second part of the question [is]: 'How important is the quality of the writing itself in spreading ideas through society?'

[78]
S: I think 'important for whom?' is the great question, because there are different classes of

readers. I would like to be able to say that the quality of writing is very important, but it isn't for everybody. Think of that book Ball Breaking; it is written in a dreadful style, in a way, isn't it? But it is the sort of style that would appeal to a lot of people, appeal perhaps to more people than the sort of style that I write in, or that Dr Conze writes in. So it depends very much on your audience. So you probably need a whole lot of literature on different levels; some scholarly work, some written in a really beautiful literary style, others written in a very popular, easily intelligible style. I don't think anything should be actually badly written; I think sometimes Robert Spicer's writing is actually bad writing. I think that should be avoided on whatsoever level.

Ratnaprabha: Can I come in on that point, Bhante? I think you said, or you implied, that there might be a dichotomy between easily intelligible writing and writing with a good literary style. Do you think that is a necessary dichotomy?

S: I think if you want to communicate ideas really clearly you have to write in a good literary style. I think to the extent that you sacrifice style you also sacrifice, beyond a certain point, intelligibility. But when you write in a style, say, like that of Robert Spicer, you are concerned with intelligibility only up to a certain point, because your audience, your readership, is concerned with intelligibility only up to that point; they don't want to go beyond, they don't want to pursue further refinements of thought.

Kulamitra: The last section of the question: 'Do you expect such a renaissance to gather strength outside as well as inside the sphere of influence of the WBO?'

S: I think it could, especially on the level of ideas. I think it could. I am very doubtful whether existing Buddhist groups, certainly in Britain, will do anything in this direction, because most of them are transplants from the East, even culturally speaking.

Kulamitra: I presume it goes without saying that you would like us to make a greater contribution in the realm of ideas to that sort of renaissance?

S: Oh yes, very much so. Earlier this afternoon I was talking with Mike McGee(?), who came to see me after his return now to England from India, and he is very keen on pursuing this line of thought. And he is a professional philosopher, in a sense, he is an academic well, he teaches philosophy and he would very much like to bring Buddhist thought to the notice of professional philosophers. He is thinking of trying to do this gradually. Clearly, you couldn't try to bring Buddhist thought, Buddhist ideas, to the notice of professional philosophers unless you were reasonably familiar with their field, or unless you knew Western philosophy sufficiently well to command their respect, so that they would at least listen to what you had to say. Again, it is a question of communication on another level, or at least in another mode. But I hope the FWBO is not going to confine itself, say, mainly to coops. I hope it is going to be more active in the general cultural, religious and even philosophical field.

Kulamitra: Is it possible to prioritize in any way? Say, for instance, as an individual Order Member you start off your work in a coop, but you do realize [79] that you have the potential, perhaps, to pursue studies, possibly to end up being able to communicate on that sort of level? Is that more worth while?

S: It is very difficult to generalize. You have to see the needs of your centre, your particular

coop, your own particular endowments. A dilettantish interest, a smattering of, say, knowledge of English literature or comparative religion is not really going to help very much or carry you very far. You must be the sort of person who is able to go rather thoroughly into such fields, and make a contribution that will be respected by people who are, if not exactly specialists in that field, at least well acquainted with that field. Otherwise perhaps you would be better off packing beans! I think you have got to be able to make a definite contribution, not just take an amateurish sort of interest in that particular field.

Kulamitra: So, quite apart from one's spiritual development or even understanding, you might be an exceptional person as far as, let us say, intellectual gifts were concerned.

S: Yes, yes. Or even creative talents. For instance, if a centre was really struggling along and needed workers in its coop, it would perhaps be a bit self indulgent on your part if you just wanted to pursue a pretty superficial interest in, say, English literature or comparative religion or whatever. If, of course, you had a real gift for those things and a real appreciation, with a definite possibility of being able to do really worthwhile work in that field which would help forge an important link between that field and Buddhism or that field and the FWBO, that would be quite another matter. All right, perhaps we had better leave it there.

Voices: Thank you very much, Bhante.

[80]
Day 4

Tape 5, Side 2

Tejananda: We have got 13 questions for you on Perfect Action. The first one is from Kulamitra, concerning ethics and modern society.

Kulamitra: In a way, it is ethics and ancient society. In her book on fourteenth century Europe, A Distant Mirror, Barbara Tuchman suggests that the middle ages can be seen in the light of the tension between commonly held ethical ideals, such as chivalry and Christianity, and the egoistic behaviour which continually failed to live up to them. Are commonly held ethical ideals important to the spiritual life of society, even if many people fail them, and could the acceptance of Buddhist ethical principles outside the circle of practising Buddhists help foster this second Renaissance that we were mentioning yesterday?

S: Let us take that bit by bit leave out the quote, as it were, from that lady's book.

Kulamitra: Are commonly held ethical ideals important to the spiritual life of society, even if many people fail them?

S: I think the answer is obviously yes. I don't think there is much doubt about that. I think the real discussion or debate comes with the next part of the question.

Kulamitra: And could the acceptance of Buddhist ethical principles outside the circle of practising Buddhists help foster what you hinted at as a second Renaissance?

S: I think this depends very much on what you mean by Buddhist ethical principles. I think we have to acknowledge just to take this country, at least that we live in a plural society; that is to say, a society in which a number of different religions are followed, including Buddhism. So for that to be possible, for there to be a pluralistic society at all, means that those religions or other ideologies which exist within that society must recognize the possibility, even the desirability, of their coexistence; that is to say, their peaceful coexistence peaceful at least in social terms. That does imply a certain common ethical outlook; do you see what I mean? What I am getting at is [that] the fact that you have a pluralistic society at all presupposes certain ethical principles, certain values if you like, which are shared by a number of religions or ideologies including Buddhism. Do you see what I mean? At least some of those ethical ideals implied by the fact of the existence of a pluralistic society would be Buddhist ideals for instance, the ideal of tolerance, let us say: the spirit of live and let live, as it were. So I think that, if Buddhism exists within a genuinely pluralistic society, the fact that that society is pluralistic will mean that it is at least possible for Buddhism to exist; it is at least possible for Buddhists to follow the spiritual path within that particular society. But if, of course, that pluralistic society is affected to an even deeper extent by Buddhist ethical ideals, presumably it would be all the more easy, so to speak, for Buddhists to follow the spiritual path within that pluralistic society. But if you live as part of a pluralistic society as a Buddhist, you cannot expect of that society to be anything more than pluralistic; you can't [81] expect it to be a Buddhist society, unless you can manage to convince everybody of the truth of Buddhism. But I think the mere fact that a society is pluralistic is favourable to Buddhism. If, for instance, a society is monolithic, if only one ideology is really permitted, or if one is definitely dominant, that is not a very favourable situation for Buddhism; but a pluralistic society is a quite favourable environment, actually, for Buddhism. Because, first of all, Buddhism is permitted, and also the fact that the society is pluralistic implies the existence of a kind of common ethical basis which, by the fact that it is common, means that it approximates to some extent to Buddhism.

Kulamitra: Bhante, in the beginning of the lecture, one of the first things you draw out is the difference between Buddhist morality and, let us say, theistic society: it is lack of a dependence on God. Apart from Buddhism

S: Well, it is more than that. Subhuti expounded on that in his paper, didn't he?

Kulamitra: But I was thinking, apart from ourselves as Buddhists, other Buddhists and maybe secular humanists, other religions do have a difference in that area. Does it mean that, as Buddhists, our influence might be to make, say, Christianity and Islam more tolerant of other religions than they have been in the past?

S: It might indirectly, but I think it is in the interests of Buddhism that, so far as society at large is concerned society in the widest sense we are not so much concerned perhaps to spread specifically Buddhist ideals but to encourage the idea or ideal of pluralism. I think that is greatly to our benefit. I think Buddhists everywhere should support pluralism, should support tolerance, should support even, if one dares to use that term, democracy in the real sense. Do you see what I mean?

Kulamitra: What do you mean, 'the real sense'?

S: Well, not just demagoguery.

Kulamitra: Ah, yes.

S: The genuine acceptance of the fact that every individual in a society has, to the measure of his ability, some responsibility for the running of that society.

Kulamitra: But pluralism seems to come quite naturally to Buddhism. It doesn't seem foreign to it.

S: To the spirit; but in practice, for instance, the whole disaster with regard to Sri Lanka springs from the fact that the Sinhalese Buddhists refuse to recognize pluralism. That has been their great mistake, and I think to that extent they have been unBuddhistic, even antiBuddhistic, because they have insisted on a Sinhalese Buddhist racial cum religious cum linguistic hegemony, which is quite opposed to the spirit of Buddhism. They don't want a pluralistic state, a pluralistic society within which Sinhalese and Tamils, Buddhists and Hindus, Aryans and Dravidians, have an equal place. So I think it is in the true interests of Buddhism and Buddhists to work wherever possible for a pluralistic society. We don't want any privileges; we just want the freedom to operate, the freedom to practise and teach the Dharma. And we trust that it will attract more and more people by its own intrinsic merits.

Dhammaloka: Isn't the idea of pluralism, on the other hand, completely antagonistic to theistic religions, particularly monotheistic religion?

[82]
S: Well, it can be if the followers of monotheistic religions are so convinced that they have a monopoly of the truth that they feel obliged to impose that on everybody else then, yes, a pluralistic society is antithetical to theism or to monotheism; and they usually accept pluralism only with reluctance, and usually only when they are in a small minority. As soon as they come to be in the majority they try to impose their will, try to impose their religion or ideology on the minorities. That has been the record of Christianity almost everywhere. This is in one way one of the interesting features of the Reformation: because, at the time of the Reformation, there was a split [between] Catholicism and let's say Protestantism, and since Protestantism was no less intolerant, no less monolithic, than Catholicism, they couldn't coexist in the same state. Therefore the principle was evolved: 'As the religion of the prince, so the religion of the people' I forget the Latin phrase which summed it up probably Abhaya remembers it?

Abhaya: Cujus rego, ejus religio.

S: That's right, yes. But you couldn't have a Catholic monarch would be obliged to coerce his Protestant subjects into becoming Catholics, and a Protestant monarch would feel obliged to coerce his Catholic subjects into becoming Protestants; so there had to be an exchange of populations. But again there were wars of religion still between Catholic and Protestant states and there were pockets of Catholics here and pockets of Protestants there; so, in the end, they had perforce to accept something like coexistence, something like mutual toleration, for purely practical reasons, if Europe was not to be just divided endlessly by religious wars. And this also... led to a growth of scepticism, to say the least, about absolutist moral and religious claims. So, in the case of Christianity, though Christianity remained the majority religion, the sects into which it became divided were themselves so monolithic that they had, if they were not to tear one another to pieces, to accept a sort of implicitly pluralistic ideology, against

their will not out of conviction but out of necessity. But now we tend to accept it out of conviction rather than necessity. We see it as a good thing, not just as a regrettable necessity unless, of course, in some cases at least, we are Christians, when we regret the good old days of the Inquisition and so on perhaps not openly, but in our heart of hearts. This is a point that I have argued in India. For instance, in India, it is to the benefit of Buddhists that India is a secular state, and we need to insist and remind Hindus, even, that India is not a Hindu state; even though Hindus are in the majority it is a secular state, within which Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parses, Jains, all coexist. But I think the important point I am trying to make, which I think has not been sufficiently made anywhere, is that the fact of the existence of a pluralistic society implies a certain, let's say, ideology, for want of a better term, or philosophy, or outlook, or attitude; and that outlook or attitude is favourable to Buddhism not only favourable to it, is even in consonance, to a great extent, with its own attitude. So, in a way, we don't, as Buddhists, need in the wider community to talk so much in terms of Buddhism or Buddhist ethics or Buddhist ethical values, but in terms of pluralism; in India, even in terms of secularism. I gave that talk in Aurangabad on 'Buddhism and the Secular State' it's wrongly titled, by the way, in the Dhammamegha series and I was very concerned to make this point.

[83]
Kulamitra: But in this country, perhaps, the tendency has been through that pluralism and secularism just for a general diminishing of any spiritual values or even generally accepted ethical standards and so on.

S: Yes. I think the positive implications of pluralism have not been sufficiently brought out in this country I think partly because there is still an established church; the state is still, in a sense, officially Christian, but not really fully effectively so, only to a quite limited extent. America is a secular state, but I think there is a slight tendency for that to be eroded at present. I maintain that it is eroded every time, in an American court of law, someone takes an oath; because, strictly speaking, in a secular state, in the courts of justice of a secular state, one should not be required to take a religious oath or it should not be possible, even, to take a religious oath. Isn't there a motto: 'In God we trust' or something like that? Doesn't it appear on currency notes? To my way of thinking, that represents a slight undermining of the American constitutional principle of separation of Church and State. I think that principle is perhaps in danger in the [United] States to some extent at present. I think the church is encroaching a little on the state the church in the form of the 'moral majority', let us say. We might call them the 'immoral majority'. But you see the point I am really getting at? that we shouldn't necessarily be in a hurry to speak in terms of applying Buddhist ethical principles to society at large, or suggesting that society at large follow Buddhist ethical principles. I think it is sufficient, at least for the time being, if we dwell on the more positive aspects of pluralism, and point out the very definite ethical ideal that is involved in pluralism, and see it in positive as well as negative and restrictive terms: that it is not simply that pluralism prevents us from bashing each other's heads in; it also enables us to co-operate. It provides us with a basis for co-operation. So to have a friendly and co-operative attitude towards people of a different way of thinking is certainly not inconsistent with Buddhism, though it might well be inconsistent with certain other faiths and ideologies. In other words, indirectly, by promoting pluralism, you are in fact though to a limited extent, perhaps promoting Buddhism.

Kulamitra: That sort of co-operation with other faiths, or even just intelligent people at large would that be to make sure that a high level of culture and values was maintained in society?

S: Yes, one could say that. And also, of course, to ensure that the values of pluralism itself were preserved, and defended, perhaps, against attack.

Kuladeva: Does this mean, therefore, that we should be less inclined to criticize other religious traditions in the West, such as Christianity?

S: I don't see that that necessarily follows. You can criticize them where you disagree with them. They are free to criticize you. But the fact that you can criticize, without the criticism leading to any civil disturbance if you don't refrain from attacking each other merely out of fear of the law [means that] you both implicitly accept the fact that you live in a pluralistic society and must respect each other's points of view. So the acceptance of pluralism does not mean that you don't disagree, you don't criticize other religious points of view; you recognize your common right to disagree and to criticize and debate and differ. What you don't recognize is any right to have recourse to violence or unfair methods of coercion and so on. Buddhists recognize that anyway, or should do; whereas Christians almost of principle, historically speaking, have not [done so]; [84] they regard it usually as their duty to coerce people of a different way of thinking from themselves.

Tejananda: The second question is from Dhammaloka on Germanic pagan elements in Western morality.

Dhammaloka: You refer to Western ethics as a 'very compositive thing', made up of elements from Greek and Roman classics, from Judaeo-Christian origin, and, you say, especially in some of the northern European countries, elements from Germanic paganism. Could you please trace back to their origins some of the major features of Western culture, particularly those of Germanic and of classical origin?

S: I think feudalism itself is generally held to be of that kind of origin, isn't it? the sense of loyalty to your leader, your feudal superior. I think this is probably the principal feature which comes from pagan and Teutonic sources; I can't at the moment think of any other.

Dhammaloka: How about chivalry?

S: No, chivalry doesn't seem to be of pagan or Teutonic origin. What exactly does one mean by chivalry? Chivalry is the code of the knights, isn't it? from cheval, those who rode horses. Yes, chivalry, perhaps the code of honour associated with chivalry the duel, perhaps, the tournament perhaps that did have some connections with Teutonic paganism. But I think chivalry, to the extent that it was associated, for instance, with courtesy and with a certain kind of romantic cult the romantic cult of woman and so on that seems to owe more to the troubadours of the south; possibly distantly to Catharism, even. And then the classical elements are quite clear; these are the scientific and intellectual elements; the legal element in the case of the Roman heritage. And of course, in the case of Christianity, the Judaic heritage. For instance, the ideal of forgiveness, say, comes from Christianity; the ideal of revenge the lawfulness, even, of revenge comes from Teutonic paganism. So there has sometimes been a clash.

Kuladeva: I was under the impression that feudalism was very largely the result of the late Roman Empire, that the seeds are purely ... sown then; that citizens became more and more tied to the land.

S: That is true, because when the Roman Empire broke up why did it break up? It broke up largely due to the barbarian invasions. So you had the barbarian invaders that were usually organized into hordes or tribes under chiefs. That seems to provide the basis of feudalism that they would conquer a certain area, virtually enslave the inhabitants or subject them in some way or other, then those inhabitants would till the land; then the chief, the leader of the tribe or the invading army would distribute land among his followers as William the Conqueror did when he invaded England and they would be ready to support him, to fight for him, when called upon to do so. There was that sort of chain of command. If it was a very large army, the leader would make over certain large areas of conquered territory to his generals, say; they would distribute among their commanders, and they perhaps to officers further down the line. And in that way the feudal chain of loyalty was established. I think this is very largely, very roughly, how it started. So, yes, it was connected with the break-up of the Roman Empire, and, yes, the [85] barbarians from the north who to begin with were pagans were involved in this kind of way. No doubt the picture was much more complex than that, but this is how, within the context of feudalism, the virtues of loyalty came to be so strongly emphasized. The whole structure depended upon the loyalty of the feudal inferior to his feudal superior, and that loyalty was often the overriding consideration. Sometimes in later times, after Christianization for instance, a bishop might be the feudal inferior to, let us say, a duke, and would have to fight or provide soldiers, at least, when called upon by his duke to do so; and some might consider that to be in conflict with the bishop's duty as a Christian and as a bishop. Some felt it to be inconsistent, others did not, and happily went into battle in their capacity as feudal inferior or feudal dependant. Throughout the middle ages, I think there were fighting bishops; that was clearly a legacy from Teutonic paganism and not from Christianity. That is why the fighting bishops, when they went into battle on horseback, were provided with maces, not with swords; because someone in holy orders was not supposed to shed blood! There is literalism creeping in!

Tejananda: The third question is from me. It concerns Christian fundamentalist revivalism. You mention in the talk that no one, or at least very few people, believe literally in the Bible any more. However, it seems that there has been a definite Christian revival in the 18 years or so since you gave these talks, especially with regard to fundamentalist Christianity. In answer to a question on one of the 'Higher Evolution of Man' lectures earlier this year, you said that while, as far as the FWBO is concerned, Christianity does seem to be a force to be reckoned with in the USA, in this country the revivalist movement is much less significant. I wonder whether it might not be more significant than it appeared. For example, I recently learned from a young married couple living in a small new town near Bristol that Christianity is, so to speak, absolutely rife there; they didn't know anybody there, apart from themselves, who was not Christian. This, plus some difficulties caused to my community by an agent of our landlord who is a fundamentalist Christian difficulties which I feel almost certain have been emphasized only because we are Buddhists leads me to wonder whether this revival in this country might not be larger and more a potential source of difficulty to us than we may have assumed.

S: That may well be the case. Personally, I am not very closely in contact with the outside world. I do listen to the radio, and I do sometimes read the newspaper and various magazines. It could be that fundamentalism has grown to a greater extent than we realize, and there is therefore a greater danger than we suspect. I am quite sure that it has grown rather than otherwise since I gave that lecture, unfortunately. I think it has not only grown; I think it has become a bit more aggressive. It is taking the offensive more, perhaps, than it did before. This

seems to be a fairly widespread phenomenon in the modern world. The same thing is happening in Islam, isn't it? mainly in Iran. It is certainly happening in India amongst Hindus. We see it, unfortunately, even among Buddhists in Sri Lanka, though there it is not without historic roots. And I think that you tend to get this throwback to, or revival of, fundamentalism when people begin to feel that there are no basic certainties in the modern world, or when perhaps the pace of change is too rapid for them, as in the case of Iran, and they were feeling they were uprooted too much and too quickly; so there is a reaction to more traditional [86] values, even in a narrow, fundamentalist way. Changes have been so rapid and so enormous over the last 20 or 25 years, even since I came back from India, that I think people start feeling rather insecure, and they therefore cling, many of them, more firmly to the ancient certainties. It is not a rational process. It is rather a frantic grip that they take on those ancient certainties, or what appear to be certainties. I did happen to read an article recently in a newspaper or magazine to the effect that, whereas membership in the mainstream churches was definitely declining, membership in the fringe churches or the minority churches or sects, like the Mormons, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Pentecostalists, was definitely on the increase in other words, all the more extreme fundamentalist sects. The Church of England is very much in decline; even the Catholic Church, to some extent, in this country. But the more extreme fundamentalist churches are flourishing as never before. What the significance of that is, and to what extent it is likely to impinge on us or limit our freedom, is difficult to say; but perhaps we should be on our guard. And one of the ways of being on our guard and safeguarding our own position is in emphasizing the importance of a genuinely pluralistic society.

Tejananda: That does seem to fit with a radio programme I heard, interviewing people who had changed religion some into Islam; there was a women who was a Buddhist nun; some into Judaism, and some into Christianity, I think. And all of them, apart from the Buddhist, indicated that it was because what they changed to seemed much simpler, more straightforward, and a sort of stronger belief than what they had before.

S: I think this is also why some people at least are drawn to the Theravada or even to Zen rather than to the FWBO: because they are much more strongly affirmative, much more dogmatic, even, in some cases, and much more simplified, than we are. I don't think we would give much comfort to someone who was looking for real certainty, very dogmatic affirmations and a strong statement to the effect that 'We have got the truth and nobody else has'. I think movements or sects which make that sort of claim are more likely, rather than less likely, nowadays to attract followers if one can call them followers.

Tejananda: That does seem to be the case with the Nichirens as well.

S: Yes, indeed: yes, that is true, because they are about as fundamentalist as any Buddhists could be. It is even doubtful, perhaps, whether they are really Buddhists; Dr Conze certainly doubted it. And, yes, they do seem to have a fairly strong following.

Dhammaloka: But it seems to be suggested that, for a plural society to function, a quite developed level of individuality, generally, is required.

S: I think that is true, yes. Unless, of course, pluralism is accepted, in effect, just because people are afraid of the consequences in a way, of religious conflict if they do not accept it.

Dhammaloka: But that would mark it with more and more difficulty in (?) values, people just getting more

S: At least you have got to have someone to hold the ring, as it were. And if there ceases to be a sufficient number of people to hold the ring, there will be actual conflict.

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Ratnaprabha: What do you mean by 'holding the ring', Bhante?

S: Well, sort of holding the balance, as it were, between all these different sects, and preventing them perhaps even forcibly, sometimes from fighting.

Ratnaprabha: For example, the state?

S: Yes, the state. Supposing the policemen joined various fundamentalist groups, then what are you going to do?

Tejananda: So, presumably, the most we can do effectively, apart from on a small scale level, is to support pluralism.

S: Yes, support ideals such as those of tolerance and so on.

Tejananda: And presumably to exemplify those qualities, where we do come directly up against intolerance?

S: Indeed; right, yes. But not be afraid to take positive action to safeguard, not only our own rights, but even those of other people. A threat to any minority say, in Britain is potentially a threat to us, because we are also a minority, at least in the religious sense, and possibly, as we get bigger, we shall be a minority in other senses too. Supposing we have such an enormous string of coops it begins to threaten big business? We would certainly find big business after us. I don't suppose I will see it in my lifetime! But we must not underestimate the changes that have taken place. When I first arrived in Britain, very few churches, for instance, would have hired a hall to a Buddhist group; now it is common. Even Catholic churches don't seem to think anything of it. They are only too glad of the revenue! Maybe that factor has helped. But, even during the time I have been in Britain when I was at the Hampstead Vihara I remember trying to hire halls, and the church cancelling the booking when they discovered that the hall was being booked by a Buddhist group. Oh, yes. But you would never find that now as far as I know. I think it would be very unlikely now.

Tejananda: Except perhaps with fundamentalists!

S: Except perhaps with fundamentalists, yes. But usually they don't think of hiring their halls or churches out; they are packed to the doors every night of the week! Some of the more established churches that have got these large empty halls that have to be maintained are only too glad to hire them. They started by letting them be used for yoga classes and things like that, but now anything goes; it doesn't matter. You could probably hire Norwich Cathedral if you could pay for it! Well, yes, it is hired for music, isn't it musical concerts? That would have been unknown, not so long ago for commercial concerts.

: You get the Dalai Lama in Westminster Abbey, don't you?

S: Yes, indeed; yes. Well, next year you are going to have me in King's College Chapel, Cambridge!

: Really?

S: Yes!

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: Doing what?

S: Preaching! (Laughter.)

: On television, as well?

S: I don't think it will be on television. But I shall be there addressing the congregation. In June, I think it is. I thought it worth accepting even though I have committed myself so far ahead. But I think I will be ready by that time, having done a stint of my memoirs, I think I will be ready for giving a lecture here and a lecture there. They only want 20 minutes, so I will write a quite serious paper, I think, and read it; I am not quite sure on what topic. But, yes, I had a very cordial invitation from the Chaplain; he is very pleased I am accepting. I sent him a copy of The Thousand Petalled Lotus to study. It is on a Sunday morning service, and they have a good congregation there, both from the university and from the town. The singing is known to be good, isn't it? Apparently it will be a sung service I forget; it is some particular festival, you know, the Third Sunday in some thing or other you would probably know?

: It is probably Lent

S: It's not Lent. Anyway, it's something of that sort. And he is even ready to have a Buddhist reading instead of the collect for the day from the Book of Common Prayer.

Abhaya: It will probably be the First Sunday after Pentecost.

S: Yes, something like that, yes. I must look up and see if I can speak on something appropriate, from that point of view.

Abhaya: The Holy Ghost! (Laughter.)

S: ... Well, there was a time when I saw the Holy Ghost you haven't heard that story. It is in that part of my memoirs which was censored by the publisher. Yes: when I was a child I saw the Holy Ghost. I could not have been more than five or six, because I hadn't been confined to bed at that time. I used to be sent along, sometimes, to the local Congregational church that was the nearest church; I didn't have to cross the road. So I forget the circumstances, but I think it was the first time I had been, or been taken, to this church, and I came back after the service I must have been asked by my parents, who didn't go parents didn't usually go in those days, they just sent the children! if I'd liked it, and I said, Oh, yes, I'd seen the Holy Ghost. It turned out, apparently, after inquiry, that what I had seen was the minister in his white surplice. I had heard this phrase, the Holy Ghost, and I thought that that was the Holy Ghost.

(Laughter.) I am not sure if I actually remember the incident, but I certainly remember my father telling the story later on. He used to be very fond of retelling these stories of things I had said and done as a child. So, yes, I saw the Holy Ghost. I must have had some association of ghosts and people in white sheets, white surplices, and I knew it was a holy occasion; so, being an intelligent child, I put two and two together and concluded it was the Holy Ghost.

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Tape 6, Side 1

Tejananda: Bhante, is there any chance of those early parts of your memoirs ever coming out?

S: Oh, yes, we have our little plans for those probably under the auspices of Windhorse. There are about 100 pages 10 chapters, which were rejected by Heinemann. They thought they were of very little interest. But everybody asks me 'Why didn't you tell the story of your earlier years?' The man who interviewed me today from The Illustrated London News asked me about this. K? That did dispose of that question?

Tejananda: Yes. The next one is from Sudhana, on the Vinaya Pitaka.

Sudhana: Do you think Order Members should do more study specifically on the Vinaya? If so, which part would be particularly relevant to us?

S: I think at least some Order Members should do some study of the Vinaya Pitaka. Whether everybody needs to study it is a different matter. You also ask is it 'relevant to us?'

Sudhana: 'Which parts?'

S: Which parts. I think it is difficult to say that one part is more relevant than another. In some ways it is all relevant and it all is not relevant, in the sense that it is after all the Vinaya for bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, and there are not many bhikkhus and bhikkhunis around at the moment. So one might say [that], in that sense or from that point of view, the study of the Vinaya Pitaka was irrelevant; but that would not in fact be correct, because, though it is the Vinaya of the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, apart from the fact that there is quite a lot of information about the life of the Buddha and the history of the bhikkhu Sangha, there is the fact that the rules for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis involve certain general principles, which are certainly applicable even to those who do not live as bhikkhus or bhikkhunis. So I think, in studying the Vinaya Pitaka, there are really three steps to be taken. First of all, one must study and understand the Vinaya Pitaka as it is understand, if you like, the letter. And then, especially with regard to the individual rules or provisions, try to understand what is the general principle involved, and try as it were to isolate that from the particular situation and from the lifestyle of the bhikkhu or bhikkhuni as such. And, the third step, try to apply the general principle that one has extracted to one's own life and one's own different lifestyle. Do you see what I mean? For instance, supposing you take the rule that the bhikkhu should not take solid food after 12 o'clock. You consider: what was the reason for that? Well, there were two reasons. Originally the bhikkhus did take a second meal; but, to cut a long story short, the reasons for that rule seem to be, (1) that the Buddha did not want his followers to indulge in greed for food; he wanted them to control their appetites, to take no more than was strictly

necessary. And (2) they were dependent on the lay people for alms, and he did not want them to trouble the lay people more than was strictly necessary. So here you get two principles: the principle of moderation in eating, and the principle of taking from others as little as you possibly can, the least that you need to take, if you have to take at all. [90] You can then proceed to apply those general principles to your own life, asking yourself: 'Do I overeat? Could I possibly eat less? Do I need to have four meals a day? Could I not cut it down? Could I not perhaps go without breakfast?' you see what I mean 'Or perhaps I could cut down my evening meal from four courses to two. Perhaps I could give up meat.' You see what I mean you are applying the general principle to your own circumstances. So I think therefore there are these three stages, if one studies the Vinaya Pitaka; and, if one studies in this way, it can be very useful to those who are inclined to such study. No doubt the results of such study will get into general circulation in the Movement as the person actually engaging in the study gives talks and maybe leads study himself, and so on; perhaps it isn't necessary for everybody in the Movement, even everybody in the Order, to go through the Vinaya Pitaka, which is in part quite tedious, not having been composed as literature. I have recently invented, or adapted, a term to use in this connection. I speak of 'transposition', in the musical sense of transposition. In music, doesn't one transpose a piece of music from one key to another?

Dhammaloka: Yes, one does.

S: So how would one describe that process of transposition from one key to another? What actually happens, so to speak, when you do that?

Dhammaloka: In music you actually literally, so to speak, shift the notes tones, what is the word in English? up or down, depending on the key.

S: Yes; so what has happened, in general terms, when you transpose from one key to another? It is 'key', isn't it, from one key to another?

Sudhana: It is the same piece of music, the same tune, but starting on another note.

S: Yes, so it is as though, when you transpose a Vinaya rule, you have in a way the same principle, but you apply it within different circumstances or to a different lifestyle. So it is not just a question of applying or adapting, but of what I call transposing it. So transposing it the principle corresponding to the tune from, say, the bhikkhu key to the as it were layman key, or whatever it might be the householder key. You preserve the principle, but you vary the circumstances, you vary the conditions under which it is applied. So it sounds a little different. It is the same tune, but when it is in a higher or a lower key it does sound a little different, doesn't it? It modifies the tune itself subtly. It is much the same in this case. So I like to speak in terms of transposing the Vinaya rules not that we do not observe them because they are inappropriate to people in the Order; we apply the principles involved, we transpose those rules, let us say.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, could you just complete your example? You mentioned how there were two principles in not eating after 12, the second one being not pestering the lay folk too much

S: No, no, I did I said that you don't take from others more than you need to take, if in fact you have to take at all. Do you see what I mean? For instance, supposing you have to take up somebody's time; all right, due to certain circumstances, you need to take up some of their

time, but you don't take up more than is

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absolutely necessary. You can apply or transpose that principle in that way. We cannot transpose it very literally, because in the FWBO we do not have the principle of depending on a laity for support, an in effect non practising laity. We try to support ourselves. But the general principle, in a broader sense, still applies: that, if you do need something from another person, don't take more than you actually need; take the minimum that you need, whether in terms of material things time, energy, attention and so on. Don't be a burden on other people not more than you really need to be, objectively. You may feel like pouring out all your troubles; all right, perhaps you have a need to do that; all right, so inflict all your troubles on another person, but not to any greater extent than you really need to. Just have your say, express your feelings, and then just leave it at that, not just go on and on repeating it all over and over again. I think I would even go so far as to say there is probably not a single Vinaya rule, however trivial, that we could not transpose to our own circumstances. The Vinaya is a very consistent system, based on ultimately very sound principles, so I think it certainly repays study. It isn't of value only to the bhikkhu or the bhikkhuni, even when one considers the purely disciplinary aspects of the Vinaya Pitaka, leaving aside all the biographical and historical material and the teachings which one finds also in the Vinaya Pitaka. If you consider even the first of all the pratimoksha rules, it is quite interesting, because the first relates to celibacy. There was a bhikkhu who had been formerly married, and he found things rather difficult after a while, because he had been married a long time, I suppose, and all that or perhaps he was still quite young so he thought he had better go and see his wife, who was living not very far away, he thought it would not be proper, perhaps, to go and see another woman. So he went back to his wife for a while; he didn't think he was doing anything wrong. But the Buddha found out about this and made a rule that it actually was a breach of celibacy even to have intercourse with one's former wife. The interesting point here was that the monk had a rather literalistic view of celibacy: he thought it would be all right, an exception could be made in favour of his own former wife, because after all he had been married to her in the past. But the Buddha made it clear that that was not the case. Perhaps he thought that celibacy just meant abstaining from adultery, but the Buddha made it clear that it meant abstaining from sex in the broadest sense. You could take that as an example of literalism, literal mindedness, because he had not asked himself 'Why are monks supposed to be celibate, what is the reason behind it, what is the philosophy, as it were?' If he had understood that, he would have realized that his own previous wife was automatically excluded, too. Perhaps he thought the damage was already done, so to speak!

Ratnaprabha: There does seem to be an enormous amount of literalism in the Vinaya, doesn't there, especially with regard to sex, where the monks seem to use their imaginations to try and think of something not yet mentioned in the rules as if they can't see what celibacy means?

S: I think, where you get rules at all, you will always get literalism. I think therefore it is a good idea to have as few actual rules as possible. Lao Tzu makes this point in the Tao Te Ching, doesn't he? where he says [that] where laws are made lawlessness will break in. Again, one mustn't take that too literally! One finds a lot of literalism in the Theravada Sangha, with regard, say, to the handling of money, that is, gold and silver; because only gold and silver is mentioned, though money is clearly meant. But some bhikkhus will handle currency notes and write cheques with a clear conscience, while believing quite genuinely,

though mistakenly, that they are observing that particular rule. I have known [92] monks who have justified going to the cinema to see quite ordinary films on the grounds that going to the cinema was not prohibited in the Vinaya. Bhikkhus in Thailand, where they are supposed to observe the Vinaya very strictly, all have TV sets in their monasteries they have told me this and what they are very fond of watching, this is the most popular programme for monks, is Thai boxing. Again, there is nothing in the Vinaya about it! But it is surely not very conducive to the monastic life, even in the limited Theravadin sense, to watch Thai boxing night after night on TV. It is very violent, of course. But that is their favourite TV programme. This is what they have told me themselves.

Dhammaloka: Would it be too much generalized to say that we need rules only inasmuch as we don't understand the principles involved?

S: Well, yes and no. It depends who one means by 'we'. I think, in the case of Order Members, one cannot in fact have a rule or observe a rule without understanding the principle behind it. You can only have rules without understanding in the case of children or those who are in the position of children, that is to say those who are not able to understand and who have to be obliged, in a way in some cases even forced to observe certain rules or laws for their own good as well as for the good of society. But I don't think there can be a genuinely ethical life where you are observing rules the meaning of which you do not understand at least to some extent. Some people, especially, say, some criminals, regard a rule or a law just as a rule, just as a law. They don't consider it has any ethical significance. They regard it as a quite arbitrary limitation on their freedom of action, which they are quite justified in circumventing if they possibly can. Some criminals might think no more to take an extreme case of taking someone's life than the ordinary citizen would think of falsifying his tax return. There is an example of that in a book I read recently, In God's Name. The example was the son of Sindonia (?). Here was Sindonia, responsible for all sorts of enormities; and when the American Government actually got him in the end and he was imprisoned, his son was outraged 'How dare they do this to my father?' It was quite instructive. He regarded the American legal system as having no right whatever to prosecute and imprison his father. It was a gross violation of his father's rights. He seemed to think his father had a complete right to do whatever he wanted, even if that involved large-scale embezzlement and even murder. It is quite extraordinary, his attitude as revealed in an interview which is reproduced in part in this book. He was genuinely indignant. Not that he held that his father was innocent of the crimes of which he had been accused; not that at all; but that nobody had any right to do that sort of thing to his father as though he believed his father had total freedom of action, or should have. Quite extraordinary.

: Who was his father, Bhante?

S: Sindonia. A big and very crooked Italian financier, connected with the Mafia, one could say, who had very extensive dealings with the Vatican Bank. To me that was one of the most revealing episodes in the book: the real top level criminal mentality. They regard the police and the whole judicial system as infringing their freedom, and the son regarded it as absolutely within his rights to try and arrange for the murder of the judge who had sentenced his father, because what right had that judge to persecute his father in that way? It is in a way a sort of infantile attitude. [93] People of that sort see rules or laws not as representing any ethical principle which is binding on a human being, but as purely arbitrary limitations on their freedom of action. I think it is very difficult for the law-abiding citizen to understand

that kind of mentality, but it does exist. How are we getting on, by the way?

Tejananda: We have only got through four questions so far.

S: Oh, come on, then.

Tejananda: Right. The next one is from Dhammaloka, on natural morality.

Dhammaloka: Not in the lecture, but on other occasions, you have spoken of pakkati sila as 'natural morality'. From my experience in using this term in Germany, I got the impression that the word 'natural' is a very ambiguous one, which seems to be easily misinterpreted, particularly if used with respect to morality and culture in general.

S: Yes, I think this is true; because, in Catholicism, there is a well-known term, 'the natural law' which is not natural, in fact, at all. Possibly 'natural morality' could be confused with this. So perhaps one should be very careful using that expression, pakkati sila, though 'natural morality' literally translates that. It is that morality which is morality in the sense of consisting of actions which, under the law of karma, have consequences.

Dhammaloka: Could you think of another term? I was thinking whether it was possible to say 'evolutive' I know the word doesn't exist, but perhaps one could make it 'evolutive morality'. Because it may point out the sense

S: One could, perhaps, speak in terms of psychological ethics; because one's attitude, one's conscious intention, is an inseparable part of natural morality. It is natural as distinct from conventional. In other words, natural morality is that which is determined by the state of your mind, whether skilful or unskilful. If a skilful or unskilful mental state is involved, then it becomes a matter of natural morality.

Dhammaloka: In an unskilful sense as well?

S: Well, yes; because an unskilful state, under the law of karma, will result in an unpleasant experience. So natural morality is that morality which is governed by the law of karma. Or it is the law of karma. When you practise natural morality, you involve yourself in the law of karma, or you are involved in the law of karma. So natural morality consists of those actions which have karmic significance. You could say karmically significant actions or karmically significant morality, which doesn't necessarily coincide with morality in the legal sense or in the accepted social sense.

Dhammaloka: I get the impression, Bhante, that there is quite a micchaditthi through the Movement about this. I am pretty sure I have heard about natural morality usually in the sense that that is the good sort of morality; that is, the sort of morality which helps you to develop. So not that is just generally the

S: Well, in a sense that is true, because only that morality which is natural morality actually helps you to develop. Any amount of observance of artificial [94] morality, let us say, or conventional morality, will not necessarily, or will not by itself, help you to develop. The morality which helps you to develop is that morality which is based on the principle, let us say which is the karmic principle of natural morality.

Kulamitra: So the unskilful mental states produce natural immorality? Is that how you put it?

S: And consequences, yes. To put it in its simplest form: natural morality is that morality which is based on the law of karma, not simply on human opinion or social convention. So conventional moralities can differ from one society to another, but natural morality cannot. But perhaps one needs to be careful in using the term 'natural morality'. It may be confused with 'natural law', which Catholics believe even non Catholics and non Christians should observe or should even be made to observe. I remember hearing a nun, an Irish Catholic nun interviewed on the radio about abortion, and she said very strongly: 'We are not against abortion just because it is against Catholic teaching, but because it is against the natural law,' and she said it with real force; but she clearly did not recognize that natural law, in that sense, was a characteristically Catholic concept. It is a theological concept, actually. Sometimes Catholics try to maintain that they are for something, or against something, only because it is either in accordance with, or not in accordance with, the natural law, not because it has anything to do with Catholicism. Well, that is not really quite intellectually honest. Sometimes they say: 'We are not asking governments to enact legislation which is in accordance with Catholicism; oh, no, no, we are only asking them to enact legislation which is accordance with natural law, which is the same for everybody.' That is a rather different conception. So morality which is in accordance with the law of karma is natural morality in Buddhism, pakkati sila.

Ratnaprabha: Can you think of a more punchy title for it, if we are not to use the word 'natural'?

S: You can say 'genuine morality' as distinct from artificial morality; or psychologically based morality which has reference to your actual mental state, whether skilful or unskilful.

: Could you call it individual rather than social morality?

S: You could, but even that could be misunderstood, because your individual morality could be a matter of your personal opinion. It need not be based on the law of karma. It might be a matter of your individual morality; you might claim that killing was not wrong. Anyway, perhaps we should press on.

Tejananda: Right. The sixth question is from Ratnaguna, concerning the Five Precepts.

Ratnaguna: Are the Five Precepts specifically Buddhist, or were they taken on by the Buddha from the traditional Indian ethical code, if there was one?

S: It seems that the Five Precepts, as a list, are a specifically Buddhist list, but there is no doubt that the first four precepts, even as a list, were in circulation before the time of the Buddha. It seems that the Buddhists under certain circumstances added on that Fifth Precept; under certain other circumstances they added [95] on six more, to make the Ten Silas, the Ten Kusaladhammas. So one can say that, yes, the Five Precepts as such seems to be a Buddhist innovation, but simply by adding that fifth precept to an existing set of four, which was apparently well known. In a sense, that is to be expected, because the four represent, one might say, basic ethical requirements that are almost bound to be recognized by any society, at least to some extent.

Ratnaguna: The second question to that is: Is it possible to say where the earliest reference to the Five Precepts is in the Canon?

S: Well, in the Khuddaka Nikaya there is a short text called the Khuddakpat(?), sometimes translated as 'The Short Section', where the Five Precepts are mentioned. It is difficult to say what is the earliest reference, because we do not always know which parts of the Canon are early and which are later. But it does seem to be a somewhat later list not a very much later list, but a somewhat later list. And as a formula it definitely occurs in the Khuddakpat. Whether it occurs there for the first time or not, I could not say; but it is found in the Pali Canon, there is no doubt about that.

Tejananda: The next question is from me. It is about the panatipata precept. In the lecture you say, concerning the panatipata precept, 'Although sometimes rendered as "not to kill", it is really abstention not only from killing, but from harming in any way'; whereas, in The Ten Pillars of Buddhism (p. 50), you write: '... the Precept is probably best spoken of in terms of abstention from killing.' One would have supposed that the first statement, being a more general proscription of violence, implicitly inclusive of killing, was the more satisfactory interpretation. Could you please explain the apparent contradiction?

S: I have actually rewritten, for the second edition, the revised edition, of The Ten Pillars, that particular section, because it seemed not to be clear. I discussed it at some length with Subhuti. So I have redrafted it. I can't remember my exact wording, because I considered it very carefully, so I will have to refer you to that. It is coming out quite soon.

Tejananda: Was that the correction which appeared in Shabda?

S: It might have been.

Tejananda: I think it still came out in the end, but it was killing which you were referring to, rather than violence in general. That was my impression. I couldn't find that, so I am not absolutely certain.

S: I think you are probably right. My train of thought then I can't remember at the moment, but I remember I discussed it with Subhuti quite thoroughly and came to that definite conclusion, and I thought why I came to that conclusion was clear from what I had actually rewritten. I can't remember what I actually said offhand.

Tejananda: We will have to come back on that when it comes out.

S: Yes. It may have had something to do with the actual usage of the word in Pali literature, as distinct from its literal meaning. Himsa does mean violence, it means attack; but it does seem to be used technically in Buddhism to mean killing, [96] so that when Buddhism speaks of ahimsa the primary meaning is 'not killing', even though it can also be understood to mean abstention from violence.

Ratnaprabha: That is why it is 'panatipata'?

S: Ah, right; panatipata is attacking living beings. Yes, I think the same applies in the case of panatipata: the general, in a sense the literary meaning is attacking or assault, but used by

Buddhists usually to convey the sense specifically of killing. I think that is what I actually found. I consulted the dictionary and various texts. I think that is the conclusion I came to.

Tejananda: But how does that leave us with regard to violence which does not lead to killing?

S: I think when you take the Precept, you so to speak pledge yourself at least to the minimum observance; at least you must not kill. When you take the Precept of panatipata perhaps this is the crux of the matter you do not undertake to abstain absolutely from all forms of violence, because otherwise you would be breaking the precept all the time. You haven't yet come to that point. You do undertake to abstain from all forms of killing. But that does not mean that your observance of the precept is limited to abstaining from killing; you try to extend it and broaden it so that you more and more abstain from all forms of injury. But, even if you are not able to observe that to any great extent, at least you refrain from killing. Do you see what I mean? I think this is the significance. This is why you take the precept, in English, of abstaining from killing, and not of abstaining from violence; otherwise you have got, one might say, an impossible task right from the beginning. So you undertake to abstain from killing; but the reason is that killing is an extreme form of violence. So you don't rest satisfied with abstaining from killing. You try to abstain from inflicting injury to the greatest extent that you can.

Ratnaprabha: Does this also apply to the other Precepts? Are they also given in an extreme form whereby you would try to observe them to the letter?

S: Yes, in a sense. Take, for instance, brahmacarya. Brahmacarya is not one of the Ten Precepts, but one can extend kamesu micchacara to the precept of brahmacarya, and take that instead. So if you take the precept of brahmacarya, or abstaining from abrahmacarya, it does not mean that you undertake to abstain from all sexual acts, words and thoughts, though that is what brahmacarya really means in the full sense. You undertake to abstain from all overt sexual activity. You cannot undertake to abstain from all sexual thoughts; that would be too much; but none the less, that would be your ultimate goal. Or, to go back, say, to sexual misconduct: at least you should not commit adultery, at least you should not rape. Even if you are unable to refrain from little misdemeanours, sexually speaking, at least you should not commit those major sexual misdemeanours. This is why sometimes abstention from kamesu micchacara is translated as abstention from adultery, because that is an extreme and major form of sexual misconduct. So, as regards the actual precept, if taken literally it sets the lower limit below which you must not fall under any circumstances; but also it is an expression of a principle. So even though you are pledged not to fall below that lower limit, that does not mean you must remain satisfied with that lower limit, because the precept expresses a principle; so you have to go on to practise, as much as you can, the principle involved in the precept to a greater extent than the precept, [97] taken literally, actually expects of you. In the case of some precepts that is more obvious than in the case of others.

Tejananda: A question from Ratnaguna on homosexuality.

Ratnaguna: In the Pali Canon, rape, adultery and abduction are listed as forms of sexual misconduct

S: Yes, these represent the lowest limit of practice. One must not fall below abstaining from these.

Ratnaguna: According to one English Buddhist I have met, homosexuality is seen as a form of sexual misconduct in traditional (Theravadin) Buddhist countries. Is this the case?

S: Yes and no. There is a Pali commentary on the Five Precepts which does make this point.

Ratnaguna: A commentary?

S: Yes. But there is no warrant for this as regards lay people, let us say, in the Pali Canon itself; though, in the case of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, they are, of course, expected to abstain from all kinds of sexual activity, including auto-erotic practices. But there is a very interesting discussion of this whole question of sex, marriage and friendship in a new book I have got: I think it is called Tales and Teachings of the Buddha, but it is based on the Jataka stories, or it is about the Jataka stories. And it even goes so far as to suggest I have not read it carefully, I have just dipped into it, I have sent it, actually, to Tuscany; I am going to read it there but it makes the point that, in the Jatakas (and it is studying specifically the Jatakas, both the verses and the stories), there is a sharp contrast between sex and marriage, and love and friendship. According to the author of this book I forget his name, but he is a Western scholar the Jataka stories are very much down on sex and marriage, but strongly affirm love and friendship. According to the author and one might differ from him here in the Pali Canon itself, in the rest of the Canon outside the Jatakas, sex and marriage are certainly frowned upon, but love and friendship are frowned upon too. (One might query this.) According to him, in the Jataka stories at least, love and friendship, far from being frowned upon, are exalted quite highly. And, according to him, the Jatakas suggest that, if a sexual element, even, creeps into love and friendship that is to say, between men

Ratnaguna: (interrupting) When you say 'love and friendship', can you clarify that?

S: I am using his terminology.

Ratnaguna: Does that mean friendship?

S: Yes, love and friendship. If a sexual element creeps in (and, as I say, he is considering only love and friendship between men; he doesn't consider, basing himself on the Jatakas, that love and friendship between members of the opposite sex [of opposite sexes?] is possible), if a sexual element creeps in, that is quite acceptable according to him, according to the Jatakas; which is a quite [98] interesting point of view. I have yet to go through the book carefully, but it may be worth your while, later on, looking into this book.

Ratnaguna: Are these the canonical Jatakas?

S: No, he is basing himself on the Jataka verses, which are canonical, and mainly on the non canonical Jataka stories, but taking into consideration also the canonical Jatakas. His thesis seems to be that the Jatakas represent a somewhat different form of Buddhism than the rest of the Canon, and [that] the fact that in Theravada countries many people were inspired by the Jatakas softened somewhat, or modified, the rigour and the narrowness, in a way the rigidity, of the standard Theravadin approach based, according to him, on the rest of the Canon. That may be rather debatable, all that; but the fact is, he has drawn out the fact that at least part of the Canon, while not being in favour of sex and marriage, strongly recommends love and friendship between members of the same sex, and does not look unkindly even on the sexual

element that may creep in; which presents rather a different view of things from what one normally gets. It is a quite interesting, scholarly sort of work. He has a rather weird view of the anatta doctrine, though, which one has to be careful of.

Ratnaguna: So I don't think you have answered the question: 'According to one Buddhist I have met, homosexuality is seen as a form of sexual misconduct in traditional (Theravadin) Buddhist countries. Is this true?'

S: Well, if one accepts [the thesis of this book], this alters the interpretation. It seems difficult not to accept it, because he quotes chapter and verse from the Jatakas. Well, rejection, one might say, or non acceptance of homosexuality in Theravada countries is not universal. In fact, I know from what I have heard from Theravada bhikkhu friends that homosexuality is quite common in at least some Theravada countries, especially in Sri Lanka; not so much in the others, but especially

Tape 6, Side 2

S: ... it seems, in a broad sense, accepted and recognized.

Ratnaguna: I don't know if the next two questions are relevant, then. If it is true

S: No, maybe I should modify that. The author of that book makes it clear, and I think the passages he cites make it clear, that homosexuality (if one uses that term, and there is no term corresponding to that English term in Pali), if it is to be accepted at all, it is in the context of a relationship of love and friendship do you see what I mean? though that is not considered to be the case, or the same principle does not seem to apply, so far as the Jatakas are concerned, to the relationship of sex and marriage. That is seen as entirely mundane, without any sort of spiritual possibilities at all. Whereas the relationship of love and friendship that is, between members of the same sex, between men, especially is regarded as having a definite spiritual potential, even where there happens to be a sexual element. He brings this out quite clearly.

Ratnaguna: So if there is a bias against homosexuality in a Theravadin Buddhist country, that would not be a Buddhist bias so much as a cultural bias?

[99]
S: You could even say that; though, again, even if one accepts what he says with regard to the Jatakas, there are other parts of the Pali Canon where all sexual activity is as it were banned. One has got, as it were, to weigh perhaps one part of the Canon against another. But certainly he seems to have made out a good case for the Jataka stories at least, or the Jataka literature and that tradition, representing a somewhat different view from at least some other parts of the Pali Canon.

Ratnaguna: Those other parts of the Pali Canon would presumably be for monks, would they? When you say that 'all sexual activity'

S: Ah, but even what he says with regard to the Jatakas and to sex in love and friendship seems to be extended to monks as well as to lay people. The book does present a quite different point of view. He has argued his case quite well.

Ratnaguna: So a monk might not be celibate?

S: Well, if one accepts that sort of interpretation, he might not be. But he does make the point that the sexual element is definitely within a context of what he calls love and friendship. And he seems not to well, he makes it quite clear that the Jatakas do not consider the possibility of love and friendship in connection with sex and marriage. Sex and marriage is sex and marriage. It is a quite different thing. Love and friendship is a quite different thing. And a sexual element in a relationship of love and friendship which is, of course, between men; I don't think he mentions female examples is acceptable; or, at least, doesn't get in the way. This seems to be his thesis. Not that he sort of goes out of his way; it is just one particular chapter. He has got one particular chapter called, I think, 'Sex and Marriage versus Love and Friendship'; because he is surveying the whole Jataka literature and all its attitudes. But he does make it clear that there is an element in Theravada tradition which is a little more liberal in this respect than is generally believed. In fact, he believes that, in a broader sense, the Jataka tradition, as he calls it, represents a more liberal approach to the spiritual life generally almost approaching that of the Mahayana, but within the overall Theravada context. It is quite an interesting book.

Ratnaprabha: But I thought that, in the case of monks, any kind of sexual activity was considered to be a

S: Yes, yes, that is true; this is another part of the Pali Canon. It is a question of weighing one part of the Pali Canon against another. He is pointing out that there is, alongside the rather puritanical tradition, let us say, of the strict Vinaya, this other tradition of the Jataka, which in a sense almost provides an alternative tradition within the overall tradition of Theravada Buddhism. In other words, he makes it clear that, even with regard to this particular quite crucial matter of sexuality, the Pali literature, the Theravada even canonical literature, is not quite so monolithic as we are generally led to suppose. If one was, as it were, more puritanically inclined, one could give more weight to the strict Vinaya tradition, and regard that as representing the authentic Buddhist tradition; if one was more liberally inclined, so to speak, one could give perhaps more weight to the Jataka tradition and perhaps consider that as representing the real Buddhist tradition or real Buddhist view. But he is the first scholar, as far as I know, to discuss this whole question quite openly and with a full range of references to canonical and non canonical Buddhist texts within the Theravada tradition. He discusses the whole matter quite [100] reasonably. It is quite clear he doesn't have any particular axe to grind; he is just interested in the Jatakas, concerned to study their particular contribution to Theravada tradition. He does make the point, so far as I remember, that the Jataka tradition has influenced lay people more than monks; but he also makes the point that monks themselves have not altogether escaped the influence of the Jataka tradition. How are we going on?

Tejananda: We have five, some of which are quite short, I think. The next one is from Ratnaprabha, about taking precepts on behalf of our spiritual friends.

Ratnaprabha: This is a question about applying precepts for the benefit of others, or even to help self transcendence. It is about taking on a precept on behalf of spiritual friends that is, oneself undertaking a precept that a spiritual friend should adopt a particular skilful course of behaviour, or abandon a particular unskilful one. For example, one might resolve: 'I undertake the training principle that my friend will reduce his drinking of alcohol.'

[101]
S: No, not 'that he will' how can you? No! 'That I will do everything in my power to help him', but not 'that he will'. (Some laughter.) No, I am afraid not! He might retaliate!

Ratnaprabha: I phrased it like that, because I was thinking, in a way, of the parallel between one's own better nature trying to influence one's own worst nature by taking a precept. Now in this case you might actually see something that he was doing which was definitely unskilful, you are quite sure about it.

S: But you are not his better nature! You are just you! (Laughter.) You are not his better nature, you are just a better person. No, I am afraid not. I appreciate the intention, but I think it can't really be effectuated in that way; or not in that form of words.

Ratnaprabha: Is there anything similar, do you think, that we could do that was a little more formal than just saying: 'I am going to help him'?

S: Doesn't that really say everything? What more can one human being do for another than help him, really? help, encourage, incite, inspire, guide but not do it for him. Not undertake the responsibility, not do it on his behalf.

Does that then rule out the other example?

Ratnaprabha: It does, yes, it now becomes ...

S: There might, of course, always be an exception to the rule. No, I don't think there can be here.

Tejananda: OK; now one from Ratnaguna on samvara.

Ratnaguna: I just wondered what samvara meant. I couldn't find it in the Pali Dictionary.

S: Literally, it means a binding. A bit like the word religion, in a way; though 'religion' is supposed to mean 'binding back'.

Ratnaguna: How is it spelt, please?

S: It is samvara [not spelling it], it is a Sanskrit word, actually, though you do get it in Pali. Samvara sila, in Pali; it is a sort of binding sila, or sila that you definitely take upon yourself. Not a sila that you happen to observe, as it were, just because you are a good-natured person, but a sila which you definitely take upon yourself, which you bind yourself to observe. So it is [spelling it] S,A,M usually with a dot either above or below V,A,R,A. In the Pali/English Dictionary, I think you find that the M sound is written by a peculiar symbol, like an 'n' with a long foot; so it is S,A, and then that strange 'ung' letter, followed by V,A,R,A.

Tejananda: The next question, from Kulamitra, is on the bhikshu samvara sila.

Kulamitra: You say that the bhikshu or bhikkhu samvara sila is the natural behaviour of those bent on Nirvana, but what of today's differences from ancient India? How does the bhikkhu principle differ from the traditional bhikkhu precepts?

[102]
S: I don't think there is a bhikkhu principle, because being a bhikkhu pertains to a particular way of life. There is a path principle, one might say, and being a bhikkhu is a means of carrying out or observing that path principle. But what did you say at the very beginning?

Kulamitra: Well, I said a sort of precis of what you said in the lecture.

S: Ah, so it is a question, one might say, going back to what I said earlier on, of transposition. You find out what the principle involved is, and then apply that, so to speak, to the changed circumstances. You change the key without changing the tune; or you have to identify the tune first, before you can transpose it.

Ratnaguna: So it is less absolute than suggested in the lecture, then? Because, in the lecture, it does say [that] the bhikkhu samvara sila is the natural behaviour of those who are really determined to gain Nirvana.

S: Yes, I would say 'in principle'; yes. If you take what a bhikkhu is in principle, as it were, what that sort of lifestyle really means, then it would be the behaviour which naturally corresponded to that. So if, for instance, you say that, in principle, the bhikkhu life means making do with as little as possible, not indulging in cravings and appetites and so on, living simply, not being dependent on others; well, the natural expression of that sort of principle would be such and such a lifestyle. Perhaps I by implication speak here of a sort of bhikkhu principle, but in a sense one shouldn't do that. Though, again, in a sense, one should or can, because in the Pali literature itself, sometimes 'bhikkhu' is used more for an ideal. Sometimes it is used for a particular way of life. In the Dhammapada the word bhikkhu is used in a very broad, general sense, as someone committed to the spiritual life. In one particular verse, the Buddha says: 'One who observes such and such principles, or precepts, he is the bhikkhu, he is the sramana, he is the brahmin.' So there, clearly, 'bhikkhu' is someone following the spiritual ideal wholeheartedly. But when the term bhikkhu occurs, say, in the Vinaya Pitaka, it has a rather different meaning. It means someone following a particular lifestyle, and therefore observing certain rules, some of them very minute.

Ratnaguna: Here the full sentence reads: 'The bhikshu samvara sila comprises the 150 precepts observed by the fully ordained monk, and represents the natural pattern of behaviour of one who is fully dedicated to the attainment of Nirvana.'

S: Perhaps I would modify that now to say 'in principle represents'; do you see what I mean? It is a quite important qualification: 'in principle represents'. At the time that I gave the lecture, I think I was following tradition, even the letter of tradition, to a greater extent than I do now. I think I have been transposing to a much greater extent since then. If we edit it again we should put 'in principle' in square brackets.

Tejananda: A question from Sudhana on the Bodhisattva precepts.

Sudhana: Where can we find listed the 64 Bodhisattva precepts? Could you give us some examples of these precepts, and how they differ from other precepts in being more Bodhisattva like?

S: I have given a list, or selection from them, somewhere, haven't I, in a lecture? Where was

that? Anyone remember?

[103]
: Was it The Ten Pillars of Buddhism?

S: Bodhisattva precepts? No, I think it was an earlier lecture. In 'The Bodhisattva Ideal' series, I think.

Abhaya: It is in that.

S: I translated these with the help of Dardo Rimpoche. I have got them all written or typed out. I had thought sometimes of taking a study group on them some time; I think it would be useful. Some of the precepts are common to Hinayana lists of precepts, and some are quite distinctive. They represent an attempt on the part of the Mahayana to construct, so to speak, a Mahayana Vinaya in accordance with the Bodhisattva ideal; just as the Hinayana Vinaya is constructed in accordance with the Arhant ideal, one might say. So there is a certain amount of overlapping, but they by no means entirely overlap. For instance, one of the Bodhisattva precepts is to worship the Three Jewels three times a day. Another is not to exalt oneself and despise others. Another is not to teach the doctrine of sunyata to those who are not ready for it. You can see that they are concerned more with the spirit than with the letter of observance. Perhaps I will, one day, have a study group on these. I went through them with Dardo Rimpoche and, as I say, made this translation.

: Supplementary to that, could you consider under what circumstances, if any, we could envisage Order Members, or the Order as a whole, taking the Bodhisattva precepts?

S: I have given some thought to that over the last few years. I have sometimes thought it would not be a bad idea to include the Bodhisattva precepts in the Sevenfold Puja, in the context of an Order meeting, a chapter meeting, as sort of expressive of the aspiration of the Bodhisattva and therefore as expressive of a certain aspect of the Going for Refuge itself, and perhaps bringing out even more fully the altruistic implications of the Going for Refuge. I have certainly thought about that. To the best of my knowledge, they do not survive in the original Sanskrit, but we do have them in Chinese and Tibetan translations, and my version was made, of course, with Dardo Rimpoche's help, from the Tibetan translation.

Sudhana: So the Bodhisattva precepts are not dependent on the taking of the Bodhisattva vow; it is something that one can take before ?

S: Ah, the vow and the precepts are distinguished; they are two separate things. In the Tibetan tradition, of course, one takes the vow and the precepts at the same time. But, of course, one can take the vow on different levels. There can be a sort of effective, as distinct from a real, taking of the vow, just as there is an effective as distinct from a real Going for Refuge.

Sudhana: So the precepts could be taken on the basis of the effective [vow]?

S: Yes, indeed, yes. Any more?

Tejananda: A final one from Ratnaprabha on total acts.

Sudhana: Sorry, just before that, could I get the clarification in? Does that mean that, before they could be used in an Order Puja, effectively people would have had to have taken the effective level of Bodhisattva vow? Because I am not sure -

[104]
S: Well, in a sense they have done that by virtue of the fact of Going for Refuge.

Sudhana: I am not sure whether all Order Members realize that significance to that extent, though.

S: Well, obviously one would not introduce something like that without making it clear. But, as I have made clear, the Bodhicitta is an aspect of the Going for Refuge. So, if you have an effective Going for Refuge, by implication you automatically have an effective arising of the Bodhicitta. So, in a sense, that step has already been taken; but no doubt it does need to be brought out more clearly and explained in so many words. I think it would be good, perhaps, to recite or repeat the Bodhisattva precepts in the context of an Order meeting or Order Sevenfold Puja, just as a sort of indication of the spirit in which the whole Order operates; especially in view of the fact that one regards the Order as a sort of reflection of the Eleven Headed and Thousand Armed Avalokitesvara.

: Bhante this is a slight aside, but related to that person you mentioned. I had heard that somebody had asked if there was an Eleven Headed, Thousand Armed meditation practice, or meditation practice based on that particular form, that would be suitable for Order Members after the Order Metta; and I believe that you said there was not?

S: No, I didn't say there was not. I said I was not acquainted with one; because there are thousands of sadhanas. It is quite likely that there is a sadhana of that type, but I have not as yet come across one.

Sudhana: Do you think it would be a suitable practice?

S: It could be. People could find it very inspiring. They seem to find the painting very inspiring. I didn't hear that anybody found it bizarre or anything of that sort. So, if they found the painting inspiring, they might well find that particular sadhana inspiring. It might be possible to find one, but I haven't seen one as yet. Perhaps it is not very common. But there is no reason why we should not make inquiries. In Tibet it is the Four Armed form which is the most popular the satakshari(?).

Ratnaprabha: Is the list of the 64 Bodhisattva precepts available in English translation anywhere, apart from in your notes?

S: I believe it is, but perhaps not completely. I believe I have seen it somewhere. But, of course, there are two traditions: one preserved by the Tibetans and one preserved by the Chinese. The two are not quite the same; I think the Chinese have a smaller number of precepts than the Tibetans. For some reason or other, writers on Mahayana Buddhism seem to give no attention whatever, or very little, to the Bodhisattva precepts. Perhaps that is significant. But I have got them, and it would be possible to make copies.

Tejananda: So, Ratnaprabha's question on total act.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture, you use the term 'Total Act'. a) Is this your own phrase, or is it borrowed from another writer?

[105]
S: I am not sure. It might be borrowed from scholastic philosophy 'pure act'? Scholastic philosophy? St. Thomas Aquinas? There might be some echo of that in it, possibly. St. Thomas Aquinas said didn't he say that God is pure act and there is no potentiality in God? There might be some distant echo of that phrase, I am not sure. But I certainly did not consciously take it from any other writer or thinker.

Ratnaprabha: And: b) Is 'Total Act' action based in integrated awareness?

S: I think one could put it in that way; yes, I think one could. An act which expresses the whole of your being. Again, there is a sort of connection with what Thomas Aquinas says about God, strange to say that the actions of God are fully adequate to his nature. (I am only paraphrasing.) So that total act is that act in which all of your intention finds expression. And very often, of course, our acts are very, very far from totally expressing our intentions, for one reason or another. There is something we are not able to put across, something we are not able to express, or on which we are not able to act fully. Ratnaprabha: If I understand 'integrated awareness' correctly, it is, at least on our normal level, a horizontal integration, and does not involve, necessarily, the integration of unconscious factors. So would this apply also to total act?

S: I think, as far as I remember, when I spoke of total act I was speaking of totally total act!

Ratnaprabha: I think you mentioned 'Total Act in the full sense' at one point, as if there is a total act not in the fullest sense.

S: Ah. I think one would have to say that, for a total act to be possible, there would have to be no real division between the conscious and the unconscious. In other words, one would have to be fully integrated vertically as well as horizontally, otherwise a totally total act would not be possible. I think I have indicated that a total act is something of which only a Buddha is really capable, so I suppose we in a way come back to Thomas Aquinas again. All this would need checking. I am not really sure of my Thomas Aquinas. It might have nothing really to do with him at all. He is quite well worth reading, for anyone interested in philosophy. He is very clear, but sometimes quite difficult, and one of course very often does not accept his basic assumptions; but he reasons from those assumptions very cogently, and very subtly sometimes. I am glad to say we now have all his works at Padmaloka. I think so. I had the Summa Contra Gentiles, and someone has given us the Summa Theologica. I have looked at it, and it seems quite complete. It consists of a large number of treatises, including one on angels, which I have not had time to look at.

Ratnaprabha: In Latin?

S: No, in English.

Ratnaguna: There was one more question, actually, which is: I wondered what your sources were for the terms 'love mode' and 'power mode', or whether they are your own?

[106]
S: I believe that they were original, but again I cannot be quite sure. I might have come across them in the course of my reading, but I certainly have no recollection. I certainly did not consciously borrow them.

Ratnaguna: So you think they are probably your own?

S: Well, in the sense that I was not conscious of borrowing them. It could be that those expressions have been used by authors I have not read. They are the sort of terms which could occur to almost anybody thinking about those particular problems, so I would not like to claim them as really distinctively original terms, even though I did, so far as my own talks are concerned, arrive at them independently, as far as I know. I think when one reads a lot one very often does not remember from where one picks things up, or whether one has in fact picked them up at all, or not. Though on certain questions one can be quite sure that one's ideas or one's terminology is original, just because you can remember the effort of thought that led to the production of those ideas or the coining of those particular terms. I am not sure whether I thought of the terms 'Lower Evolution' and 'Higher Evolution' by myself, or whether I had come across them in my reading. I certainly cannot remember borrowing them from anywhere. I am not sure whether I have actually ever coined a term deliberately which has caught on, even within the FWBO; I can't be sure of that. I have usually borrowed terms or translated terms, and used them in a slightly different way.

Ratnaprabha: 'Love mode' and 'power mode' would surely be an example, wouldn't they, if you did coin those? That has caught on.

S: Yes, that is true. I think I coined them. As I say, they might well have been used by others, so I couldn't really claim them as being original coinages, as I might possibly have picked them up from books that I have forgotten reading. It probably is unlikely, but I can't be absolutely certain. Sometimes, I suppose they are just floating around in the air, aren't they, and sort of appear, but can't really be attributed to anybody in particular. That's it? Right, good. Are we halfway through?

Tejananda: Yes.

S: Oh, we are. You seem to have no difficulty finding questions.

[107]
Day 5

Tape 7, Side 1

Tejananda: We have got 12 questions [on Right Livelihood], beginning with Dhammaloka on 'Pure Land'.

Dhammaloka: In the course of Questions and Answers in Tuscany 1982, you mentioned that the term 'Pure Land' was used by the Communist Party in China. You concluded your remarks on this with the following statement: 'We don't have to surrender our traditional Buddhist

terms just because Mao may have twisted or misused them, but' and this is the point I would like you to comment on 'perhaps the term (Pure Land) itself is inappropriate.' What did you mean here?

S: If one takes the term 'Pure Land' in English I think this is what I had in mind this does not of itself convey to the English-speaking person the full sense that is conveyed by the corresponding Sanskrit or Chinese or Tibetan term. If we, for instance, say to people in England who come to classes or attend lectures, especially newcomers: 'We are trying to build a Pure Land,' that will not have any immediate significance, will not convey immediately any clear meaning. I think this is what I was getting at. It is too much of a Buddhist technical term. If we were to say that we are trying to create an ideal world, or an ideal society, that would perhaps convey a little of it, though still not very much, but still it would convey something; whereas 'Pure Land' would perhaps convey nothing at all. It might even convey a suggestion of Puritanism.

Dhammaloka: Could you think of any term which would indicate that the 'Pure Land' does not indicate society on a mundane level?

S: Hm. 'Kingdom of Heaven'?! I haven't been able to think of any suitable term, as yet. I think one would have to try to think of some quite roundabout expression like 'a transformed and transfigured world', or something of that sort; 'a world made new'; 'a world fit for heroes to live in'! You know where that phrase, or something like that phrase, comes from? After the First World War in England, the then Government was promising all the ex soldiers that they would be coming back to 'a land fit for heroes to live in' that is, a thoroughly reformed and transformed world. I don't think, actually, it took place! But, yes, we do have to think about this and try to create some more suitable equivalent term which will convey rather more of the full richness of the term 'a Pure Land'. Basically it means a more ideal world in which it is more easy for a human being to develop or evolve, in the spiritual sense; or perhaps even the expression 'more easy' should not be used: 'where there is more support for someone wanting to lead a spiritual life', 'where there are better facilities.' Because it essentially is not made easier; it is simply, well, one might say, facilitated. Was that it?

Dhammaloka: Yes.

Tejananda: The second question is from Ratnaguna on the Buddhist concept of ideal society.

Ratnaguna: There are two questions here, one on the Pure Land and one on Right Livelihood, both of which I really struggled with to get down. I think there are [108] more ramifications, especially to the first one, than I thought. This question is based on the assumption that most, if not all, of the Utopias or ideal worlds which you listed in the lecture from Western culture are ideal societies of this world, i.e. the kamaloka, and so more or less attainable in this world. The Pure Land of Buddhism is of a different order of ideal world, i.e. a spiritual world. Does traditional Buddhism posit a more down to earth or mundane ideal world?

S: Oh yes, quite definitely; because it has the conception of the Dharmaraja. It is the function of the Dharmaraja to encourage or to promote the observance of the Ten Precepts that is to say, the same 10 precepts that we take upon ourselves. This is considered as the principal function of the Dharmaraja or, one might say, of a righteous government; or, again, you might say, within a more, say, democratic context, the function of a right state or an ideal society.

That is as it were the more mundane equivalent of the conception of the Pure Land. So one might say, in thinking and speaking in terms of the creation of a new society, that we are not introducing any sort of new or foreign idea into traditional Buddhism; the idea is already there, quite fully developed. i recently got a quite interesting new book. It was a translation by an American scholar of the Asoka Vadana (?). The Asoka Vadana is, one might say, the legend of Ashoka; it is from a Sarvastivadin source. But there is an excellent introduction, tracing the development of the idea or ideal of the Dharmaraja, the cakravartiraja, and so on, which makes all this very clear indeed.

Ratnaprabha: Can you remember the name of the author?

S: I am afraid I cannot, but I put it in the Order Library. It is called simply The Asoka Vadana The Legend of Ashoka. It is an American publication. There is a quite lengthy introduction outlining the concept of the Dharmaraja and stressing its importance for Buddhism.

Ratnaguna: The second part is on Right Livelihood. b) You say in the lecture that Right Livelihood represents the more collective aspect of the path. Do you think the Buddha was thinking in these terms, or is this your idea? Archaic or original Buddhism seems to be concerned with individual development, rather than collective.

S: Well, yes and no. The stress, the emphasis, was on the individual, but the Buddha was not unaware of the implications of the fact that there were a number of individuals as it were practising together. The mere fact that he founded, so to speak, a Sangha shows that. But there was not, it would seem, quite so much cohesion among the lay followers, as we may call them, of the Buddha as there was among the monks, for obvious reasons. But the Buddha did speak, in one particular passage, for instance, of good laymen and good laywomen illuminating the Sangha, so he does seem to have thought of them in some kind of collective terms. You spoke specifically about right means of livelihood, but if one as an individual observes Right Livelihood, this does have a significance for society at large and therefore an effect on it. For instance, one of the forbidden trades, as it were, is that of the manufacture of arms weapons of war so that certainly has implications for society. One might, therefore, say that the Buddha did think in terms of society collectively when he spoke of Right Livelihood, certainly when he spoke of certain aspects of it. [109] I think one might even say, if one went through that list of prohibited trades, that they were prohibited at least as much on account of their ill effects for society as for their ill effects for the individual by 'society', of course, meaning 'other individuals'.

Dhammaloka: Still, Bhante, in the lecture you emphasize this collective aspect very strongly, in a surprising way, at least if one compares it with other stages of the Path. One could have done this perhaps to some extent with Perfect Speech as well, Perfect Emotion as well, Perfect Action as well, but you do it very strongly here. And I wondered whether that was partly due to the audience you had, because it was at a time when there was a very strong interest in creating well, I don't know whether it was in creating a new society, but social revolution and activities in connection with that.

S: No, I don't think I was influenced by that factor at all if I was even really aware of it. I was just pursuing, as it were, the logic of my own thought or the logic, as it were, of my own exposition of the Buddha's teaching in general and the Eightfold Path in particular. But I did as it were ask myself: what was the basic structure of the Eightfold Path? I saw, in accordance

with tradition, that there was a Path of Vision and there was a Path of Transformation; so one had to make sense of the fact that the last seven steps of the Path represented a Path of Transformation. Well, transformation of what? So, as I looked at those seven stages, I saw that there was a transformation of one's emotional life, a transformation of one's communication clearly other people come in there; one's action other people come in to a greater extent; then one's means of livelihood well, other people are involved to a greater extent still. The whole of society is involved indirectly, because the way in which one earns one's livelihood has such widespread ramifications. Then I proceeded to Right Effort well, with that we seemed to come back more to the individual; with Right Mindfulness we came back still more to the individual; and most of all, in a sense, back to the individual with Perfect Samadhi. So just contemplating the Path itself and considering it entirely on its own terms, entirely on traditional Buddhist terms that did seem to be what the Path, the Path of Transformation in particular, was all about: the transformation of self, the transformation of society. I arrived at it in that sort of way. I think in all my as it were expositions of Buddhism, I have been very little influenced by outside non Buddhist or secular thought. I have just pondered on the implications of the Buddhist teachings themselves. I do not think I have been consciously much influenced by extra Buddhist teachings; though I might sometimes have used current terminology, especially psychological terminology, I do not think I was really influenced by them at all. I just used the language which was relatively familiar to people at that time. And, of course, I use that language now less and less. All along, I have always asked myself: what does this particular teaching mean? What are its implications? I have never taken a particular teaching for granted, or assumed that I understood what it was in fact all about, what it was intended to convey. I never assumed that its meaning was clear and obvious. I think, also, during my sojourn among the ex Untouchables in India, and in connection with my work with them, years and years ago, I saw very clearly the importance of Right Livelihood or, if possible, Perfect Livelihood if one was to make any sense of the Buddhist life at all. I did see, as a result of my connection with them, the need to transform the whole of one's social life. It was not enough just to transform just one's individual life; in fact, it was hardly [110] possible, certainly for the majority of people, to transform their individual life without a corresponding transformation of the collective life of society itself.
Abhaya: Bhante, we were talking last night about the importance of the plural society. I sort of see, in what you have just been saying about the importance of transforming the whole of social life, and also on the other hand keeping society pluralistic, not a contradiction but a certain limitation a built-in limitation to the Right Livelihood teaching. Do you know what I mean?

S: I don't think there is a contradiction, because I think, as I did in fact say yesterday, that by implication the pluralistic society is, at least to some extent, a Buddhist society, inasmuch as it represents an expression of the spirit of tolerance, and therefore the recognition of other people, other individuals, as individuals. So I don't regard the pluralistic society as representing a sort of limitation on what we can do as Buddhists, but on the other hand rather as helping to make it possible. Because at least we have the opportunity of trying to convince and, if you like, convert other people. We are allowed to speak to them, we are allowed to spread our own ideas. They are allowed to become Buddhists if they so wish. Perhaps I should one day give a proper talk on this whole subject of the pluralistic society, because I have a feeling that the positive significance, or the positive value, of a pluralistic society has not yet really been brought out. A lot of people perhaps tend to regard it as a sort of compromise, a sort of makeshift; that it would be better if you didn't have to have a pluralistic society. But, at least under present conditions, I do not see that that is the case. I see it as a

distinct advantage, from a Buddhist point of view, to have a pluralistic society.

Abhaya: Only provisionally speaking?

S: Yes, because if you have a pluralistic society, at least you are able to function as Buddhists. You are able, as it were, to carve out your small Buddhist enclave within the pluralistic society. You are allowed, as I said, to talk to and even convert other people; so there is the possibility of your enclave expanding until it becomes conterminous with the whole society. But, obviously, you have to do that by ethical means, and by appealing to the individual conscience, the individual reason; not in any other way. But, in the meantime, in a pluralistic society, you yourself are protected from coercion and pressure, and so on, to change your particular faith, your particular attitudes. Perhaps we do not always realize how fortunate we are in Britain living in what is in effect more or less a pluralistic society. I don't think we appreciate the amount of latitude, the amount of freedom, we do have. You hear so many people, even our own Friends, knocking the system, knocking the Government, knocking the constitution. One would almost think that one lived under a totalitarian system, under an absolute dictatorship. It is all right to call Mrs Thatcher a dictator, in a moment of heat, but to think of her, or any other British Prime Minister, seriously in those terms just shows a serious loss of perspective.

Abhaya: So what you are saying, actually, Bhante, is that this principle of the pluralistic society is in fact a basic Buddhist principle?

S: Yes, you could even say that; yes.

Abhaya: Because I would have thought, naively perhaps, that the basic Buddhist principle, politically speaking at least, was towards a Buddhist state - where you [111] have all the people in the government Buddhists not in the sense of a dictatorship, but ideally speaking.

S: Well, yes, that is the ideal. But if you are in a minority, if Buddhists are in a minority, they have no hope, probably, of achieving that ideal unless the society within which they live and work is pluralistic. At least that society gives them a far better chance of achieving their ideal than if they lived in a society which was not pluralistic; a society which regarded them with suspicion and which tried to restrict and limit their activities, for one reason or another.

Sudhana: Bhante, would you be kind enough to define for our purposes what you mean by 'pluralistic', exactly?

S: A society in which you are free to follow any religion or any belief, without any restriction other than those of public decency and public order; in which you are not only free to follow but even to propagate, even to convince and convert others. A pluralistic society is a society in which you have a number of different religions, a number of different ideologies, all freely competing by fair means. You do have that in Britain. We sometimes have the odd minor difficulty, but we have no real difficulty at all in existing and propagating our beliefs. There is no restriction on our activities.

Dhammaloka: Would you see this pluralistic principle to be abolished when there is a Buddhist state? I am not quite sure about

S: Well, yes and no, because if everybody wanted to be Buddhist, and was freely Buddhist, it would not be pluralistic. But it would be potentially pluralistic, because if anybody wanted to give up Buddhism they would be free to do so, and start or follow some other faith. You would have to accept that. If you did not, I think you would not be genuinely Buddhist.

Sudhana: So in a way it would be pluralistic in principle, a Buddhist society?

S: No, I would not say pluralistic in principle. It would in principle permit pluralism, which is different from being pluralistic. I do not think you can have a Buddhist state as, say, Buddhists in Ceylon seem to think of a Buddhist state in which not only is everybody Buddhist but in which everybody has to be Buddhist. I would say that is a contradiction in terms. That is not a Buddhist state. Paradoxically, a Buddhist state is one in which you are free not to be a Buddhist, even if you happen to be born one, so to speak.

Tejananda: A question from Dhammaloka on the unifying principle of the new society.

Dhammaloka: My question is related to some of the points which we raised last night when we were talking about generally shared values in society, in the context of pluralism. In 1975 you were talking about a unifying principle of civilization and culture, and you suggested that a new unifying principle for Western civilization 'can only come from something very much resembling Buddhism... in alliance with the more positive non Christian trends in the existing Western civilization and culture.' Have you since then had further, more specific thoughts on this subject [112] which would give more concrete hints on the nature and content of such a unifying principle of the future?

S: I don't think I really have had further thoughts. I probably could have quite easily if I sat down and considered the matter, because I think I have studied a bit more of Western culture since then, thought more about Buddhism itself, had a bit more experience of spreading Buddhism in the West, trying to develop a Buddhist movement. So if I sat down to it I probably would now have more to say, and in greater detail. But, just at the moment, I do not.

Tejananda: Another one from Dhammaloka on unobtrusiveness versus outgoingness in our outward profile.

Dhammaloka: In 1975 you seemed to favour the growth of the FWBO taking place in an 'unobtrusive manner', without society taking too much notice of it. In 1984 and since, you have been emphasizing the need for spreading our ideas widely with the help of the media, and even carrying on 'a much more vigorous campaign of propaganda.' Are your previous reservations about our attracting attention no longer valid? Do you suggest attracting public attention to some of our activities only, but not to others? If so, how is that possible?

S: [Let us] take it bit by bit.

Dhammaloka: 'Are your previous reservations about our attracting attention no longer valid?'

S: In a sense not, inasmuch as we are a considerably bigger movement than we were then, and much stronger and in a better position to withstand any opposition that we might encounter. There has been a change only to that extent.

Dhammaloka: 'Do you then suggest attracting public attention to some of our activities only, but not to others?'

S: I don't think it is a question so much of attracting attention to our activities, but to what we basically stand for as manifested through our activities. Yes, I think we should attract now as much attention as we can that is to say, not attention in a general sense, but attract as much attention as we can so far as those people are concerned who might be interested in what we are doing and possibly benefit from our activities and become involved in them. Just to give you a small example, one of the Mitrata production team has been systematically telephoning around Buddhist groups trying to interest them in Mitrata. We have been placing advertisements in different Buddhist magazines for Mitrata. We placed one recently in The Middle Way, offering a free specimen copy, and got quite a good response yes, from the readership of The Middle Way. So we are being a bit more enterprising, a bit more outwardgoing in this way. It is partly because we are better organized: well, we have a better product to offer, we have got people helping us who are able to spend time looking around in this way. We have also got money for advertising, which we did not have before.

Dhammaloka: The last bit [of the question] is irrelevant now.

S: Yes, I am now in favour of a far greater degree of outwardgoingness in all sorts of ways, including, of course, the written word. I am encouraging people to [113] do as much writing as possible, to give as many talks as possible. Yesterday I gave an interview to the assistant editor of the what is it called? I have forgotten the name of the paper now; it is not one I usually read, though it is quite a good paper. The Illustrated London News. That does seem to be read by quite a few well placed people, so if there is a profile, I think they call it, of me appearing in that complete with photograph, it seems well, that will also perhaps help us a little.

Abhaya: When will that appear, Bhante?

S: Probably next month, so keep your eyes open. One reason also why I feel that we need to be as outgoing as possible and attract the attention of as many potentially interested people as possible is that there is a growing interest in Buddhism, but unfortunately that interest is sometimes channelled into what I would regard as being, in comparison with the FWBO, the wrong channels. I think it is quite unfortunate that so many people who could have contacted the FWBO if we had been better known have contacted instead other forms of Buddhism which I feel do not offer them such an effective means of personal development. I think first impressions can be very powerful, so once many of them make that contact they either are put off completely and don't think of Buddhism again, or they become attached to that group, with all its limitations, and would not think in terms of trying the FWBO, usually. But had they heard of us first they might well have been more attracted by us, or attracted rather than repelled by Buddhism.

Tejananda: Are you referring simply to certain schools of Buddhism as they are presented in the West, or to specific, say, Buddhist groups, when you talk about

S: No, I am thinking more of certain forms of Buddhism as presented in the West. I am sure, to the best of my knowledge at least, that we have more to offer.

Dhammaloka: In regard to the strength the FWBO has gained over the years as a Movement whereby we can withstand some opposition, in Germany we have been asked by the people who decide whether we are to be a charity or not I don't know the English [equivalent] and one of the critical questions is: 'What does your Movement say in regard to the family, the principle of family and marriage, which is upheld by religion?' I suppose that this is a question which is of quite predominant value in England as well.

S: When they say 'What do you say about it?' what do they mean?

Dhammaloka: That was not their exact formulation. They meant: 'What is the position of the FWBO in regard to family and marriage? Would we encourage it or not? What do we think about it?'

S: Well, we would say that we neither encourage nor discourage. We would say that that is a matter entirely for the individual himself to decide whether he wishes to marry and have a family life or not and we accept members of either kind and do not discriminate between them.

Dhammaloka: This is what I answered this woman. But it was more by way of example that I introduced it, because I get the impression that people coming in contact with us, or perhaps only reading, as we spread our information more widely there are articles in newspapers about single [114] sex communities perhaps, or single sex Right Livelihood businesses and all these things are something which opposes their values, their thinking, very much.

S: Our primary emphasis is on the development of the individual, and we believe that the individual must have the courage to give up, eventually, whatever stands in the way of his or her development.

Dhammaloka: Would you in any way expect a sort of negative propaganda to be made against us?

S: Well, we have had it, haven't we, in those book reviews that Subhuti dealt with?

Dhammaloka: But that is in very minor publications, isn't it? I was thinking when there is more publication

S: Well, you could even have a daily newspaper public campaign against the FWBO on that basis, conceivably if, say, the proprietor or editor felt very strongly, or if he happened to be a Catholic; if we became sufficiently big to be threatening. The Buddha himself was accused of destroying families, wasn't he? and there was a great uproar, for seven days, then it died down!

Dhammaloka: Are there any particular areas where such a thing might happen more easily?

S: Almost everything! That 'they waste time meditating instead of working'! If you want to find fault, you can find fault easily enough. That 'they are not patriotic; they would not support their own country in time of war; they wouldn't fight.' They might say those sort of things. Or that 'they have a dilettantish interest in literature'! Or that 'they are vegetarians'. You might even find the meat producing lobby against you. The meat producing lobby has

been conducting its own propaganda in favour of meat eating; has been trying to get pro-meat propaganda into schools, because of falling sales of meat. You might come up against them one day, if you had dozens and scores and hundreds of vegetarian restaurants all over the country they might see you as a menace. They might accuse you of undermining the health of the younger generation. There is nothing they cannot do, if their interests are threatened. Every single aspect of the FWBO is potentially liable to be under attack. I think we must be prepared for anything. Mara will always be looking for a way. But we are not against the family per se, because our emphasis, our primary emphasis, is on the individual development. If a given individual happens to find that the family is a suitable medium for his personal development, fine; we have no quarrel with that whatever. It just so happens that quite a lot of people have come to the opposite conclusion, as a result of their own experience. But we are not, in principle, so to speak, opposed to the family; that is not a matter of principle. Our principle is that of individual development, so we don't insist that people either accept the family structure or they don't. We don't refuse to accept people because they have families, or because they do [not] have families. That is our as it were official position. The authorities in Germany might not regard that completely with favour. They might feel that we were neutral about the family whereas we ought to be enthusiastically supporting it, but you have to give perhaps a positive tinge to your neutrality!

Dhammaloka: I shall try to do that!

[115]
S: At present, as regards the Order in Germany, it is 100% unmarried, isn't it? If you ever have two married Order Members, it will then be only 50% unmarried and 50% married.

Dhammaloka: It is three now, with Ajita.

S: Oh, with Ajita. Oh, well, it is still 100% unmarried, yes? You will need three more to make you 50% unmarried and 50% married. Well, you might have to make a worthy sacrifice for the sake of the Dharma! (Laughter.)

Dhammaloka: So you want me to marry?

S: I only said you might have to make a worthy sacrifice for the sake of the Dharma! My personal wishes don't come into it!

Tape 7, Side 2

... just to award you a medal!

Tejananda: Just a contribution about that, Bhante. Do you think that there are any areas in which we should still keep a low profile?

S: I would say that, when we are outwardgoing, our overall emphasis must be positive rather than negative. We shouldn't go out of our way, for instance, to attack the family or attack Christianity; I think the time hasn't come for that. Our emphasis must always be positive, I think. If we are asked a straightforward question, we have to give a straightforward reply, but essentially our emphasis is positive.

Ratnaprabha: Would this mean that it would be unwise for us to involve ourselves in campaigns which are against things, like the campaign against nuclear weapons, as being too negative?

S: Well, there are different ways of involving oneself in that. In any case, it is not just a question of being against nuclear weapons, as if you can fall back happily then on non nuclear weapons. What you are basically in favour of, what you are basically for, is peace is good will among men. The abolition of nuclear weapons is incidental to that, it is a means to that particular end. So that, even if you are involved in activities of that sort, I think you should take very good care, not only that you give an impression of being for something positive rather than merely against something negative, but actually feel that way yourself; because sometimes, when I personally hear people on the radio who are against this and against that and you agree with them; yes, it is right to be against this and against those particular things but you don't really feel sometimes very sympathetic towards them, because their opposition is sometimes so negative, so unpleasantly negative, that you almost wish they didn't represent that cause. Do you see what I mean? You start feeling sympathy for their opponents! I remember there was a certain representative of the Government of India in UNO. He was a really quite unpleasant character very, very Left-wing. His name was Krishna Menon, a great favourite of Pandit Nehru. And a fellow representative remarked about him that 'Every time he opened his mouth, you felt like voting against him'! So you don't want to create that sort of impression. Sometimes Krishna Menon might have been in the right, on principle; but that was the sort of impression he created, the sort of reaction he provoked. [116] So I think put the positive side of your case more strongly than the negative, and say much more emphatically what you are for than what you are against.

Tejananda: A question from Kuladeva on kingship and the stability of society.

Kuladeva: This question I am not entirely satisfied with the way I have formulated it sprang out of what you were saying on the plural society, and also the general attitude, [coming] from talking in that way, towards democracy as I have perceived it, anyway, in the Movement. Given the volatility of kingship subject as it is either to the whims of the hereditary principle (I was thinking partly of what you said about Ashoka, that he was an exemplar of the Dharmaraja at its highest level, but afterwards there was a succession of not very effective so-called Buddhist kings) or the uncertainty of usurpation where the hereditary principle has not been sufficiently established, as in the Roman Principate, and the dangers of pseudo liberal democracy what do you think would be the best form of government for the stability of the new society?

S: I really don't know. I think, if society managed to become an ideal society, it would in the process work that one out for itself. I think it is very difficult to predict in advance. There could be a number of possible forms of government for an ideal society, depending on local conditions, even local temperament, local tradition, local [history?]. Perhaps there is not any one absolutely best form of government for everybody. Also one has to consider the question: in an ideal society, to what extent would government be necessary? I think government would still be necessary, inasmuch as you would at least need a machinery of co-operation amongst all the people belonging to that society, so I do not think government in that sense could be dispensed with. It would be a question of finding out what was the most effective machinery in any given area, in different countries if there still were countries! and what was the machinery that would best preserve, or best contribute to the preservation of, the ideal society

itself. I think we are so remote from an ideal society at present that perhaps we cannot even begin to guess; but perhaps as an ideal society does in fact evolve, people will begin to see what are the governmental requirements of an ideal society. You could say that perhaps by that time telepathic qualities would have developed, and that very little external governmental structure would be necessary. All sorts of things could develop, because it is going to take a very long time tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of years before a truly ideal society is developed. And in the meantime all sorts of new, or relatively new, human faculties and capacities might have been developed, not to speak of new technology; though I have a sneaking suspicion that in a truly ideal society there will not be, perhaps, very much technology. That might just be the limitations of my personal, more literary, humanistic outlook! I don't know; I could be completely wrong. I hope not!

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, when you say 'the machinery for co-operation', are you referring to administrative machinery?

S: Yes, I suppose basically yes. Communications. At present, it is quite difficult to have an ideal society on the small scale of the single sex community. It is very difficult, even, to have an ideal society in that miniature form, with perhaps just 10 or 12 people; how much more difficult, therefore, to have an ideal society consisting of hundreds of thousands or millions of people, perhaps even billions. [117] But I think it is possible of achievement, if one considers how far homo sapiens has come already all the way from the amoeba. Assuming, of course, you accept the evolutionary hypothesis.

Ratnaprabha: When you talk about this evolutionary process and development of new human faculties and so on, are you thinking purely in terms of individual psychic development or new evolutionary developments in the sense of the Lower Evolution?

S: No, I was thinking of the development on the part of each individual of higher as it were psychic qualities.

Ratnaprabha: So these would not be anything hereditary, so they could be developed in one lifetime. Is there any need for it to take 100,000 years?

S: I don't know. There are all sorts of possibilities. Perhaps they could become hereditary; perhaps they would have to be learned in every generation; perhaps learning techniques would be perfected. The whole thing represents such a higher degree of evolution it is very difficult for us to imagine the actual details. To a creature swimming about in the water, it must have been very difficult supposing he even had an imagination to imagine creatures flying in the sky. There could be beings that had, so to speak, a single consciousness, so they all acted in unison, so to speak, automatically. That is not impossible that a sort of almost collective consciousness evolved, but above, so to speak, the group level. Why I started talking about all this was that it is an assumption, even, that a governmental machinery, in the administrative sense, would be needed in the ideal society, because by that time human beings might have developed faculties which took the place of such administrative machinery. You would know as it were telepathically how much you would have to pay in the way of income tax, and give a telepathic order to your bank manager! if you see what I mean. Except that, in the ideal society, there probably would not be taxes or tax returns or bank managers or banks. Don't take my words too literally.

Ratnaprabha: Have you ever thought of writing a sort of Utopia or science fiction story that described this society?

S: No, I haven't; I think I will have to leave that to a younger generation of Order Members.

: Ratnaprabha could probably give an accurate account.

S: It could well be a bestseller! 'The FWBO in the Year One Million.' People talk about the FWBO in five years' time, the FWBO in 10 years' time how ridiculous! Just go the whole hog and write or speak about the FWBO in the year One Million or Ten Million, if you like. Just use a bit of imagination! Here is Orwell, just a few years ago, thinking he was being very daring writing a book [called] '1984'. Well, 1984 has come and gone, and it wasn't very much like he predicted fortunately in most parts of the world, anyway. Just think of single sex communities all over the world! the whole globe, you know?

Ratnaprabha: Maybe there won't be distinctions of sex.

S: Well, there probably wouldn't be any distinctions of sex by that time; evolution would have gone beyond that point. You would have to work out all the details for yourself! You could have a lot of fun, write a very interesting [118] chapter. People will have gone far beyond veganism; we regard that as pretty advanced, but by that time they will have got far beyond veganism. There probably wouldn't be a single vegetable left on the face of the earth. As for cows, they would be mythological monsters, disappeared long ago.

Ratnaprabha: The last turnip in captivity.

S: You'll probably have museums or zoos where you go to look at a turnip or a carrot. There might be even laws passed, preventing people from referring to such an obscenity as eating. People might have pornographic magazines depicting people in the act of eating! (Laughter.)

Ratnaprabha: You could make a film about it.

S: I am sure you could. But, yes, the future is unimaginable that is all I am trying to say, really. It even might be truly anarchic, the ideal society, in the strict literal sense of not having a government, because each person is so highly responsible he does not need to be told what to do, and perhaps if some of these higher faculties were developed the behaviour of human beings belonging to the ideal society would be spontaneously co-ordinated. It is not unimaginable, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility. After all, it is like that in various Buddha realms, isn't it? Why should that not be exemplified on this earth? if there is still an earth; we probably will have removed to some other planet by that time. It is quite possible. Or somewhere else in the cosmos. Anyway, what was the next question?

Abhaya: Could I just ask a question? When you were talking about putting out publicity and being more outwardgoing, you seemed to be favouring doing that in terms of I think you used the words 'people who might well be interested.'

S: Yes.

Abhaya: Do you think that appealing more to society at large would be a bit like running

before we could walk? Or what is the logic behind that?

S: I think there are definitely some people in society who would be more susceptible to our message, let us say, than others. So it would be good if one could identify those and aim what one had to say more towards them. But I think one must be careful not to assume that you know who or what categories of person would respond more readily. This was one of the things that I found when I came back to England in 1964: I found that the assumption then was that the type of person who was most likely to respond to Buddhism was the Hampstead intellectual; but when I gave my talks at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, the Hampstead intellectual was conspicuous by his absence. I saw hundreds of them in the streets of Hampstead every day of the week, but none of them seemed to find their way along to the Vihara. That is why the Vihara had been set up, originally, in that area because they thought that that was the most suitable area, where you would be sure to get a good response from the local people, because there were so many intellectuals in Hampstead. It certainly did not work out like that. So I think one must not assume that one knows who are the people who would be most likely to respond; I think you have to do a little market research, so to speak. Therefore, you need to experiment. You need to, for instance, advertise quite widely and then see what sort of response you get, from what sort of paper, from what sort of people. I think we know now that we get a good response - at [119] least a reasonably good response from advertisements that we put in Time Out. In the old days, it used to be the New Statesman and Nation. Recently I think we have discovered that we have quite a good response from where was it they advertised LBC activities, I think especially the Battle retreat? quite a new source it might even have been The Guardian; and they found they had a good response, more so than they had expected. The point I am trying to make is that there are people in society who are more ready than others to respond to Buddhism, but one should not assume that one knows what kind of people would respond not assume without conducting, perhaps, further research; not assume that it is necessarily going to be young men who have just left university, or not assume it is going to be the 40 year old housewife who finds herself with time on her hands; not assume it is going to be the artist and the intellectual; not assume it is going to be the trades unionist. Try to find out whether there in fact is a pattern, whether certain age groups or certain occupations are more likely to be interested in Buddhism.

Tejananda: The next question is from me. I think it would be true to say that the Noble Eightfold Path is one of the earliest, as well as one of the most important and widely taught, embodiments of the Buddha's teaching of the Path to Enlightenment, particularly in the Theravada school (at least, with regard to the second part of the statement). In view of this, it seems quite remarkable that the Eightfold Path contains a stage or limb concerned exclusively with livelihood, in that this is an area of life which, though of obvious importance to lay followers of the Path, has no significance at all, as far as I can see, to those who have Gone Forth. Do you think it is justifiable to see this as an example, generally ignored in the Theravada, of the relative lack of distinction made by the Buddha between followers who led the household life and followers who went forth? Could this not be pointed out as clearly indicating the disparity between the Original Teaching and later developments in which the Path came to be considered effectively as the exclusive province of the monastic Sangha, as least so far as the Theravada is concerned?

S: That is quite true, in fact; because something is said by the Buddha in the Pali Scriptures about Right Livelihood in so far as that concerns the monk because the monk gets his livelihood by going for alms by begging, as we would say. None the less, when it comes to

enumerating, in the Scriptures, the different forms of wrong livelihood, the most common that are enumerated in the context of the Eightfold Path are, for instance, manufacture of armaments, trade in human beings, dealing in liquor which are all means by which the lay person gets his living. So, clearly, the Buddha is thinking in terms of the layman, so to speak, following the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Digha Nikaya, in the Silakkhandas, the sections on sila in the different suttas, you get a great list of occupations which the monk is not to follow: he is not to support himself by telling fortunes, or making prognostications, or casting spells; he is to support himself by alms. But the Eightfold Path is not usually mentioned in that context. When the Eightfold Path does come to be mentioned, and in connection with the Eightfold Path, in connection with right means of livelihood, the different wrong means of livelihood are enumerated, they are wrong means of livelihood applicable almost exclusively to the layman; so that does very much suggest, as Tejananda says, that the Buddha envisaged the layman as following the Noble Eightfold Path, and therefore as following the spiritual path, and therefore [120] being a true follower of the Buddha, in a sense a full follower of the Buddha, not a second-class follower of the Buddha, not a second-class Buddhist, as the layman has tended to become in the Theravada countries. I think that is in fact a quite important point. If one is addressing oneself exclusively to monks, what is the point of saying that you should not deal in liquor, or you should not manufacture weapons, etc. etc? Those remarks are clearly addressed to the lay person. How are we going?

Tejananda: We are just coming on to No. 7, out of 12. This is from Dhammaloka on people in wrong livelihood.

Dhammaloka: In regard to people practising extremely harmful livelihood, slaughterhouse men etc., coming along to the FWBO, you said in the lecture (though that was not in regard to the FWBO): 'It would not do him any good... I think I could guarantee that if such a person did come, and did try to meditate, before many weeks had passed he would be having horrible visions of the living beings he had slaughtered. Now such people have been coming to centres etc., and in varying degrees there may be other people practising harmful livelihood who may come in contact with us in the future. Your remark seems to suggest that it might be better to discourage them from practising the Dharma. Would you please comment?

S: No, not practising the Dharma; practising meditation. I think my remarks were specifically in connection with meditation. If you suggested that they tried to purify themselves, or if you suggested that they paid more attention to their ethical life, you would be encouraging them to practise the Dharma. I think one has to accept that if people are engaged in very, very unskilful activities, involvement with Dharma activities and especially meditation may provoke a quite unpleasant experience on their part. But obviously these are extreme cases. You may not know, to begin with; you may only know when that person comes to you and says: 'I have been meditating and I am just getting horrible experiences,' and you ask: 'What sort of horrible experiences?' and in this case he might say: 'Well, I keep getting visions of slaughtered animals or myself as cutting their throats,' and then you might ask: 'What is your occupation?' and then he might tell you. And then you would have to explain: 'This is on account of your occupation, and I suggest you go a bit slow with the meditation and think very seriously about where you stand, ethically speaking, in connection with your means of livelihood.' Not that, at the beginning of the class, you stand up and ask: 'Are there any butchers present?' (Laughter.) 'Anyone living in adultery, or ?'

Sudhana: If a person came along to a class and was in that position say he was something like

a motorcycle messenger you can get that kind of person in London who finds it very difficult to meditate, how would you encourage him to keep in contact without coming along to meditation classes, which is what primarily he came along for in the first place?

S: Well, you just have to be quite open with him and say: 'Look, I appreciate your interest in meditation, and I hope you can get more and more into it, but you have to recognize that the way you live, the way you behave during the day, also has its effect on your mind, and if you are trying to do one thing when you meditate and a quite different and opposite thing the rest of the day, that can bring about conflict and tension.' You have to explain this and then say: 'It is just up to [121] you to regulate either the amount of meditation you do or the amount of dashing about you do.' Just warn him of the danger of the situation. Play it by ear. He might be someone who has been thinking of giving up his job anyway, and what you say might just turn the scale; or it might be a completely new idea to him that your means of livelihood has an effect on your mind at all. He might never have thought of that; it might never have crossed his mind, in which case you would have given him something quite serious to think about. But, in any case, you have alerted him to the connection between what he does during the meditation class and what he is doing the rest of the day.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaprabha on the purveying of poisons.

S: I can almost guess what the question is going to be or, at least, I think I can!

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture you describe the traditional wrong livelihood of purveying poison for disposing of enemies. You say there are all sorts of modern analogies. Could you give some examples?

S: Additives to foods; I was really horrified the other day that I forget all the details, but certain manufacturers of certain foods are vigorously opposing provisions for the labelling of those foodstuffs, giving information as to exactly what is contained in the tin. That seemed extraordinary. And some of the things that they don't want you to be informed are in the tin are actually harmful to you. It really seems extraordinary. It is poisoning. Cigarette manufacturers are probably purveyors of poisons. You could regard alcohol as a poison I think, technically, it is a poison, or at least it is a foreign element; it has no nutritive value. And, apart from the things that are actually added to foods when they are canned, for instance, what about all the pesticides that are sprayed on crops? What about all the pollution that gets into the atmosphere that you imbibe? That is poison. Pollution equals poison. There are whole industries which are devoted to poisoning the population. It is a really quite serious business. You can't even breathe pure air. I really noticed this when I was on the Women Order Members' Convention; it was in a different part of Norfolk, and quite isolated, away from any industry. And it may have been because of the heavy rainfall at that time, but I have never, I think, in Britain, smelt such clean air; the difference was really noticeable. The last time I inhaled air as clean as that was when I was in South Island, New Zealand yes! It was quite different. It was so clean. So we hardly ever breathe clean air; the air is being polluted, i.e. poisoned, all the time. The seas, the rivers, are being poisoned, and the earth is being poisoned, food is being poisoned, so we are being poisoned. It is a very widespread phenomenon. I expect it was of things of that sort that I was thinking at the time.

Ratnaprabha: Was that the question you thought I was going to ask?

S: Yes, indeed. It is pretty obvious, isn't it? I wasn't being telepathic.

Dhammaloka: I would have expected, under the heading 'purveying of poison', poison being meant in the sense that you actually want to kill someone poison for deliberately inflicting harm in the world; [and where] you understand that it is poisonous.

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S: Well, the manufacturers of cigarettes or who put additives in canned food might say that they had no intention of poisoning people; in fact, they may say they do not believe it does any harm, they believe it does you good. None the less, the evidence is such, I think, that one can only wilfully ignore it; and one wilfully ignores it just because it is in one's interest financially to ignore the evidence.

Dhammaloka: Wouldn't that be listed under drink and drugs, anyway, or under

S: Not necessarily; no, because a drug is not quite the same thing as an additive, unless you could in fact become addicted to it, I suppose. A pesticide is not exactly a drug, is it? Effluent is not exactly a drug! What is effluent?

Voices: (inaudible.)

S: That's right, it is nasty stuff that pours out of factories and into rivers and doesn't do you any particular good.

Tejananda: The next one is from Ratnaguna on astrology.

Ratnaguna: In the lecture you say that the Buddha disapproved of astrology, palm reading, divination etc. as means of livelihood. Does this mean that they are not bad things in themselves, but one should not earn a livelihood by them? Was it meant for the monks not to earn a livelihood by them? And if they are bad in themselves, in what way would the Buddha have considered them bad?

S: In the context of the Vinaya, addressing the monks, the Buddha seems to be concerned with such things simply as wrong means of livelihood, especially in the case of the monks, inasmuch as they should maintain themselves by begging, by going for alms. But, apart from the Vinaya, there are other passages in Buddhist canonical literature which suggest, or even show quite clearly, that the Buddha had no faith in astrology. In some Buddhist countries, of course well, in all Buddhist countries, you may say, monks, at least some monks, do practise astrology, and some do even practise it as a means of livelihood; but those, say, who do not practise it as a means of livelihood, who as it were offer their services freely, would maintain that there is something in it; it is actually a science like, for instance, medicine, which can be applied for the benefit of other people. But that would seem to go against what the Buddha himself says, at least in the Pali Canon. I don't think there is any instance of the Buddha actually saying, in so many words, that it is wrong for monks to practise astrology as a means of livelihood, but [that] none the less astrology is a science which can be used for the benefit of other people; I do not think there is a single passage where the Buddha makes any such statement or gives one reason to suppose that that was his point of view. One is free to differ from the Buddha, but that does seem to have been the Buddha's attitude.

Ratnaguna: This goes for divination and palm reading and all that?

S: Everything of that sort, it would seem. In one of the Jataka stories the Bodhisatta is represented as saying: 'What can the stars do? The stars have no effect on us. The stars have no influence.' [That is], a man's fate depends on his own efforts, not on the stars. Of course, modern apologists would say that they do not believe that your fate or destiny depends on the stars, only that the stars exert a certain influence; but there is nothing in the Pali Scriptures to warrant [123] our thinking that that was the Buddha's position. He didn't even seem to think that the stars exerted an influence. At least, he didn't admit, in so many words, that they did.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, do you have any views of your own on whether astrology could be useful?

S: I tend to ignore astrology. I really cannot say categorically that there might not be something in it, but I tend to think that the kind of people who rely on astrologers are rather weak-minded, anyway, and that, if only for practical reasons, an interest in or reliance on astrology is not to be encouraged. I would not be prepared to say that, abstractly speaking, there is absolutely nothing in it; [but] I don't think I would even say that publicly, for fear of encouraging a weak-minded reliance on astrology and astrologers. Then people go along to an astrologer, or any other soothsayer or whatever, witch doctor what is the sort of question they ask? They ask about their love life, or they ask about money, or ask about promotion, especially in India. So that should give one a clue to the underlying attitude, the motive, on account of which they resort to such people. I remember hearing quite recently about a woman in the FWBO who entered into a relationship with a man mainly, so I gathered, because she had been to a palmist or someone like that who had told her that she was shortly going to enter into a relationship with, I think it was, 'a dark man'; so she did! She must have asked some question about relationships

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he probably felt the visit and her fee was well worth it; she had got her money's worth. It is really quite deplorable, isn't it?

Kuladeva: Bhante, do you have any views on things like the oracle as used in Tibet in this light?

S: I really don't know. There seems to have been something in it; but one very important feature that one must not forget is that the oracles were always under the control of a quite highly gifted lama, who interpreted the oracle. People were not usually able to understand what the oracle said. Whatever he said was a species of gibberish, and the lama had to interpret it and say what the oracle had in fact said. So that introduced automatically an element of control, control by a spiritually developed person. One must not forget that. But I must say I have not been able to evaluate the oracle fully; in fact, I haven't given it too much thought. I know it is part of traditional Tibetan Buddhism, apparently inherited from the Bon inherited mainly by the Gelugpas. Something of an extraordinary, even supernormal, nature does happen, but what exactly does happen, and what its significance is, what its value for human life, I do not find it easy to say. But Tibetans certainly have great faith in the utterances of oracles, though rather, I should say, the utterances of oracles as interpreted by lamas.

Chakkhupala: Returning to divination and astrology, was it not an astrologer or diviner who actually made the prediction of Siddhartha Gautama's birth?

S: That is true, but then if one accepts the story, the Buddha was a baby at that time. He wasn't responsible for the predictions that were made, whether by astrologers or soothsayers or good fairies or bad fairies at the time of his birth!

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: The astrologer's prediction seemed to be true, didn't it?

S: One can never prove that something was predicted! But again, in the earliest accounts of the Buddha's life, there is no reference to those things. There is no reference in the Ariyapariyesana Sutta. Or you might even say, if a child is born to a king, it does not take any great sagacity to suggest that possibly there are two alternatives open: he has been born of good stock, he looks intelligent well, he might be a very good king, or even if he was not a good king, perhaps he would be a great teacher; who knows? You see? There doesn't really seem much in it! I take those predictions with a pinch of salt, in the sense that I am not convinced that there was an astrologer around at the time of the Buddha's birth and that he did make those predictions, as the legend has it.

Tejananda: Bhante, I am wondering well, I have an example of somebody, a Friend at Bristol, who last weekend I found out is very keen on astrology, and he was in fact thinking of making a bit of money by doing people's astrological charts. One Order Member that he spoke to over the weekend came out very strongly against any possibility of him doing that. I was not so sure. What should one say in that kind of case?

S: I would not encourage the person, but I think one should be cautious about coming out very strongly against anything that, say, a Mitra or Friend wants to do, because very often people have their own ideas and they have all sorts of feelings about authority and so on. So I should be very careful about coming out very strongly against something. But I certainly would not encourage it. On the other hand, one has to recognize that there is at least one branch of astrology which purports to concern itself with the elucidation of character rather than with actual prediction. There may be something in that; I have not really gone into it deeply enough to be able to say. But, in any case, you have to know yourself. You can't just take it from another person that you are such and such, whether because the stars say so or because the other person just has a hunch as to what you are really like, you have to look yourself and see whether you really are like that, whether you really have those qualities, those characteristics, those weaknesses, those strengths. You have got to be able to see it for yourself, not just follow blindly, whoever it is tells you what you are like.

Tejananda: Now a question from Chakkhupala on alcohol.

Chakkhupala: There was some discussion on the question of providing alcohol with meals to the public. At Hockneys, although we do not sell wine, we do allow customers to bring their own, and provide glasses and make a charge for corkage. (Laughter.)

S: That's how they make their money!

Chakkhupala: Do you have a personal view of this practice, in the light of the Right

Livelihood ethic?

S: I think it is pretty marginal. I think you would just about get by! I must say I am in a way in two minds about alcohol. If I am asked what my personal view is, as it were in the abstract, I would say that I do not think there is anything unethical in consuming a small amount of alcohol with a meal, assuming it doesn't unduly affect your mental balance or your mental state. But what I have become more conscious of recently is the extent of alcoholism in the world, even in Britain, and I really begin to wonder whether one is justified in supporting or [125] condoning or encouraging [the consumption of alcohol], even indirectly, even though to a very small, limited extent, by your own practice. So I think we have to look at things from that point of view also. It may well be that quite a number of people, maybe all Order Members, are quite able simply to take a little wine with a meal, at least occasionally, without it doing them any harm at all or in any way getting in the way of their spiritual development; but perhaps we have to consider whether that does not represent a sort of condoning, or appearing to encourage, something that is a dreadful evil in respect of millions of people in the world. So I think we have to look at it also from that point of view. But I would say, in the case of, say, a vegetarian restaurant like Hockneys, I think provided you did not actually purvey the wine yourselves you would just about just about get by, ethically speaking, with allowing people to bring it themselves and just charging them for the corking whatever that means! It sounds a bit of a racket, I must admit!

Chakkhupala: It is well established.

S: I am sure it is: rackets usually are well established! That is what a racket means!

Chakkhupala: The substance of the possible criticism was [that] given that Hockneys is known to be a Buddhist business it is, however faintly, making a statement that condones the consumption of alcohol.

S: Yes. I think one must consider that. But the FWBO is spotless, almost, in comparison with some Buddhist groups, because there are some, notably Trungpa's group in the States, which is having coops dedicated to the production of liquors, and is selling. And it is in fact encouraging there are articles on the art of drinking Japanese saki in their newspaper and so on. Oh yes! This is going to be the subject, I think, of comment in our Newsletter when it becomes a magazine. I think that is going rather too far. But I have been recently that is to say, in the last few months as the result of reading an article or two and hearing things on the radio quite shocked at the extent of alcoholism in so many countries in the world, the extent to which it wrecks homes, wrecks families, wrecks individual human life and just creates misery for all concerned. It is a very serious social problem in a number of countries, whether capitalist or communist.

Tejananda: Now one from Kuladeva on acting.

S: Acting!

Kuladeva: Or rather drama. You seem to follow Aristotle's interpretation of Greek tragedy as catharsis

S: I realize that that interpretation has been queried in recent times.

Kuladeva: Well, I am not questioning that so much, but in Greek tragedy the actors wore masks and the violence took place off stage. Do you think that in the drama even of, say, Shakespeare, where the actors do not wear masks and violence does sometimes take place on the stage, the actors taking the part of [126] characters who represent unskilful states of mind are thus liable to be developing those unskilful states of mind?

S: I am not sure about the actors; because, for instance, when you see blood on the stage, they have got little bulbs of red ink or something that they just squirt at the appropriate moment. I don't know whether that has any great effect on the actors. I think probably it does not. But what about the audience? I remember seeing a stage performance of Lear, and that scene in which Gloster has his eyes gouged out that was done with great realism, it was really quite dreadful; I personally did not like to see that at all. I am sure that quite a few people in the audience must have felt quite ill, seeing that gouging out of eyes represented in such a realiztic manner. I think that is quite undesirable. It could have been done as it were in mime. It did not have to be done so realistically. And perhaps it is not good for the producer, at least, to have it done so realistically if he is the one who wants it done that way. Perhaps it does not affect the actors they know what is going on, they can see it is not a real gouging out of eyes but why does the producer, for instance (or the director, as the case may be), want to represent it so realistically? Why does he want the audience to see it in that way? Why does he force the audience to see it in that way? I think those questions have to be asked.

Kuladeva: I was also partly thinking of the actual states of mind behind the acts of violence. I think somebody mentioned, in our discussion, something that came up on a Tuscany that Devamitra said he had had to play the part of George Jackson obviously, this wasn't Shakespeare, it is modern drama and that he had to be very provocative in terms of challenging people; and he almost got involved in a fight on one occasion. But that somebody portraying that sort of character a very angry, violent character whether they are actually taking part in that production would be developing that particular mental state.

S: Well, you see, apparently there were two schools of acting. One maintains that the actor should actually get into that feeling and experience it; the other that he should not, that he should as it were simulate it while remaining himself quite cool and quite unattached. One could argue that the second school or second type of acting is bad in another way, inasmuch as it probably encourages alienation; so both, under certain circumstances at least, do seem to have an unfortunate effect on the actor. So one really needs to consider the whole question, from that point of view. The individual actor needs to ask: what sort of effect is this having on me? regardless of which particular school of acting he happens to follow; whether he is actually experiencing a particular emotion, especially a negative emotion, or whether he is merely simulating it without feeling it. If that is in fact possible.

Ratnaprabha: Does that mean that it could possibly be of dubious ethical value for us to, say, go and watch Richard III, because we might be condoning or sharing in an actor having to share Richard III's states of mind?

S: I think you go to see the play. You don't just go to see Richard III, in the sense of that particular character. So I think what you have to ask is: in what state of mind are you left at the end of the performance? Where does the performance leave you? And I think this is where Aristotle's catharsis comes in. Because you might have seen, incidentally, quite unpleasant things, or even momentarily have experienced negative emotions, but it could be

that you are genuinely purged of them and, come the end of the performance, you find yourself in a very different state of mind, which is perhaps even highly positive. So you have to [127] think of the effect of the play as a whole, or even of the effect of a particular production. I think you can't take out this bit or that, and think in terms simply of the effect of this bit or that on your mind, regardless of the effect of the play as a whole.

Ratnaprabha: But what I was thinking of, Bhante, was more the partial responsibility that one has in going to see a play for an actor having to go through the experience of playing Richard III. If we think that an actor might be badly affected by it, are we justified in paying for the ticket and going to see the play?

S: Then, of course, you have to ask in what mental state the actor ends up. It could be that I don't know, I am only hypothesising if the overall effect of the play is cathartic and positive and inspiring, the actor empathises with the feelings of the audience and ends up himself in a quite exhilarated and positive state of mind, feeling that he has been the means of bringing the audience to that point; that he has rendered, as it were, a positive service, that he has interpreted a great poet like Shakespeare for the benefit of so many people. We have to ask in what state of mind the actor ended up; not simply ask what was his state of mind when he happened to recite certain lines? Or even what was his attitude towards his life as an actor on the whole, what effect it had on him generally. One would have to ask that. Perhaps it varies. Some actors seem to have been admirable people, others not so admirable, not nearly so admirable. I was reading only recently I forget in what connection about a seventeenth century actor called, I think I am not sure whether it was Betterton or another; but, anyway, he was renowned at that time for his high moral character, and was widely respected for his high moral character (those were the words of the text I happened to read). So that is not impossible. No, perhaps it wasn't Betterton, it was another actor whose name began with B; it might have been Betty, Mr Betty. But, anyway, the principle is the same, regardless of the name.

Tejananda: Final question from Ratnaprabha on Perfect Livelihood.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, could you expand on the nature of Perfect Livelihood as an anga of the Transcendental Eightfold Path, as opposed to Right Livelihood as a limb of the mundane Eightfold Path? In what way is the life and being of the individual and society being transformed in (Transcendental) Perfect Livelihood? Can Perfect Livelihood, like right Livelihood, cover the social and political spheres?

S: I suppose it would. I suppose the only external difference between Right Livelihood and Perfect Livelihood would be that Perfect Livelihood never failed. In the case of Right Livelihood, there might be little lapses or compromises from time to time, but that would not be the case with Perfect Livelihood; it would literally be perfect, and the person practising it would be prepared perhaps even to sacrifice his life rather than engage in imperfect livelihood. He would have, in a sense, no choice, because Perfect Livelihood would be an expression of what he was essentially. There would be no conflict. It is, of course, quite a question what specific form Perfect Livelihood would take. It is not easy to imagine such a thing! It is a bit like the perfect or ideal society: it is not easy to imagine. But certainly it would resemble externally Right Livelihood, but Right Livelihood raised to the nth degree.

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Tejananda: Surely it would be livelihood as practised by at least Stream Entrants?

S: Well, perhaps only Buddhas can practise Perfect Livelihood in the full sense; perhaps not even Stream Entrants, because they are still subject to greed and hatred, besides the five higher fetters. That is quite a thought, isn't it?

Ratnaprabha: Presumably a Stream Entrant could practise Perfect Livelihood in the sense that his livelihood would be transforming his life and being in the light of his Insight?

S: Yes, at least his livelihood would be becoming more and more perfect, if one can use such an expression.

Kuladeva: Do you think there is any correlation between Perfect Livelihood in its higher sense and the Bodhisattva's career?

S: Well, if a Bodhisattva is living in a human body, presumably he has to earn his living in some way, especially if he is not living as a monk. Are there some forms of livelihood which are per se, as such, perfect at least in the negative sense? I suppose there are a few. I am trying to think of one.

Kuladeva: I was thinking of the Bodhisattva's career as a sort of vocation; because you mention in the

S: The element of livelihood will none the less enter into a vocation. He won't be paid for being a Bodhisattva; the Bodhisattva will have to earn his living, and a living for his family if he has one, despite the fact that he is a Bodhisattva. So the question of Right Livelihood will still arise for him. Perhaps one should say what means of livelihood would be most appropriate for a Bodhisattva? Perhaps living on an unearned income? Don't take me too seriously! Or perhaps, as a result of all his previous merits, he would have an unearned income who knows? Or perhaps he would have a wealthy father who would happily support him in his Bodhisattva activities. But supposing he had to earn his living, what would be the best way for him to do that? That is quite a question. Because perhaps he hasn't only to think in terms of Right Livelihood, he has to think in terms of perhaps earning his living in a way that brings him into contact with a lot of people, because he wants to be in contact with a lot of people; has to weigh that factor against, perhaps, if necessary, that unfolding (?) of Right Livelihood.

Tejananda: Perhaps he should start an FWBO co-operative.

S: Right, yes! Perhaps he should recruit four other Bodhisattvas first! Perhaps a Bodhisattva does not think in terms of Perfect Livelihood but only in terms of a perfect Bodhisattva career, of which Right or Perfect Livelihood is a part. We do read stories about Bodhisattvas taking birth among pig butchers so as to be able to lead them on the Path. Perhaps one shouldn't take that sort of story too literally, though. In my innocence, when I first started the FWBO and people started coming along and I was talking about Right Livelihood, I assumed I took for granted that one of the best modes of Right Livelihood was the vocation of a teacher, but some of my teacher friends speedily disillusioned me! Perhaps not all teachers would agree with that, but they certainly seemed to think that teaching, within the existing

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system, was not by any means Right Livelihood. They felt they were obliged to teach in a way, or under conditions, which were basically unethical.

Dhammaloka: Doesn't this apply, in a sense, to all of our businesses? that we are working under conditions, in the greater sense, of society which are basically unethical?

S: Basically unethical? Well, often unethical to a great extent, yes. Yes, I think we have to recognize that. It varies, of course, I think a little, at least from business to business, from coop to coop. But inasmuch as your life is interconnected with the lives of so many others depends on the lives of so many others some at least of whom will be leading unethical lives, you cannot separate yourself from that completely. So [that is] a different reason for creating the New Society, because you can't be fully ethical until everybody is ethical.

Dhammaloka: So could one say that a Bodhisattva presumably would not think so much in terms of finding the sort of livelihood in the most ethical context, but the sort of livelihood which would be most conducive to creating that ethical context?

S: Well, as I said, the Bodhisattva would also weigh the factor of the kind of livelihood which would enable him to come into contact with a large number of people. He might be able to find a perfect means of livelihood, but which he had to follow on his own; so he might think it preferable, under the circumstances, not to follow that particular perfect means of livelihood, because it would isolate him from other beings, and the most important part of his mission was to be in contact with other beings.

Ratnaprabha: I think you have already partly answered them, but there are two other parts to the question. 'In what way is the life and being of the individual - and society being transformed in Transcendental Perfect Livelihood?'

S: In what way?

Ratnaprabha: In that the higher angas of the Eightfold Path represent the transformation of life and being in the light of Perfect Vision.

S: This ties up with what I said earlier about the ideal society that we find it difficult to imagine what the ideal society would be like, in specific terms. In the same way, we would perhaps find it difficult to imagine what a society would be like in which there was no such thing as wrong livelihood but only Right or Perfect Livelihood. We would not find it easy to imagine the mechanics of that sort of situation. Perhaps there would not be private property; there would not be any question of work in the modern sense, any question of employment in the modern sense; perhaps no distinction between work and play, no such thing as wages. So the whole thing becomes different; everyone perhaps is a vegetarian; perhaps you don't even need to subsist on food in the ordinary sense in those days. We can see where there is room for improvement in our own means of livelihood, but perhaps it is difficult for us to imagine a society in which everybody is practising Right or Perfect Livelihood. That would require an almost unimaginable transformation of society, and therefore an almost unimaginable transformation of individual human beings. If there was peace as presumably there would be in an ideal society there would be no manufacturing of weapons of war. No one would be following that particular form of wrong livelihood anyway; it would be unthinkable, [130] it

would be unknown. No one would be purveying poisons. And there would certainly be no exploitation of other living beings.

Tejananda: The other question?

Ratnaprabha: Well, I think the last part has been dealt with 'Can Perfect Livelihood, like Right Livelihood, cover the social and political spheres?'

S: Well, it is not so worded, but I think as I think I have said in the lecture itself one can take it as, so to speak, representing, or even symbolizing, that whole aspect of life, the whole collective as it were social, political and economic aspect of life. Though, of course, one might say [that] in the perfect society there will be no means of livelihood in the sense in which we understand the term no economics, and no politics. Certainly not as we understand them. How can there be power politics where the power mode does not operate, where only the love mode operates?

Tejananda: Something that you said just now puzzled me slightly, although I can see the truth of it. You said 'You can't be fully ethical until everybody is ethical.' How then can people become enlightened?

S: Exactly! (Laughter.) There is no question, from the Mahayana point of view, of an individual becoming enlightened while others don't become enlightened; that is the significance, one might say, of the Bodhisattva's vow not to enter into Nirvana until everybody else has entered in. But again, one mustn't take all this literally and then ask very logical questions based upon your taking of such statements in a very logical manner. But there is a definite interconnectedness of all beings, so that you won't be able to put, so to speak, the finishing touches to your Enlightenment until others are enlightened too. It is quite a problem with regard to 'Who gets enlightened first?' This is the logical mind asking questions. Well, if you can't get enlightened until he is enlightened, and he can't get enlightened until you are enlightened, how can you so organize things that you both, so to speak, get enlightened at exactly the same instant, the same second? That suggests, really, if that is the case, that you and he are not really, in a sense, separate.

Dhammaloka: Wouldn't it be denying the Buddha, as it were?

S: This is the sort of logical question that comes up. But then again, as I have said before, can one really think of the Buddha's Enlightenment in the sense of an attainment of a certain fixed point, a static point, which one identifies with a state of Enlightenment? Though that is the language of the Scriptures, certainly; but in a way what other language can one use? One has to stop somewhere, as Dhammadinna said I mean the Dhammadinna of the Scriptures. I am paraphrasing her, of course. So, yes, one has to stop somewhere.

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

Tape 9, Side 1

Tejananda: We have 11 questions on Perfect Effort. We did find it fairly difficult to find questions on this ... because it covers so much fairly familiar ground, but we did squeeze out these 11 questions.

S: All right. I will try and squeeze out the answers.

Tejananda: The first one is from Abhaya on the source of the Eightfold Path.

Abhaya: I know that there is an outline statement of the Eightfold Path in the Dhammacakraparvartana Sutta. I have come across references to the Eightfold Path in other suttas. But is there any sutta where the Path is expounded at any length, the main source of your treatment of it in this lecture, or is your exposition a sort of compilation from many different sources?

S: The reference to the Eightfold Path in the Dhammacakraparvartana Sutta is the locus classicus, as they say. There are references elsewhere. I cannot give you the references offhand; there are slightly fuller accounts in the Pali Canon here and there, but there is not anywhere strange to say, in a way any really full and detailed account. Perhaps it is to be considered more as a framework. For instance, there are many passages, in fact even suttas, on, for instance, sammaditthi; so whatever is said, for instance, in a sutta on sammaditthi you could include in the Eightfold Path under that particular heading. In the same way, here and there there are remarks about samma ajidha (?), right means of livelihood; plenty of information, plenty of instruction about samma samadhi and samma sati; a whole sutta well, two whole suttas on samma sati, Satipatthana Suttas. Do you see what I mean? So, in a sense, yes, my treatment of the Eightfold Path in the series of lectures does represent a compilation of material from different sources. But certainly there is nothing very innovative in that, though perhaps I have tried to approach the Eightfold Path in a more practical and even realistic way than is usually done in modern writings on Buddhism; and, of course, I have drawn attention to that distinction between the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation. To the best of my knowledge, that distinction is not found in the Pali Canon but in the Sarvastivadin tradition. There is a very useful little work by Nyanatiloka called The Word of the Buddha. I used to have it; I don't know whether we have it any longer in the Order Library. Possibly we do. This is a little work dealing mainly with the Four Noble Truths and therefore with the Noble Eightfold Path, but Nyanatiloka gives a number of quotations from different texts in the Pali Canon dealing with the different angas of the Eightfold Path. One could say, in a way, that all the material contained in the Pali Canon, at least in the Sutta Pitaka, could be arranged under the eight headings of the different steps of the Eightfold Path.

Abhaya: I didn't quite catch, Bhante, when you said the distinction between the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation is not in the ?

S: To the best of my knowledge, it is not found in the Pali Canon, but it is definitely found in the Sarvastivada tradition, and has been inherited by the Mahayana from the Sarvastivada tradition. For instance, you will find it in [132] Gampopa, in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation. I will not say categorically that the distinction is not found anywhere in the Pali Tipitaka, but I cannot recollect having come across it. At the very least, it does not figure prominently, or is not made anything of by modern expositions.

Abhaya: Do you think the Eightfold Path is a highly developed teaching not something which the Buddha himself actually ?

S: It does figure quite prominently in the Pali Canon. It is likely to go back to the Buddha himself, though it has been pointed out that there is no reference to it in the Sutta Nipata or there is perhaps (I don't quite recollect) one reference to it, but in a part of the Sutta Nipata which is generally recognized as a relatively late part. So it may well go back to the Buddha himself, but perhaps not to the earliest part of his career. Even so, the steps of the Eightfold Path can be correlated with the three great ..., sila, samadhi and prajna, and these certainly go back to the Buddha; if these do not go back to the Buddha it is difficult to see what does go back to the Buddha. It has also been pointed out, of course, that when the Buddha at the time of the Parinirvana, or just before, enumerated the 37 Bodhyangas, as we call them now, the Eightfold Path was not included in that list; so some scholars therefore wonder whether the Eightfold Path does in fact go back to the Buddha. But I do not think that can be held to be conclusive.

Ratnaprabha: I thought that the Eightfold Path was normally one of the 37 bodhipakhyadhammas.

S: Well, let's try to count them; perhaps you are right, but there was a list, perhaps a slightly different one, enumerated by the Buddha when he said to the bhikkhus, 'Bear in mind what I have taught you. What have I taught you?' and he went through the list, and this list does not include the Eightfold Path; to the best of my knowledge, this was the 37 bodhipakhya dhamma.

Ratnaprabha: I was ... Buddhaghosa, I think it definitely does include the Eightfold Path.

S: So how many can we count them? There are the four satipatthanas, the four iddhipadas(?) that makes eight the five indriyas, the five ballas(?), that's 18; then what have we got?

Ratnaprabha: The seven Bodhyangas.

S: The seven Bodhyangas, that makes 25; the what else?

Ratnaprabha: The Four Noble Truths.

S: Were the Four Noble Truths included? I don't think they were.

Ratnaprabha: ... (inaudible). Maybe if we go on I can look it up while you are discussing something else.

S: All right, yes. By the way, I mentioned this particular point as being one of the arguments adduced by scholars to suggest that the Eightfold Path was not actually mentioned by the Buddha. If it is not the list of the bodhipakhyadhammas [133] that it is not included in, it is another list mentioned on that kind of important occasion.

Tejananda: Bhante, surely its inclusion as an aspect of the Buddha's first teaching is of some significance

S: Yes, but some scholars would argue that that only reflects the views of the compilers as to what the Buddha must have said on that occasion.

Ratnaprabha: I have found it. Four applications of mindfulness; four right efforts; four bases of supernormal power; five ...s; five strengths; seven diamond factors; Eightfold Aryan Path.

S: Ah, then it is included. Then the list that the Buddha mentioned on the occasion I referred to must have been another list. Even so, that is only an argument from silence, as it were, which is not conclusive.

Tejananda: The second one is also from Abhaya, on an effort diary.

Abhaya: You may just say, 'Ah yes, I agree' to this! On recent study retreats, we have talked about the value of keeping meditation journals. It occurred to me, listening to the lecture this morning, that one could keep a journal of one's mental states using the four efforts as a structure for charting the ups and downs of consciousness: which unskilful mental states crop up in which circumstances? what do I find is a particularly helpful way of maintaining certain skilful mental states? and so on. a) Have you ever had any thoughts along these lines? b) Do you think the four efforts teaching might provide a good structure for a series of workshop sessions?

S: To deal with the last part of the question first: yes, I think it would. Perhaps you could experiment at the weekly Order chapter meeting; that would perhaps be a suitable venue to try out any experiment of that sort, and see whether it couldn't be more widely made use of. In India, some teachers recommend not just a meditation diary but a spiritual diary, keeping track of one's general spiritual progress, general state of mind. But if that is not to be just very vague after all, you don't want just to write 'things coming up this morning' or 'not much happened this afternoon'! if you want to give it a more definite structure, make it more concrete, you could well use that formula of the four great efforts. In principle, one should be making an effort all the time. The nature of the effort depends upon circumstances, depends upon your particular experiences. Perhaps somebody would like to try that, say for a week, to find how it works, and then report back, maybe write something in Shabda, or report in and then write it up for Shabda. I think it is quite a good thing that people experiment in these sort of practical ways, so that it is not just always a matter of theoretical discussion. I think it is very important to find out methods, new methods or new applications of methods, to reduce things to matters of practice in a very concrete way.

Kuladeva: What exactly did you mean by trying it out at the weekly chapter meeting? Do you mean actually reading out from - ?

[134]
S: No, Abhaya suggested a workshop, so I assumed that he already had in mind some idea of what particular form that would take, whether by way of reporting in round the circle or any other.

Abhaya: Well, maybe everyone could agree in a chapter to keep such a diary for a week, and maybe read out excerpts from it

S: And compare notes at the end of the week.

Abhaya: the results of one's findings and then there could be mutual feedback on each person's contribution.

Tejananda: The third question is from Ratnaguna on taking refuge together with your failure.

Ratnaguna: After trying to overcome a particular hindrance with one of the four antidotes, if all the antidotes fail we should Go for Refuge to the Buddha, together with our failure, and just let it rest there. What does this mean?

S: Well, it really means this in some ways I should have thought it was obvious that, even when you fail, all these methods fail, you still are not beaten not in principle; because the mere fact that you have made an effort, that you have made all those four efforts, even though you have failed, means that you still are striving, you still have an ideal, you still Go for Refuge, you are still committed. So it is as though you are saying to yourself: I have tried very hard, I have tried the method of eradication and so on, I have tried to eradicate the unskilful that has arisen, I have tried to develop the unarisen skilful, but I have had no success whatever; but none the less, despite my failure, I am committed. I do Go for Refuge despite my failure. I acknowledge my failure that is what I mean by saying take your failure with you. You don't say that the failure doesn't matter; but you don't give up, even when you are totally beaten, or at least when you have totally failed in that respect.

Ratnaguna: I wondered if it was in a sense another method of overcoming that hindrance by Going for Refuge to the Buddha, invoking faith,

S: Well, it may well have that effect. I won't say that it will, but it may have that effect. But in any case it is good to remind oneself that, even though you have failed, maybe failed completely for the time being, in principle you are still committed, you still Go for Refuge, you live to fight another day.

Ratnaguna: I was also interested that you said [that] if you are working within the context of the psychological, there is nothing you can do; if you are in the context of the spiritual, then you can do this.

S: Right, yes.

Ratnaguna: Is there no psychological equivalent to this?

S: How can there be? Because Going for Refuge is a Going for Refuge to the Transcendental, essentially; so does psychology in the ordinary sense recognize that dimension? It doesn't. So the possibility of as it were throwing oneself upon the Transcendental does not exist for psychology in that sense.

[135]
Ratnaguna: Is it not in a sense just accepting yourself?

S: Well, no, it is more than that. It is not just accepting yourself. You commit yourself. It is not just a question of accepting your failure in the psychological sense; it is taking your failure with you when you Go for Refuge, which is quite a different thing.

Ratnaguna: So if you are working on the psychological plane, at that point you are stuck?

S: You are stuck, yes. At least you may feel that you are stuck, or you may be stuck not that anybody is ultimately stuck, because you can still start looking beyond psychology. Maybe that would be the significance of that experience that psychology is not enough; you have got to go and look somewhere else.

Tejananda: One from Ratnaprabha on an intermediate state between alienated and integrated awareness.

Ratnaprabha: This is a question about integrated awareness, alienated awareness and dealing with negative emotions using the 'sky-like mind' antidote. It seems to me that applying the method of distancing oneself from negative thoughts cannot be described strictly as integrated awareness. However, alienated awareness is described as 'awareness of ourselves, especially feelings and emotions, without actually experiencing ourselves.' So the sky-like mind is not alienated awareness, as you say, in fact, in a seminar extract in Mitrata: because you are experiencing those thoughts. Does this imply that alienated and integrated awareness are two extremes, with intermediate states of partially integrated awareness, the 'sky-like mind' antidote being such a state?

S: If you have got extremes you can always have intermediate points or intermediate states between those extremes; where you have got black and white you can always have various shades of grey. So, clearly, if you have got alienated awareness on the one hand and integrated awareness on the other, it means there can be states of mind which are as it were intermediate. Whether that attitude of regarding the mind as being like the sky is one of those, I am not quite sure. I think when you think that the mind is like the sky, that particular image of the mind being like the sky is very evocative; you have in a way a very positive experience of the mind, or at least a very positive attitude towards it. So perhaps it could not really be described as alienated, or even as partially alienated. When you say the mind is like the sky, it is as though you are not thinking in terms of your ordinary mind, your ordinary consciousness; you are thinking of your mind or your consciousness in, so to speak, much more metaphysical terms, and seeing the thoughts, the mental states that you are trying to get rid of, just as clouds drifting across that. It is as though, when you think of the mind in that way, you are almost ceasing to think of the mind in purely psychological terms. It is as though you see beneath the ordinary mind a deeper level altogether, which is not affected by the passing of unskilful thoughts. Do you see what I mean? The fact that it is an image that you see that image must have a certain emotional effect on you, so it can't really be alienated. At least, that is what the expression conveys to me, 'the mind is like the sky'. It is like the sky it is not only clear, it is vast, it is limitless. [136] So I think when you say the mind is like the sky, you are ceasing to think of the mind in the ordinary way.

Ratnaprabha: However, you do describe this technique as involving distancing oneself from negative thoughts, and elsewhere as 'standing back and looking at the experience.' This doesn't sound like integrated awareness.

S: No. Well, perhaps if, despite the fact that one used that expression, 'the mind is like the sky', you were still thinking of the ordinary mind, there would be an element of alienation. But if you realized, perhaps, or had a better understanding of the metaphysical implications of that statement, had a more vivid realization of the mind as really being like the sky, there

would be no question of even a partly alienated awareness. Just as when you say in, say, the state of Enlightenment, that there is no greed, hatred or delusion, there is no danger of your thinking of the state of Enlightenment as slightly alienated because it is remote from those sort of experiences.

Ratnaprabha: But, presumably, if these negative thoughts were actually present in the mind, and one was using this as a technique during meditation to try and distance oneself from them, there would be a degree of alienated awareness in that sense?

S: I think it would also be a question of not concentrating so much on the unskilful thoughts but on the image of the mind as like the sky, and trying to fill your consciousness with that; in other words, in that way trying to expand your consciousness to such an extent that the unskilful thought becomes relatively insignificant, it is just a little speck against that infinite blue sky. Of course, to be able to do that properly you would have to be, so to speak, a Buddhist, and have that particular view of the mind or of the true nature of the mind; so here, too, you go beyond the purely psychological perspective.

Abhaya: Nevertheless, Bhante, you would still recommend it as a useful device, say, in beginners' classes, to mention this as a way of dealing with the hindrances, even though beginners would not see the mind in this metaphysical way, but would see it much more psychologically?

S: Yes, except that one should not perhaps generalize too much about beginners, because some people may be of such a nature, such a temperament, even, that an image appeals to them quite immediately and quite strongly, and [if you say] that the mind is like the sky some people might get a very definite impression from that, even though they were completely new to Buddhism. Not everybody, obviously, but some might well do so. You can even elaborate upon that and say: 'Just try to think of the mind as just like the vast, clear blue sky'; and, even if they were not able to think of it metaphysically in the traditional Buddhist way, that would certainly give them a strong impression, a vivid impression, of the mind being much more vast and universal, so to speak, than they usually thought, and give them a better perspective on their unskilful thoughts, a better sense of proportion. If you go into it and say 'That is what your mind is really like; just try to grasp that; not identify your mental state and yourself just with those unskilful thoughts. They are just passing. The mind itself is not limited by those, the mind itself is much vaster. The unskilful thoughts are just like a little cloud. The mind is like the infinite blue sky, across which that little cloud passes, and it will soon be out of sight.' Maybe you have to elaborate upon it a bit imaginatively, not just [137] say 'The mind is like the sky', as though they have got to go on repeating it like a mantra 'The mind is like the sky, the mind is like the sky' that by itself will not do the trick.

Sudhana: This may be an obvious question, Bhante, but is it just because of our conditioning that we perceive the mind as not being like blue sky?

S: Presumably. If you don't see something, even your own mind, as it really is, so to speak, presumably that is due to what we would call past conditioning or what Buddhism would call our previous samskaras. In a way, what other explanation is there? It is due to your habitual ignorance, as again Buddhism would say.

Tejananda: Are those four antidotes to be applied in strictly the order they are given, or can

they be applied in whatever order or to whatever extent seems appropriate to your individual need, as it were?

S: I think you would have to say in accordance with your individual need. You might, as it were, have to follow the path of irregular steps! What is the order just to refresh my mind? Tejananda and

Ratnaprabha: Reflect on the consequences; if that doesn't work, cultivate the opposite; then the sky-like mind; then forcible suppression.

S: I think the traditional understanding is that they are to be employed in succession, inasmuch as they represent more and more strenuous, or even more and more serious, efforts; more and more drastic efforts perhaps that is the word. Though if one was really intelligent at all, the first should be enough, shouldn't it? just contemplate the awful consequences of your unskilful mental state. That should really be quite enough, especially if you dwell on them with some degree of vividness. As I have mentioned before, this is really one of the most important aspects of the spiritual life: that you should be aware of the consequences of your own actions, should have a sense of responsibility, therefore, for your actions. Some people habitually overeat, for instance; they ought to be considering the consequences of that, but very often they do not. There is the dreadful and almost classic example of this sort of thing I mention it for the benefit of those who are lovers of literature and those who are familiar with Boswell's Life of Johnson: the way in which his great friend Henry Thrale, the husband of the famous Mrs Thrale, met his death. He was an absolute glutton, and his physicians warned him again and again not to eat so much. His wife begged him, but on the day that he had his final apoplexy, as they called it, he overate to such an extent that the servants were terrified. Yes! And shortly afterwards he had this stroke, as we say. He must have known, but none the less he disregarded the consequences.

Abhaya: Ate himself to death.

S: Ate himself to death. Quite extraordinary. Do you remember this passage?

Abhaya: Do I remember it!

: Was he a Member of Parliament?

S: He was, yes.

: I heard that extract on the radio.

[138]
S: He was MP for Southwark for a while no, was he? Did he win the election? I can't remember. He certainly contested it, and Johnson helped him. I think actually he didn't win at least, not always. But that was how he met his end, practically committing suicide. He was unable to restrain himself, unwilling to restrain himself, unwilling to contemplate the consequences. I forget the details the biography gives some details about what actually he did eat on that occasion, for that particular meal; it was really terrifying. He was a very, very corpulent man. But this is just an illustration of the way in which people disregard consequences, refuse to consider consequences. The compulsive gambler is another good

example; the man who drinks, gets into the habit of drinking. He doesn't realize that he may well become an alcoholic.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, all these are quite extreme examples, though, and when one is just allowing what seem to be quite small unskilful states to remain in one's mind, it may not seem clear.

S: Indeed, yes. The Dhammapada says: 'Little by little a man fills himself with evil, and little by little a man fills himself with good.' Yes, it is very easy to disregard the little things. You do not realize that little things have consequences, because those little things go on being repeated all the time, go on being accumulated all the time. That can be very insidious. In the same way, you do not realize that a little meditation every day, just a short Puja every day, such a little meditation, such a little Puja, over the months, over the years, does have a very definite effect. You may not see it nothing very dramatic; you cannot even see the difference on a monthly basis, perhaps, but if someone meets you after two or three years who has not seen you during all that time, they will notice a difference in you.

Ratnaguna: When we were discussing the four antidotes, we could see how the second followed the first, and we could see how the fourth one followed on in ascending degrees, but the third one seemed to be a bit misplaced, somehow.

S: Well, perhaps the spiritual life doesn't proceed in an entirely consecutive and logical manner! Perhaps that is not surprising.

Ratnaguna: Also it seems that one of the antidotes would fit well with one of the hindrances, but another antidote would fit well with another one.

S: Well, perhaps one has to work that out for oneself. It may even so vary from one person to another. In the case of, for instance, anger, you can very easily apply the first method, the method of considering consequences; you can also very easily apply the method of cultivating the opposite. They both seem very useful.

Ratnaprabha: Do you think that the fourth method, that is, forcible suppression, is really very, very, very much a last resort sort of pressing one's tongue against one's palate and gritting one's teeth?

S: I think it is, especially if the unskilful mental state is likely to lead to an unskilful action which would be very damaging to other people, or even to yourself, for that matter. Then such forcible suppression is very much the lesser of two evils. You might be so angry that, if you gave expression to it you might almost kill somebody. It is much better forcibly to suppress it.

[139]
Ratnaprabha: But, within meditation, should we really give a very good try to the other ones before trying forcible suppression?

S: Possibly; I think it depends on the individual. Sometimes you can as it were forcibly suppress, and just get on with your meditation straight away. Sometimes that is possible. I think perhaps a lot does depend on the temperament of the individual. You have to try these methods out for yourself and see what really works in your case.

Ratnaprabha: Is this the method that is talked about in the Pali Canon, where the Buddha recalls having clenched his teeth and pressed his tongue against his palate and so on?

S: The language used is the same kind of language, yes. Whether the Buddha had had recourse to these other methods before, we are not informed. I think we should not be afraid of forcible suppression, just because of what we have read in books on psychology about the dangers of repression. Repression and suppression, even forcible suppression, are two quite different things, and we are not justified in always allowing our unskilful mental states to hang out, as it were; we are not always justified in inflicting them on other people.

Kuladeva: Does psychology generally recognize the distinction between repression and suppression?

S: Freud certainly does, but I think it is sort of vulgarized and popularized versions of his teachings, especially as current in general conversation, that fail to recognize the distinction. Freud himself was well aware of it.

Dhammaloka: Someone mentioned in our study group that he thought there were different orders when the list of the antidotes was given in the scriptures, so it is not always the same order. That is what I understood.

S: That may be; that is quite possible.

Dhammaloka: So, taking this and what you said, should we generally, when we introduce these antidotes, encourage people to make their own experience, not try them in a certain order but just find out what works best for them?

S: I am not sure about that. It may well be that you need to consider them in a certain order, if in fact they are as it were more and more drastic. I won't be sure about that. Perhaps someone should check and see whether they are always enumerated in the same order, if there seems to be any reason for their being enumerated in a different order if in fact that is the case, sometimes. Again I think [Nyanatiloka] would give information in this little work, The Word of the Buddha. Buddhaghosa certainly does. But the main thing is, of course, to encourage people to think in terms of actually applying these antidotes. That is the main point; the order in which they are applied is possibly secondary, but I think it is more than likely that there is some significance in the order as generally given. Well, clearly forcible suppression is drastic, much more drastic than contemplating any possible consequences; but, again, as I mentioned, for some people that might be the best method under almost all circumstances, and therefore to be resorted to at once. Yes, some people may be of a very decisive, prompt temperament.

Dhammaloka: I personally find it very simple: just think 'Not now', and -

[140]
S: 'Not now'? You should really say, 'No, never'! It sounds a little bit like Napoleon's famous remark to Josephine.

: 'Not tonight, Josephine'!

S: Perhaps that is just a skilful means.

Tejananda: Now Ratnaprabha has a question on the first dhyana.

Ratnaprabha: Describing the first dhyana and its simile, you say: 'The whole psycho physical being is as it were saturated with the higher consciousness.' Presumably one could refer to this as vertical integration.

S: I am not too sure about that expression 'the whole being saturated'; that would seem to confuse the first dhyana with the third.

Ratnaprabha: This was a question that arose in our minds.

S: Yes, I think that expression 'the whole being' must not be taken too literally, because the simile for the first dhyana is the spring of water, isn't it?

Ratnaprabha: No, the soap powder.

S: Oh, sorry, the soap powder, yes. So, in a sense, the whole being is saturated, but there is a difference between that and the third dhyana, because it is as though, in the third dhyana, the already integrated being is immersed in some higher element. But, in the simile or image for the first dhyana, the soaking, refers to the process of integration itself. Do you see what I mean? So that expression, the total immersion, in respect to the first dhyana, could be misleading.

Ratnaprabha: That may answer the rest of the [question].

Tape 9, Side 2

S: It is as though the permeation or saturation is quite limited. In a sense, the whole being is saturated, but within itself; but, in the case of the third dhyana, it is as though that whole being, having been totally saturated within itself, is then as a whole itself saturated by some higher element.

Dhammaloka: Isn't this even suggested by the formulation which you give for the first dhyana a bit later, when you say: 'You are still there, but you are completely permeated by something of a higher nature'? You give this for the first dhyana.

S: I think now I would not use quite that language in connection with the first dhyana. It could lead to a confusion with the third dhyana. Yes, in the case of the first dhyana in the case of the comparison you have got two elements; you have got the soap powder and you have got the water. So what corresponds to which? The dry soap powder corresponds to you in your unintegrated state, and the water corresponds to the higher state of consciousness which is bringing together, so to speak, all those scattered particles, so that, in the end, there is a complete harmony between them. On account of the growth of concentration, all the scattered particles are brought together, so [they] are in a sense saturated by some higher element, bound together by that higher element; so, in a sense, completely [141] saturated. But what is completely saturated is the previous unintegrated consciousness. But, in the third dhyana, it is the integrated consciousness which is saturated by a state still higher.

Abhaya: Sorry, Bhante in the first dhyana the water represents your potential integration, or?

S: No, it represents well, it represents the dhyana state; comparisons have their limitations, you can't have a dhyana state apart from a mind which experiences the dhyana state. So the soap powder represents the unintegrated mind; the dhyana state represents the integrated mind. So one can say that the water gradually mixing with the soap powder represents the fact that the mind is gradually becoming more integrated, and therefore more concentrated. So it is a total process, in the sense that all the particles become saturated in or absorbed into that higher state, which is of course non different from themselves one must again remember the limitations of the analogy. Even though you say that the particles of soap powder, or grains of soap powder, represent the mind in its unintegrated state, it is not that the water represents something other than the mind, because the dhyana is itself a mental state. You could put it more simply and say that, in the third dhyana, the mind attains an even higher level of integration, simply. None the less, one should be careful not to obliterate the distinction between the first and the third dhyanas by appearing to use more or less the same kind of language [for them].

Abhaya: That is quite interesting, because I think, in the past, people have understood or interpreted the first dhyana in terms of the integration of reason and emotion. I think you

S: Well, that can be done, because in a sense reason, as ordinarily understood, is as it were alienated, is analytic, is devoid of emotion, is dry; just as the soap powder is dry. You think of emotion as something moist. So one can look at it in that way. Also, why are you not concentrated? Because your interest is not involved, your emotions are not involved. So concentration, and hence the first dhyana, does involve a process of bringing together, so to speak, reason and emotion, at least to some extent. So I think it is quite legitimate to speak of the attainment of the first dhyana in terms of a bringing together of reason and emotion, and of the introduction of an emotional element into one's spiritual life. It does just occur to me this is entirely in passing, and not connected with what we have been discussing; I mention it just because the idea occurs to me and I just want to get it on the tape that in the course of these evenings so far, quite a few points have arisen that have not arisen before, despite all the previous combings through these lectures. I think it would not be a bad idea to extract from the transcript of these sessions all those questions which do deal with points that are not covered by the existing Mitrata extracts, and have a sort of supplement. Perhaps only a single issue of Mitrata would be necessary, divided into eight sections or, at the most, two dealing with further points, points which give further clarification. This particular one is perhaps a fairly important one, and it is not covered, or has not been covered, so far. Do you see what I mean? We could well have one or perhaps even two Eightfold Path Mitrata supplements. Some of the material covers ground that has been more or less covered before, but there are none the less a fair number of points that have not been raised and have not been covered before, and which it would at least be useful for study group leaders or Order Members generally to know; like this present one. Anyway, that is just in passing.

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Sudhana: We have been trying not to ask the same questions that come up in the Mitratas.

S: Right; but you have asked some questions which haven't come up before. Like the point that Tejananda made last night, in connection with Right Livelihood and the laity. That point has not come up before, and that is a quite useful point.

Ratnaguna: To get back to the first dhyana I don't know if Ratnaprabha actually asked this

does the first dhyana represent horizontal integration, or vertical integration, or both?

S: I think at least one can say it is more horizontal than vertical, because it takes place more or less in a normal state of consciousness. The external world does not begin to fade away, as it were, as it does completely, or more or less completely, in the fourth dhyana. There are degrees or levels of intensity within each of the dhyanas, in any case. It is not that you are either definitely in the first dhyana or definitely not. One understands that because at least there is traditionally an intermediate level, the neighbourhood concentration.

Dhammaloka: Coming back to the description of the first dhyana as integration of reason and emotion, would you consider that to be a sufficient way of describing the first dhyana?

S: Oh no, I would not say it was a sufficient way; no. But I think that is quite an important element in it. It also, of course, depends to some extent on a certain definition of reason and a certain definition of emotion, especially on a certain definition of reason.

Dhammaloka: Could you elaborate that, please?

S: Well, a sort of cold, analytical, slightly alienated concept of reason; not reason in the sense, say, that Milton uses the term.

Dhammaloka: I don't know that.

Ratnaprabha: I think you have just about covered it, but I hope you don't mind if I just read out the last part of the question. Presumably one could refer to this as vertical integration as, say, based on what you say in the lecture (but I think we have dealt with that). I had understood the simile to refer to one's awareness, the water, fully permeating the object of concentration, the soap powder, which would presumably represent horizontal integration only.

S: What does one mean by consciousness permeating an object? You mean being fully concentrated upon it?

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: I suppose it really does imply that, but I think the simile brings out more than that though certainly that is involved. One does speak sometimes of the absorption of the consciousness in the object, meaning full concentration on it to the exclusion of any other object. That also introduces an element of feeling, because you can't really become absorbed in something unless you have some feeling for it; so that concentration necessarily involves an element of feeling, even an -[143] element of emotion. So it would still be a coming together of, so to speak, reason and emotion. Instead of having just an idea of the object, you would have a feeling for it, gradually become absorbed in it.

Ratnaprabha: Does the fragmentary nature of the soap powder also bring out something about dry reason, do you think? bringing together little fragments of reason?

S: Well, reason, you could say, is desiccated. It is emotion that binds things together, isn't it? I sometimes quote a phrase from a letter written by a friend of mine years ago, describing the

work of a particular Pali Buddhist scholar as 'the last ounce of dust in desiccation'! So the soap powder conjures up much the same sort of image, doesn't it? something very dry and crumbled into innumerable tiny particles. The sand of the desert. If one wanted to be epigrammatic, one could say that reason is analytic and emotion is synthetic. You find that when you are writing. If you have just got a lot of ideas, it is very difficult to write, but if you have a strong feeling for something, especially for that particular subject or aspect of the subject you are writing about, the feeling binds together all the facts, all the individual items of information that you may have, all the individual ideas; and then you can write, once you are in touch with the feeling, and include all the bits of information, all the ideas. But if you have just got the ideas or the information without that feeling in fact, that very strong feeling it is almost impossible to write; certainly impossible to write in any genuinely literary sense. That is why I say emotion is the binding factor. Luther used to say that he wrote best when he was in a rage; for him, rage was the binding factor. He used to say that, when he was in a rage, his mind became

very sharp and clear, and he could write furiously! He said, when he had to reply to something Erasmus had written, that he found it very difficult to reply to Erasmus, because Erasmus, by his pseudo meekness, he said, had given him no opportunity or no excuse for getting into a rage!

: Sounds like he did get in a rage anyway!

S: He had to work himself up into a rage before he could reply to Erasmus. He admits this in a quite naive fashion. Yeats even says something to that effect, doesn't he? 'Hatred's a besom that doth cleanse the soul' something like that? Anyway, that's going too far abroad. Perhaps he says 'wrath', not 'hate'. [It is hatred - ed: 'I study hatred with great diligence, For that's a passion in my own control, A sort of besom that can clear the soul Of everything that is not mind or sense.']

Tejananda: Now we've got a question on the second dhyana from Abhaya.

S: How are we getting on with the questions, by the way?

Tejananda: We've only got four more.

Abhaya: We know that it is not possible in ordinary life to course in the second dhyana outside the actual meditation session, because of the absence from it of discursive mental activity. However, a) do you think it possible that one could course in the second dhyana for the greater part of a solitary retreat, both in and out of actual sitting practice? b) should it be possible for most Order Members to reach a stage of practice whereby they could contact, almost at will, those deeper

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creative energies represented by the subterranean spring short, that is, of attaining Stream Entry?

S: Let us have those one by one.

Abhaya: First of all: 'Do you think it possible that one could course in the second dhyana for

the greater part of a solitary retreat, both in and out of the actual sitting practice?'

S: I think you could, leaving aside the time that you spent sleeping. Yes, I think you could. Or, at least, so to speak, mildly.

Abhaya: And, secondly: 'Should it be possible for most Order Members to reach a stage of practice whereby they could contact almost at will those deeper creative energies represented by the subterranean spring short, that is, of attaining Stream Entry?

S: I think it should be; but and this is quite a big but it depends upon very definite conditions. I think the conditions are mainly that you must be sufficiently quiet and undistracted and undisturbed for it to be possible for those deeper, more creative energies to start bubbling up. So long as your mind is concentrated on, or diverted by, or distracted or disturbed by, a dozen, even a hundred, other things, it just is not possible. You have to isolate yourself. You have to remove yourself from all possible sources of distraction and disturbance and as it were just wait; and, under those conditions, it should be possible for any Order Member to contact his deeper creative energies. I know that this often used to be the case, for instance, with Ananda. You could guarantee that if Ananda got out into the country, whether on a bicycle or on foot, within an hour or two he would be writing poems! It was almost infallible; I have seen it happen many a time. Because he does have that very strongly creative streak, and he is only prevented usually or has in the past been prevented from manifesting it by having to get on with other things of a more practical nature. But as soon as he is away from those things and, say, out in the country especially formerly he could do it in coffee bars, but now he needs to go out into the country the inspiration, as it were, comes welling up. So this should be possible in different ways for every Order Member. As soon as you get on solitary retreat, something should come bubbling up, some creative energy, some inspiration. It need not be to write a poem or paint a picture; it may be simply just to get on with your meditation or get more deeply into it. But something of that nature should come bubbling up, or under certain circumstances if you are just left alone and people are not bothering you and you have got an hour to spare; you just sit down quietly. At least a little ripple of happiness should come up, or even a little spasm of creative energy.

Abhaya: So ideally, Bhante, we should be able to get to that level where we can do that, without getting away for three or four weeks just to be able, like every day, just to go away for an hour?

S: It would be good if that could be done.

Abhaya: Do you think we are a long way from that, or that it should be ?

S: I really don't know. I have been very much encouraged in the past by seeing what happens to quite ordinary people, very often with no previous contact with Buddhism, when they just get on retreat for a day or two well, say after two or [145] three days they are in a quite different mental state. They are much happier, brighter, more cheerful, more relaxed. So in a way you can in fact change quite quickly when conditions are changed. Not that that is the whole trick, because after two or three weeks you could start getting bored, or you could start craving after the previous distractions. We know that quite well. None the less, that does suggest that external conditions are very important. An Order Member should be as it were potentially creative all the time, and if he is not actually creative it should be just because he

is mentally occupied or perhaps physically occupied too with other things. But when he is not so occupied he should not relax into a state of boredom and frustration, but just enjoy his own company, as it were, and just feel the creative energies beginning to bubble up regardless of the particular form that they may eventually take. It seems in a way quite simple, doesn't it?

Tejananda: Bhante, can I just ask a question about my own experience, in a way, of what I think might be the second dhyana just to check on [what may be] happening. What I generally interpret as maybe a weak experience of it is when one reaches the stage where, having achieved concentration, say, on the mindfulness of breathing, just simply on the breath but with a certain amount of discursiveness, you can simply maintain just one pointed attention on the object of concentration without any discursiveness, but not necessarily I have never experienced this kind of up welling inspiration, as far as I am aware, but I have reached the level of just, if you like, pure concentration

S: Obviously, there are degrees. Initially it can be experienced just as an up welling of a sense of happiness; and that can become stronger and stronger, and then it can even feel like a creative energy coming from the depths. One has at that moment to be careful not to be disturbed by it, and not to start thinking about it, otherwise you lapse from the second dhyana. If you start thinking 'What shall I do with this creative energy? Shall I write a poem, or should I just continue with the meditation?' if discursive mental activity starts up in that sense, you are no longer in the second dhyana; perhaps you are back in the first, or even back in ordinary consciousness. But you can just allow that process to continue without thinking about it just observing it in a non discursive way, and experiencing it. I think one would initially experience it just in the form of an increased happiness, as though a happiness, independent of external conditions, is just bubbling up from within you.

Tejananda: So is that pure attention without discursiveness merely an aspect of first dhyana, would you say, rather than second? Or is it difficult to say?

S: Say that again pure attention without discursiveness?

Tejananda: Well, when you are just attending to the object of concentration, but without any discursiveness at all.

S: If there is no discursiveness at all, then that is definitely second dhyana. But if one doesn't have the experience of that energy, so to speak, or that happiness bubbling up, you are probably just at the beginning, so to speak, of the second dhyana; you need to sustain that, go into it more deeply, experience it more fully, and then the experience which is suggested by the image for that dhyana will start to occur.

Tejananda: I suppose it is a matter of finding it for oneself, but when you reach that stage how do you intensify it?

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S: Well, you intensify it by remaining in it. It naturally intensifies if you can remain concentrated and free from discursive thought. Its natural tendency, if it is prolonged, is to deepen. There is a sort of incremental effect. If you keep on rolling the snowball, the snowball will automatically get bigger; you don't need to make any special effort to make it bigger, you just need to go on rolling it over the snow.

Abhaya: Bhante, when you first started answering this question, you said yes, it should be possible for most Order Members to attain this stage of having access to deeper energies, but on certain conditions. You said, first of all, you must be sufficiently quiet and undisturbed. I don't think you went on to say what else.

S: Ah, yes. Another condition would be that you sorted out all your problems, as it were. Otherwise, if you remove yourself to the conditions of a solitary retreat, what will start coming up will be things from the past, memories of painful experiences and so on. So the assumption is that those are all out of the way. That is one of the conditions that you are clear and free of all those, or relatively so. You can see the sense of that, obviously. And also that you are not as it were forcibly cutting yourself off from all those diversions and distractions, but you are quite happy, initially, to be on your own. There is no hankering after the things that you left behind; you are quite content.

Tejananda: Continuing with the dhyanas, we now have a question on the third dhyana from me. It is only a minor question; it is a botanical question. I don't even know if you will be able to answer it. In the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha says: 'As in a pond of ... lotuses ... some ... are born in the water, grow up in the water, never rising above the surface, but flourishing beneath it...' which is the basis on which you quote in the lecture. Is this based on actual observation? Do lotuses actually grow in the depths of water?

S: Lotuses don't; well, they open definitely well above the surface. But the buds do begin to expand well, I am not completely sure about lotuses as such, but water lilies do begin to expand, the buds begin to grow and develop beneath the surface of the water; but they always open fully on or above the surface. Lotuses in particular stand well above the surface, a couple of feet. But they are quite a different well, they belong to the same family as the water lilies, but they are actually quite a different looking flower. The head can be about so big. But that is to say I don't know whether you it is white and tinged with pink; that is the one you usually see in India. The blue lotus is actually, I think, a water lily, it is more spiky. But what we usually call the lotus is about so big, it is like a great cup, with not nearly so many petals as you see, for instance, in the case of the red water lilies that we have got. I don't remember exactly how many petals a lotus has it may not be more than six it is shaped almost like a poppy, quite big petals. It stands well above the water. What these plants are that the Buddha refers to, whether they really are the lotus in that sense or just varieties of water lily, is difficult to say.

Tejananda: The image isn't actually completely growing under the water a poetic one, pure and simple?

S: I don't know whether the text really suggests that. Perhaps it just -

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Tejananda: It does in so many words. 'Some are born in the water, grow up in the water, never rising above the surface but flourishing beneath it.'

S: I think flourishing as buds, possibly. I won't be sure.

Tejananda: Anyway, I have a second part, which goes on to a different matter altogether, really.

S: Just to add one point. Whether they are buds or whether they are fully opened, the idea is that the water lily or lotus or whatever it is completely immersed in the water. It could well be that, for the sake of making a particular comparison, the Buddha stretched a point botanically speaking, as it were. But the idea is of complete immersion in, and suffusion by, the water the higher element, that is. That is what the Buddha wanted to make plain. So perhaps he was not too particular about the finer points of botany. Whether that amounted to an untruth is, of course, perhaps a casuistical question.

Sudhana: So you imagine the lotus, fully open, under water, submerged in the water?

S: Yes, regardless of whether that is botanically correct or not.

Sudhana: Yes, yes; that is beside the point. Right, that is clear.

Tejananda: Then I wanted to ask: You mention the Pali Canon as being full of such similes, which you say are generally ignored. Are there any good similes which come to mind, which have perhaps not yet gained general appreciation in the Movement?

S: I can't say offhand. I don't think any as it were come to mind. But we could certainly comb through and pay more attention to the similes. Many of the Pali Text Society's translations have an index of similes at the back of the volume, which is very useful. That suggests by itself how many such there are, if they rate a separate index. Perhaps it is a theme or subject for a whole lecture by somebody 'Similes of the Pali Canon' perhaps drawing attention to some which could be made more wide use of.

Tejananda: Now Dhammaloka has a question on direct and indirect methods of raising levels of consciousness.

Dhammaloka: As the reason why meditation, in terms of the dhyanas, is dealt with under the heading of Perfect Effort, you referred to meditation as 'the major manifestation of effort within the context of the spiritual life.' In the lecture, you described the skilful states to be developed in terms of the dhyanas, which presumably justifies the conclusion that you have been thinking of sitting practices rather than of the cultivation of skilful mental states in general. Inasmuch as the dhyanas are said to unfold quite naturally and effortlessly if we only live ethically wholesome lives, if seems that more effort is required for preparation and indirect methods of development than for sitting meditation practices.

S: Yes, I mean to suggest that, when you sit for meditation, your effort should not be of the nature of a very forcible effort, a great struggle against all the [148] impediments that have accumulated in your mind, but that, with the help of the indirect methods, the proper preparation, you have got your mind into such a state that you just need a little touch, you just need to make that last, delicate, subtle sort of effort to enter into higher states of consciousness.

Dhammaloka: You did not mention this in the lecture, to my memory. So I wondered whether preparation and indirect means are to be regarded as aspects of general effort [that we should distinguish] general effort and specific effort, and whether as such they are dealt with sufficiently in the second to fifth stages of the Path?

S: Could be. I have said somewhere, I forget where, that if you make the proper preparations you are already practically there with regard to whatever it is you are preparing for.

Dhammaloka: How is it then to be understood that you say meditation is the major manifestation of effort in the context of the spiritual life?

S: Well, it is meditation, in the sense of the practice of meditation, which does carry you further into the dhyanas. I don't think that any amount of preparation, just in the ordinary external sense, would carry you, say, all the way into the fourth dhyana. It might carry you into the first, but I doubt if it would carry you any further; a definite meditative effort would need to be made. But inasmuch as you had set up all the conditions beforehand, you could make that effort in a much more relaxed way. You would not be having to fight off a whole lot of hindrances which were the product simply of external circumstances external circumstances actually present at that time.

Tejananda: Kuladeva has a question on the triangle.

Kuladeva: This relates to the diagram. Is it an error that the 'lower religions' are described in both the lecture and the transcript in Mitrata to be associated with section C on the diagram, which in turn is said to represent the 'ultra human' stage? If not, what is meant by the 'lower religions'?

S: I think I must have been thinking of things like tribal cults.

Kuladeva: But this appears above point 2 on the diagram, between point 2 and point 3.

S: 'Ultra human stage' Hm. I can't remember for sure what I was thinking of then, but I imagine I was thinking of something like the pagan religions, perhaps the Greek and Roman pagan religions.

Kuladeva: In that case, do you think are they misplaced in section C? Would they not be more appropriate in section B, for instance?

S: They represent a whole band rather than a point. Perhaps it is not very easy to draw a dividing line. Perhaps you could draw up another chart where they sort of overlap, these points. There is 'infra human', 'human', 'ultra human'. I think also that point 2, 'Emergence of self-consciousness', is the emergence I think emphasis is to be placed on 'emergence', not that self-consciousness is by any [149] means fully developed at that point. That is the point where self-consciousness begins to emerge. I think perhaps that is the key to it. And the ethnic religions almost could clearly be regarded as belonging to that point. They do help, at least in a rudimentary way, in the further development of that self-consciousness.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, is there in that case some distinction between rudimentary human consciousness and the first emergence of self-consciousness?

S: No, I would think not. I will have to think about it, but I think not.

Ratnaprabha: In that case, presumably, point 2 is not, strictly speaking, the first emergence of self-consciousness, which will be at point 1 on the diagram? By point 2, you must have a

much more developed stage of self-consciousness, and perhaps you intended 'the emergence of full self-consciousness' at point 2? Otherwise, there would be no necessary distinction between point 1 and point 2.

S: That is true, yes.

Ratnaprabha: In which case, presumably, the lower religions should be ascribed to section B, between points 1 and 2?

S: Yes. There is the question of what is the difference between rudimentary human consciousness and the emergence of self-consciousness. I must say I can't recollect what I had in mind at that time. Perhaps I should think it out again.

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Kuladeva: I was wondering, when I heard it, whether it indicated religions that do not have any kind of Insight associated with them.

S: I suppose there is that possibility. They would go, perhaps, a little beyond what we usually understand as ethnic religion. I probably need to go through this whole process in a more detailed manner, and look at it more carefully.

Chakkhupala: The particular divisions you have in this diagram are actually at odds with the more sophisticated diagram in my Evolution series ...

S: Ah!

Chakkhupala: where there is no inconsistency at all.

S: Oh, well! I don't really remember, but it may be that I did not draw up this diagram. I don't remember. I think I have got my original diagrams in my notes somewhere.

: We did

Tape 10, Side 1

Abhaya: There was that lack of clarification between rudimentary self-consciousness and fully developed self-consciousness.

S: I think I will just have to go back to that material, because I have not really thought seriously about these things not in a systematic way since giving the original lectures, probably; not in this particular way. So perhaps some time I will have to go back and work it all out again.

Abhaya: Maybe we could have a revised sketch in that supplement we were talking about.

S: That is true, yes. Let me just see what I have said in the text. 'Suppose we take the phenomenon of man. Suppose we take him at his best, the best that we usually know him, i.e. take him as a self-conscious, aware human being, one who is intelligent, sensitive and responsible ' That would seem to represent point 2. So, clearly, even if we take man at the

best as we usually know him, clearly self-consciousness is not fully developed do you see what I mean? It would seem, in that case, that [point] 1, rudimentary human consciousness, represents the absolute first beginning of self-consciousness, whereas point 2, emergence of self-consciousness, represents self-consciousness as developed to the extent that is usual among more, let us say, characteristically human people, but still not developed to its fullest possible extent. It would seem to occupy that sort of position. So that would sort of reconcile the difference between 'rudimentary human consciousness emerges' rudimentary representing the fact that the self-consciousness had just begun to show itself and by 'emergence of self-consciousness' meaning emergence of the kind of self-consciousness with which we are usually acquainted. That would tie in with the stage C, representing 'culture and lower religions'; religions, yes, because there is an element of self-consciousness, but 'lower religions' because that self-consciousness is far from being developed to its fullest possible extent.

Dhammaloka: But stage C leads to Stream Entry. Wouldn't that suggest that the universal religions should be at least developing in the course of stage C?

S: Of stage C ?

Dhammaloka: Yes, point 3 is Stream Entry: beginnings of Transcendental ...

S: Well, the lower religions can be up to and including samatha. It is only when Insight develops that one reaches the trans-human. But the samatha is the basis of that, so the samatha could be included in the lower religions. In that case, of course, the higher religions would be only those in which there was Insight; which means, practically, Buddhism itself. Not that one can exclude the possibility of there being a measure of Insight in at least some other higher religions. Perhaps all that needs spelling out much more clearly and carefully. Perhaps I have quite a few more papers to write!

Ratnaprabha: Do you mind if I elaborate that slightly, Bhante? From what you have just said, I would take it that the lower religions should cover both stages B and C; in other words, from the very primitive tribal religions, perhaps down in stage B, to the more sophisticated but still lower religions in stage C.

S: That is true. Well, you see, there are some people who believe that religion is an inherent characteristic of man as such, in which case you would have different stages of religion all the way along, from point 1. Even possibly different types or stages of art from point 1.

: ... relating to how you laid out that information in the Higher Evolution series and what you now designate as lower religions would include ethnic and universal religions as expounded in the Higher Evolution series?

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S: Yes, that would seem to be so, yes; inasmuch as even a lower religion would have access to dhyana states.

Tejananda: So, Bhante, presumably section D represents the exclusive area of universal religions, in the sense of Insight? Does that follow?

S: It would seem to be so, yes. Because point 3 is the beginning of Transcendental awareness, Stream Entry. That would exclude even a religion which could be classified, in a sense, as universal, but within which there was in fact no Insight possible. But, again, perhaps I do have to go over all this material again, and work it out more carefully and eliminate any inconsistencies. The general principle, the general pattern, is sufficiently clear. It is perhaps a question of correlating more clearly the points with the stages; of making it more clear exactly where and why one draws these points or makes these lines of division. How many left now?

Tejananda: One. That is from Dhammaloka, on Perfect Effort on the Transcendental level.

Dhammaloka: Perfect Effort, as exposed in the lecture, comprises one's conscious attempts to practise the Four Exertions, which, in case of one's practice being successful, lead to the development and maintenance of the dhyanas. The dhyanas being mundane states of mind, I wonder whether there is any such thing as Perfect Effort in a Transcendental sense. How is Perfect Effort, as an anga of the Transcendental Eightfold Path, to be understood?

S: Well, not perfect in the sense of Transcendental in the strict sense, because the effort you make with regard to the mundane dhyanas is an effort by you conceiving of yourself, experiencing yourself, as a separate 'I'; but when Insight arises, by the very nature of the experience, that distinction is transcended, at least to some extent. So the effort that is made on the Transcendental level say, the effort that takes you from Stream Entry up to Arhantship is not effort in the same sense as the effort that takes you from one dhyana to another. In a sense, it more and more ceases to be your effort. It is more and more a matter of an effort being made, without that effort being referred so much as before, or referred decreasingly, in fact, to a person, an 'I', that is making that effort. So you could say Transcendental effort, with respect to the dhyanas, is almost a contradiction in terms. So Transcendental effort, considered in the ultimate sense, is rather different from what we usually understand by effort. A Buddha does not make an effort in the ordinary sense, though his Transcendental activity which is purely spontaneous, one might say, but which does not constitute an effort in the sense that it is purely impersonal appears to be the Buddha's effort, but the Buddha does not think of himself actually as exerting [himself] or making an effort of his own, so to speak. The Buddha's consciousness, presumably, is that there is an activity; there is a speaking. Perhaps it is significant that the Buddha, in the Pali Canon, is always, or nearly always, represented as saying: 'The Tathagata says this' or 'The Tathagata does that.'

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

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Day 7

Tape 10, Side 2

Tejananda: We have 9 or 10 questions on Right Mindfulness. The first one is a sort of double question from Ratnaguna, on areas of mindfulness not covered in the lecture.

Ratnaguna: a) In the lecture, you say that there are at least five characteristics of mindfulness:

Recollection, Undistractedness, Concentration, Continuity of Purpose, and Developing Individuality. And you say that the term Smrti (mindfulness) is not exhausted by these five characteristics. Presumably mindfulness has the characteristic of sraddha, but what other characteristics would it have?

S: Have I mentioned memory?

Ratnaguna: Yes, recollection.

S: No, recollection does not quite mean memory. It is recollection more in the traditional, one might say Christian, sense. How would one describe that recollection? that one was recollected, recollected?

Abhaya: In the sense of gathering all your energies together again.

S: Yes, not being scattered, not being dispersed. It is a little bit like nondistractedness, which has in fact been mentioned, but it is distinct from memory.

Ratnaguna: In the lecture you do seem to use recollection as memory, because the example you gave of unmindfulness was when the person forgot they were writing a letter.

S: Even that is not quite the same thing, because you have allowed yourself to be distracted from the action of writing a letter, but in the case of memory you can remember things that have nothing to do with your present actions or your present intentions. So Smrti is sometimes used in that sense, simply in the sense of what we would call memory, which is a rather different faculty from that of recollection. I am not sure what other attributes I had in mind. I think I had in mind mainly memory as a meaning of Smrti or an aspect of Smrti; but it was not particularly relevant to Smrti as an anga of the Eightfold Path.

Ratnaguna: b) Are these five characteristics renderings of traditional terms, or are they your own?

S: At a distance of so many years, I find it difficult to remember, but I think the first four are traditional; I suspect that I added the fifth.

Ratnaguna: Developing individuality? That is the one that made me ask the question, actually, because that reminded me of a phrase you get in the Udana: 'Making the self strong' and I wondered if the others were kind of renderings of that.

S: There is even 'making the self become' or 'developing the self'. So, though 'individuality' does not translate literally any Pali term, it certainly renders the sense of several Pali expressions: attabhava, for instance.

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Ratnaguna: That is developing the self, is it?

S: It is the self as something that has become. Or one could say 'the become self', the self that has become. Was that the whole of that question?

Ratnaguna: Yes.

Tejananda: The second one is from Dhammaloka, on mindfulness and the five spiritual faculties.

Dhammaloka: I am afraid I may have difficulty in reading it. It was very difficult for me to formulate. Several of the seminar extracts point to the fact that many people find it difficult to connect with mindfulness in a way which avoids the danger of misunderstanding it as being watchful of oneself or the world in a dry, detached and emotionally dead way. Rather than being an extra faculty as distinct from one's activities, you did refer to mindfulness in one seminar extract as saturating the flow of one's activities 'like a colouring being given to the flow'. I wonder whether it might be a good and sufficient way of introducing and explaining mindfulness in terms of the other four spiritual faculties. My reason for this is that the aspects of emotional positivity and aspiration, of receptivity and concentration, of knowledge and understanding of the skilful, and of steadfastness and energy, seem to be the central aspects of mindfulness. Following this understanding, mindfulness would not be a faculty balancing the other four, but it would be the other four faculties in a state of balance, according to one's overall degree of development, while any state of disturbed balance would be a state of unmindfulness. Would that be ?

S: One could certainly say that, taking it as a statement on its own merits, but none the less one is faced by the fact that, traditionally, there are five spiritual faculties, as we call them, which are separately enumerated and which are all equally faculties. I think probably one has to say that, inasmuch as we are usually quite divided beings when we start trying to lead a spiritual life, our mindfulness, initially at least, cannot but be, to some extent at least, alienated. You are having to stand back from your emotions or whatever; but obviously you must bring your awareness, your mindfulness, into harmony with those other aspects of your personality, with those other indriyas, as quickly as possible. That is what I was getting at when I was speaking of mindfulness colouring or suffusing the other faculties. None the less, tradition does enumerate them separately. So if one is explaining the five spiritual faculties as such to an audience, one cannot but deal with mindfulness separately howsoever one may modify that afterwards. But if one is just speaking about the spiritual life in general terms, without referring to the five spiritual faculties as such, it need not be necessary to speak of mindfulness as a quite distinct and separate faculty, if one thinks that that would be likely to give rise to misunderstanding.

Dhammaloka: I was not thinking so much of avoiding speaking of mindfulness. Perhaps I was not clear enough. I am thinking more of giving the right sort of

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impression of what is actually meant by mindfulness. It seems so often to happen that people do only take the dryer aspect of it.

S: But that is likely to be one's experience of it initially, as one tries to practise it as something opposed to spontaneity, something that you cannot in fact practise at the same time as you practise spontaneity. It is only gradually that you are able to bring the two things together. I suppose it depends to some extent with whom you are dealing. Tradition usually presents mindfulness as the balancing faculty, the faculty that balances faith and wisdom, meditation and energy not simply the state of balance that exists between them, but the

separate faculty which balances them. But one could, of course, say that, in the same way that it is not necessary to speak of mindfulness as a separate faculty in too literal a sense, that applies also to all four of the other spiritual faculties, because man's nature is in fact a unity. But there will be all the more unity if there is more mindfulness and awareness.

Tejananda: The third question is from Abhaya, on mindfulness and awareness.

Abhaya: In the course of our discussion this morning, Ratnaprabha commented that, of the words most often used to translate Smrti or sati, he considered 'awareness' to be by far the best. Attention was then drawn to the obvious advantages of 'mindfulness' and 'recollection'. These three are the alternatives you have offered over the years. This lecture refers to 'levels of awareness', and in the previous series you gave a lecture [called] 'From Alienated to Integrated Awareness'. Yet in the past few months you have talked about how 'mindfulness' tends to be neglected in the Movement, and that perhaps we need to have 'mindfulness' retreats. In teaching situations I always tend to say that the two words 'awareness' and 'mindfulness' are synonymous. Today Ratnaguna mentioned an instance in which you clearly differentiated between the two. What exactly is your position with regard to the use of these words?

S: I generally use them as synonymous, speaking as it were in a loose, non technical way. But if one looks at them more closely, no doubt one can define them in such a way that there is a fine shade of difference between them. It is not, of course, so much a question of whether mindfulness and awareness are the same thing, as of whether there are not, in our actual experience, two separate experiences which require therefore two distinct terms. There is also the fact that different translators translate Pali and Sanskrit technical terms in different ways. Guenther, for instance, habitually uses 'awareness' for jnana; sometimes, I think, for vidya. It is possible to think of vijnana as awareness rather than as consciousness. So it may be that I tend nowadays to use the word 'mindfulness' for Smrti or sati, perhaps I will not be too sure of this perhaps because 'awareness' or 'reflection' seems to come a little closer to vijnana. 'Awareness' seems to suggest a kind of mirror like quality, simply reflecting clearly what is there. 'Mindfulness' seems to have a connotation of trying to maintain oneself in a certain state, say a state of recollection. Do you see what I mean? If you say, 'He is very mindful', that has quite a different connotation from 'He is very aware'. If you say 'He is very mindful,' it suggests he is making an effort, in a way that 'He is very aware' does not. Do you see what I mean? So I think probably, on the whole, though I loosely use the terms mindfulness' and 'awareness' as roughly synonymous, I think probably, without suggesting that mindfulness necessarily is a more accurate translation of Smrti, the use of the term 'mindfulness' is more likely to give a more correct or more [155] clear impression of what one is actually talking about. The Buddha speaks of apamadena sampadetha. 'Apamadena' is often translated 'with mindfulness' though, again, it means something like 'with non heedlessness' in English a double negative. So you have got a number of terms. You have got not only 'awareness', not only 'recollection', not only 'mindfulness', but you have also got 'non heedlessness' or 'heedfulness'. 'Mindful' seems to refer more, usually, to what one is actually doing now. 'Heedful' suggests an awareness of possible consequences in English, I mean. Apamada in Pali suggests a state of being sort of carried away, even slightly intoxicated, as it were.

Abhaya: Except, Bhante, you have said that sampajanna is equivalent to 'mindfulness' clear comprehension of purpose which suggests an awareness of possible consequences.

S: Right. No, sampajanna does not suggest so much possible consequences as bearing in mind the purpose for which you are following a certain course of action, or performing a certain action; not an awareness of possible consequences in the broad general sense. For instance, when you, maybe, go into town with the express purpose of going to a particular shop and buying a certain article, you may be said to exercise sampajanna, clear comprehension of purpose, if you do just that and don't allow yourself to get distracted; go straight in, go straight to the shop, just buy that particular object, don't look at anything else, and come straight back. That is bearing in mind all the time the purpose of your visit and not allowing yourself to be deflected from that in any way. That is clear comprehension. So that is rather different from awareness or mindfulness of possible consequences of a particular course of action.

Abhaya: In that case, then, Bhante, could awareness of consequences be another element of mindfulness?

S: Oh yes, indeed. I think it is inseparable from it. I do not recollect that it has a separate term of its own, unless it is perhaps heedfulness pamado and apamado. One can see all these things hang together, don't they? And I think that the quality of clear comprehension of purpose, in particular, is closely associated with the development of individuality; because to maintain a consistent purpose is to have a consistent individuality. You can't really have an inconsistent individuality; that is a contradiction in terms. It is to have a character, also, in a sense. So when you lose your clear comprehension of purpose, it is not just a lapse of mindfulness, as it were; it is a lapse of being, one might say. It is a break in the continuity of your being as an individual. In respect of the purpose that you had originally, it is like lapsing into a state of unconsciousness. Quite a few people find it very difficult to maintain continuity of purpose; that comes out especially, of course, in the spiritual life, doesn't it? But it comes out also quite a lot in ordinary worldly life as well, it comes out all the time. If you have no continuity of purpose, if you have no clear comprehension of purpose, it means you are a prey to whatever distraction may assail you; you become very scattered, you become in fact torn to pieces. You don't merely become unmindful, you become a disintegrated person. That is a very unsatisfactory and very uncomfortable state to be in.

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Abhaya: Which is what happens in meditation, if you are distracted from

S: Yes, it happens also in meditation. If it is in fact your purpose to concentrate on a particular mantra, let us say, or on a particular practice, and you fail to do that, you are unable to sustain your clear comprehension of purpose. But perhaps it is not so much that you are unable to do that in connection with meditation, as though you do it easily on other occasions; perhaps, in the state of meditation, it becomes clearer to one that normally one lives in a state of absence of clear comprehension of purpose. You don't normally, all the time, have consciously before you the particular purpose which you are trying to fulfil. One either drifts or just responds in an ad hoc way to circumstances, or just gives in to the impressions of the moment, and so on. It is a very familiar state of affairs. So if one does fail to maintain clear comprehension of purpose, one does not break down altogether, of course, because there are other factors in you which are operating quite consistently, but those factors pertain to your lower nature; they are your instincts. So if you fail in clear comprehension of purpose, it really means that your instincts will just take over, and the fact that you are operating in accordance with your instincts will give, from a spiritual point of view or even from a human

point of view, a sort of pseudo unity and continuity to your actions and to your character. You will have the unity and continuity of an animal, virtually; but you will not have any conscious, or self-conscious, continuity or unity of purpose.

Abhaya: But is not this a term applied strictly to the spiritual life this sampajanna? Could you apply it to a man who has got a career and a definite objective, who would not be in an animal, instinctual mind state?

S: In a sense, you could, but then you would have to introduce the distinction between skilful and unskilful. Because if you set about planning to murder somebody there would be continuity of purpose, but it would be in an unskilful way. In the context of the Eightfold Path, in the context of mindfulness, clear comprehension of purpose is by definition skilful, but if you transfer the same concept to ordinary worldly life, which I think you can, although you may not use the same term, then you have to distinguish between a skilful and an unskilful continuity of purpose.

Surata: Can I just clarify this? So sampajanna, like mindfulness, has always got a sort of positive tang to it?

S: Yes, it is as it were essentially skilful.

Surata: So if there were unskilful elements it wouldn't be sampajanna any longer? You would have to find some other term?

S: Yes, you would have to find some other term. In Pali there is a compound: satisampajanna the two usually go together; generally translated into English as 'mindfulness and clear comprehension', but it is comprehension of purpose that is meant, not comprehension in a more general way. One can see how crucial this whole cluster of attributes or qualities is crucial to the spiritual life, to the development of true individuality.

Tejananda: Ratnaprabha has a question on the four types of sampajanna.

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Ratnaprabha: It is not a very long question. The commentaries give four aspects of sampajanna, or they say it is fourfold, namely: atthaka sampajanna "purpose", appaya "suitability", ocara "sphere", asammoha "undeludedness". You have spoken of clear comprehension of purpose; could you explain the other three aspects, saying whether they are different types of sampajanna?

S: This seems to be a commentarial refinement, but I will do the best I can. The other three seem to be related to purpose. But anyway, just give them to me one by one.

Ratnaprabha: Shall I just give you the English terms or the Pali too?

S: The Pali too.

Ratnaprabha: Sappaya, or suitability.

S: No was that the first?

Ratnaprabha: Well, the first one was satthaka, or purpose.

S: Well, that is clear, isn't it? Then?

Ratnaprabha: Sappaya, or suitability.

S: Now exactly would suitability mean in this connection? Clearly it is a suitability for something. It is difficult to see just from the word itself what exact sense the term has, but it might relate to the suitability of a certain means to the end in view, the purpose in view. Or it might be a question of suitability to the kind of person you are, that is to say if you were a monk, for instance, and not a lay person. I must say I am as it were guessing here; I am not as it were quoting from any sub commentary that I have read. But this is what it seems to me [to mean], if one has to try to make sense out of that distinction. Then the next one?

Ratnaprabha: Gocara, or sphere.

S: Yes, sphere is quite an interesting term. Gocara literally means 'pasture' go is 'cow', cara is to go, to walk, to experience where the cow walks, or pasture; or field in a general way. The gocara of a monk, for instance, will be skilful mental states; they represent the field in which he should move. Do you see what I mean? So what was the English translation you gave for gocara?

Ratnaprabha: Sphere.

S: Sphere, yes; the sphere of action, one might say; sphere of experience. I suppose that is related to suitability, in the second of the senses I mentioned that is, suitable in the sense of one's proper sphere of action, the proper sphere of action of a bhikkhu. I think that is the sort of connection that it has.

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Ratnaprabha: Do you mean that the sampajanna of sphere would be bearing in mind, or clear comprehension of, the proper sphere of action ?

S: Yes, the purpose, the real purpose of the bhikkhu's life, what was suitable for the bhikkhu, what he ought to be doing, what ought to be his purpose inasmuch as he is a bhikkhu. Again, I am as it were guessing, but I think this is not far from the mark, to say the least. I don't know whether there is any subcommentarial explanation of this commentarial division of the term. And then?

Ratnaprabha: The final one was asammoha, undeludedness.

S: I presume it means not making any mistake in these matters. It does seem to be rather a refinement, doesn't it? Because if you speak of clear comprehension to begin with, presumably that is undeluded anyway; but perhaps the commentator is just concerned to bring out more fully and more clearly all the different implications of the term. To what extent I have been able to do that I am not sure, but at least I have done it to some extent.

Ratnaprabha: So you would say that these are bringing out the different implications of the term sampajanna, rather than being different aspects of sampajanna or even different types of

sampajanna?

S: It comes to much the same thing, doesn't it? Because, in all cases, the term sampajanna just covers all four in some sense. Therefore they are all different senses of sampajanna, or different aspects, or different modes whatever one likes to term it.

Tejananda: Now Ratnaguna's question on your own formulation of levels of awareness.

Ratnaguna: Your four levels or dimensions of awareness differ from, but include, the four foundations of mindfulness. Why did you extend them in this way? (I think in a way the answer is obvious, but we wanted you to say it on tape.)

S: Why did I extend them?

Ratnaguna: Well, it's as if there are the four foundations of mindfulness, but you haven't used those; you have used, in a sense, your own four; but they include the four foundations of mindfulness. I wondered why you didn't use the traditional four.

S: Perhaps you should say 'Why I didn't confine myself to the traditional four?', because I do use them; but I place them, one might say, in a broader context. I spoke of those dimensions of awareness, as I have called them, because I considered them to be important. Possibly they are not mentioned, or at least not mentioned in that way, in that particular connection, in the tradition, because in a sense they were taken for granted. I speak of awareness of nature, don't I? but the Buddha's disciples lived in the midst of nature. One might even say they hardly needed to be made aware of it. Some of the gathas in the Theragatha, for instance, show that the bhikkhus were very aware of nature, very sensitive to nature, very sensitive to their natural surroundings. But in modern times, for often obvious reasons, we often lose that sort of awareness, simply because we are [159] not even in contact with nature to any great extent. I did think that that was important; that is to say, important that we should be more in contact with nature than we usually are. But, of course, you can't be in contact with nature unless you are aware of nature; so that particular dimension of awareness comes in, for us at least, in that more explicit way. Then, with regard to awareness of people; the Buddha speaks very clearly in terms of kalyana mitrata, spiritual friendship, so there cannot be any spiritual friendship unless there is awareness of the other person. It seems that you need to develop that, in a sense, almost before you can develop kalyana mitrata, or develop mitrata in any form; you have to see the other person as they are, not in terms, for instance, of one's own projections. So it is as though I am bringing into the framework of mindfulness or awareness certain things which were either taken for granted in the Buddha's day, or which existed, so to speak, not exactly in another form, but at least which were referred to in other terms. In other words, I am carrying the process of systematization a bit further, that's all especially in view of our particular needs here and now, in the twentieth century in the West.

Kuladeva: So what was implicit you have made more explicit?

S: Yes, in the case of the awareness of nature. In the case of awareness of people yes, you could say in that case, too: made explicit something that was implicit, because awareness of people is implicit in kalyana mitrata, though it is not distinctly stated. It is implicit inasmuch as you cannot in fact develop real kalyana mitrata unless you are really aware of the other person; so that, no doubt, needs to be brought out. Though, in the case of this particular

dimension, what the Buddha expressed in terms of spiritual friendship was expressed here in terms of awareness, so it means not just a bringing out but a translation, as it were, into slightly different terminology. Has anybody ever asked, in a class, say, why Bhante has introduced these two additional dimensions of awareness?

Ratnaguna: Not in a beginners' class or anything, but in a mitra study group people have asked. In a way, I find it a fairly obvious one, ... quite easily, but I just did want to hear what you had to say.

Tape 11, Side 1

Tejananda: The next question is from Ratnaprabha on reflexive consciousness and meditation.

Ratnaprabha: First there is a preliminary question to see whether the main question can be asked.

S: That's pretty cautious!

Ratnaprabha: Can one use the scale of the higher evolution of consciousness, from unconsciousness to simple consciousness, to rudimentary self-consciousness, to full self-consciousness, to transcendental consciousness, to absolute consciousness, as a scale or system for evaluating one's own moment by moment shifts in level of consciousness (at least theoretically?)

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S: It would seem so, yes.

Ratnaprabha: If so, I would like to know where the following states lie on that scale: a) The unmindful, drifting stage in meditation, where there seems to be no genuine reflexive awareness in the sense of 'being aware that I am aware'.

S: Well, it is pretty clear where you are! You are below that point what have I numbered it on the scale? Two; you are certainly below point 2, aren't you? Though, of course, one must say there are degrees of self-consciousness, and therefore degrees of absence of self-consciousness. Perhaps it is doubtful whether, at least in the waking state, a human being is ever totally unselfconscious. And then?

Ratnaprabha: Can I just go into that a bit? Is there a distinction between self-consciousness in the general sense and specifically reflexive awareness, in the sense of being aware that one is aware?

S: There is a sort of loose, popular or colloquial usage of the term self-consciousness, and I think I have made it clear on different occasions that I do not use the expression in that sense: I use it as synonymous with reflexive consciousness, that is to say, consciousness which is conscious of itself, or awareness that is aware of itself.

Ratnaprabha: The reason I asked that is that, in this state of drifting in meditation, when one becomes unmindful and is no longer following the meditation object, it would seem, taking it

literally, that I am no longer, strictly speaking, aware of being aware, although there is an awareness there but it is not a properly reflexive awareness.

S: I would say that what you have actually lost, primarily, is your awareness of purpose. You may not have lost your self-consciousness, because you may be aware that your mind is drifting but be unable to do very much about it. There are different degrees, also, one might say, of self-consciousness and therefore of lack or loss of self-consciousness. You may just have a vague feeling or vague awareness that there is something you ought to be doing that you are not doing, or even a vague awareness of yourself as having drifted, but it is not strong enough to recall you from the drifting.

Ratnaprabha: The kind of thing I am thinking of is where one is totally taken up by some train of thought, which has no relation at all to the meditation and where, as far as I am aware, I don't seem to have any memory of the meditation at all.

S: Well, you may be quite self-conscious with regard to that particular train of thought; in which case you have simply lost your sense of overall purpose with regard to the meditation. You have not necessarily lost your self-consciousness. You could be concentrating quite intently on something else, and be aware of yourself as concentrating on it quite intently, but being, to a greater or lesser degree, oblivious of the fact that you have shifted your attention, and you have lost sight of your original purpose. You may have become so fascinated by the new object that even though you are aware, maybe, in a vague, distant way, that the object is not the one that you started with, none the less you are not impelled to do anything about it; you do not just allow yourself to go on drifting but you [161] almost put yourself into the drift. The drift almost ceases to be a drift, it starts becoming almost purposive in its own right whether it is skilful or unskilful. Perhaps it is just a matter of looking at one's own experience and trying to analyse or sort out what actually does happen. All sorts of extraordinary things happen, clearly!

Ratnaprabha: I think this is why I am rather confused, because I have been trying to do this, and I have noticed this very, very strong difference in feeling tone between the state where I am following the meditation or even following a distraction but doing so as it were deliberately, and then the dog being carried away by a scent and just forgetting about its master altogether, which is more what it is like when I follow one of these trains of thought.

S: For instance, sometimes people have the experience that when they take up a second meditation practice say, a second visualization practice they start off doing the new visualization practice, including repeating the new mantra, but after a while unconsciously they slip into the old practice; so, clearly, this is in a sense not unskilful. You may be quite well concentrated, but you have lost, in terms of that particular session of practice, your comprehension of purpose, because it was not your purpose to do the old practice, it was your purpose to do the new practice. Some people, it seems, have found it for that very reason virtually impossible to take up a second practice. I think perhaps there are several reasons for this, but maybe I won't go into them now.

Abhaya: May I just clarify something you said earlier? Did you say that it is doubtful whether any human being is ever absolutely not self-conscious, or loses self-consciousness completely?

S: [Yes, but] I said 'in the waking state'.

Abhaya: That would include people, so to speak, whom you have referred to in the past as being human only in form that all their energy is taken up with food, sex and sleep, and

S: But none the less they have a vague consciousness of themselves as being engaged in that way; because, if you asked them 'What are you doing?' they can just stop and tell you what they are doing. They are capable of becoming objects to themselves. So that means that self-consciousness, in however rudimentary a form, is actually present. I believe it is correct to say that self-consciousness in that very, very rudimentary form is present in at least some of the higher apes, say in the chimpanzee; but that does not break down the distinction between the chimpanzee and the human being. It only goes to show that, though there is a difference between self-consciousness and lack of self-consciousness, it is very difficult in practice to pinpoint exactly where, in any given instance, that change does take place.

Abhaya: Could I just try and take this a bit further? When you are practising mindfulness, in the quotation that Dhammaloka gave, your mindfulness imbues the experience. You stress that a lot that there should be no sort of

S: Yes, an integrated awareness and not an alienated one.

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Abhaya: So in integrated awareness there is less and less what you call becoming an object to oneself.

S: No, I wouldn't say that at all. In a sense, you are an object to yourself, but you are not a sort of cold object, as it were.

Abhaya: You are a warm object.

S: You feel yourself, you feel for yourself and with yourself. The example I usually give, because I think it is a good one, is that of a musician totally absorbed in his playing, in his performance; but at the same time he is quite aware of himself as performing. He is aware of every movement that he makes, he is more aware perhaps than people are usually aware of themselves. But though he is aware of himself in that way, there is a fusion between himself and what he is doing, a fusion almost between his awareness and what he is aware of. None the less, self-consciousness is not in abeyance. Alienated awareness is essentially awareness without feeling, when you see something but you don't have the corresponding feeling. So it is just the same when the object, so to speak, is yourself: you can be aware of yourself without experiencing yourself fully. That is alienated awareness. In the same way, you can have a full experience of yourself and at the same time be aware of yourself, have self-consciousness i.e. you have integrated awareness.

Ratnaprabha: So, Bhante, clearly it is the ability, if you like, to become aware of oneself as an object, to imaginatively identify with others as well, that presumably is a characteristic of self-awareness, and even becomes possible on a rudimentary level at point 1 on the chart, at the arising of rudimentary self-awareness. However, the other definition you give of self-awareness, to do with 'being aware of being aware', in my own experience maybe I am giving it too high a value is something which only occurs sometimes, and not as often as I can

consider myself as an object. Are the two really the same thing, or the same process?

S: 'Being aware of being aware' as distinguished from ?

Ratnaprabha: As distinguished from the ability to see oneself as an object, or to imaginatively identify with others.

S: Being aware of yourself as being aware is in a way different from being aware of yourself as an object, but again it isn't because when you are aware of yourself as an object you are aware that that object is you! If you were aware of yourself as an object without being aware that it was you, you would be totally alienated. That would be a schizophrenic state, wouldn't it? So I think that, even in what one speaks of as awareness of oneself as an object, there is always, except when one is in a pathological state, an awareness that the object of which one is aware is in fact oneself, and therefore an awareness of being aware, at least to a slight extent.

Ratnaprabha: So the two states that I was raising in the question were the states of unmindfulness in meditation, of drifting away from the object of meditation, and the state of regaining mindfulness and returning to the object of meditation. So my original question was where these two states lie on the scale of the evolution of consciousness, and also: is it possible to say what is happening when one passes between these two states?

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S: It should be possible to look at one's own actual experience and see for oneself. Perhaps that could be a chapter workshop project. Yes, it is quite interesting. It might differ from one person to another. These are all sometimes quite complex processes.

Ratnaprabha: I have tried it myself, and although I can see in a general sense what general circumstances make me more likely to drift away, in a specific sense I find it completely unaccountable, both as to why I drift away and also how I manage to come back again.

S: I think there are several reasons of a general nature. I no doubt am not enumerating them all, but in the first instance a lot depends on the intensity of the initial comprehension of purpose. For instance, in the case of, say, meditation, you may sit down without a very strong intention of actually meditating. It may have become a sort of habitual thing; you just sit down and you sort of in a semimechanical, or maybe 90% mechanical, way, just start meditating, but you haven't actually started off with a very strong, clear, definite, even intense intention of meditating. So the very slight momentum, the very slight sense of purpose, with which you originally started is very quickly lost, for obvious reasons. Then again, even regardless of the degree of intensity with which you formulate that particular purpose when you start meditating, there is the question of the degree of variance between that particular purpose on that occasion and the overall purpose, so to speak, of your whole life. If there is too great a variance between them the overall purpose of your own life, so to speak well, overall purposes of your own life, because they may not be fully integrated will start tugging away at that relatively minor purpose that you have set up for yourself for that particular period of meditation. Then there is also the question of relative tiredness; because when you are tired your lower nature always takes over. This is one reason you must not allow yourself to get really tired. It is very difficult to sustain anything new or creative, or to build up any new pattern, when you are tired. It is almost impossible. So it could be that you are tired. And

if there is a combination of all three of these, well, obviously it is going to be very difficult to sustain your comprehension of purpose; even with one of them it is going to be quite difficult. So I think you have to be sure, 1) that the purpose that you set yourself when you sit to meditate is not too greatly at variance with the overall trend of your being for instance, that you should not sit down with the intention of meditating uninterruptedly for the next 10 hours or the next hour, if that is too much at variance with your present state of being and your overall intentions, as I have called them; 2) [that you] sit down with a very strong resolution, a very clearly formulated purpose of exactly what you are going to do, and a strong determination to do it; 3) and then make sure that you are fully rested and not tired. I think, if you make sure of these three things, it would be very surprising if you were not able to maintain your clear comprehension of purpose. There probably are other factors, too; I can't think of them at the moment, but these three are probably the most important, anyway. I am taking it for granted that such factors are present as freedom from external disturbance; that you have not just had a heavy meal, because that will tend to bring about drowsiness and sleepiness; that you do not have any great worries on your mind; that you are in a reasonably good state of health; that you are not hungry. [164] I think, if you meditate regularly, it is very important to make sure that you sit to meditate with that very clear, very conscious comprehension of purpose, and a very definite resolution actually to meditate, and meditate well, and with all your energy.

Ratnaprabha: In that context, Bhante, do you think there might be some verses that could be chanted or recited before meditation that would be more directly related to meditation itself, rather than, say, the Tiratana Vandana or the Refuges and Precepts?

S: I think there are. I can't think of any offhand. One can, for instance, recite verses or formulas expressive of the shortness of human life, the rarity of the opportunity of a human birth, the difficulty of making contact with the teachings, to remind oneself as it were of the urgency of the situation. That would no doubt help very much, too.

Surata: The Root Verses are very good for that, aren't they?

S: Yes, one could certainly use the Root Verses. In the Zen tradition they emphasize this very much, don't they? that you should meditate as though your life depended on it, as though someone was standing over you with a sword and ready to cut your head off if your mind started wandering.

Sudhana: May I quote Johnson on this subject? He said: 'You can depend on it, Sir, if a man knows he is to be hanged in two weeks, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.'

S: Yes but what does it concentrate it on? I suppose Johnson meant it concentrates it on God, perhaps, or just concentrates it in a general way, even.

Abhaya: I suppose Zen monks actually got to that point, where they did actually feel in that state.

S: Yes! Yes, I am sure they did. And perhaps still do.

Abhaya: Do you think that's a healthy thing?

S: It depends, I think, on the circumstances. We must not forget that when the Buddha sat down beneath the Bodhi tree, according to legend, before his Enlightenment, there is a verse in the Dhammapada no, another passage in which he is represented as saying that 'Flesh and blood may dry up, and my veins may wither, but I will not move from this spot until I have gained Enlightenment.' That utterance is typical of the sort of determination that is required. Anyway, the general point I am making in this connection is that, if you do a daily meditation practice, the chances are that it will become just a sort of routine, and therefore that you won't, when you start meditating, have that strong, even intense, clear comprehension of purpose in relation to your meditation practice; so one has to beware of that. I think it is a good practice to apply clear comprehension of purpose to whatever it is one is doing. One will function then much more efficiently and effectively and happily, and get more done. Though, again, that does not mean one must be goal oriented in an obsessive, even neurotic, way; one must be determined but, strange as it may sound, in a relaxed sort of way. Though on second thoughts, perhaps, on certain occasions at least, it does not matter if you are really keyed [165] up and in a sense almost tense. One doesn't want to rule that kind of experience out altogether. But I think, yes, you should start off in a comparatively relaxed way, and let your determination gather momentum as you get more and more deeply into the practice.

Ratnaprabha: Are you talking specifically of meditation now?

S: Er no, not necessarily. Determination and intense comprehension of purpose is not to be confused with hurrying or trying to rush things or being impatient or greedy for results, or anything of that sort.

Tejananda: Now Abhaya on mindfulness and the development of thinking.

S: Before hearing Abhaya's question, it occurs to me that clear comprehension of purpose can be applied to thinking. You then have directed thinking; as when you just sit down quietly to think about something, to think something out, to think something through; it may be something practical, it may be something theoretical. But one should discipline oneself to think about the thing that you have decided to think about, without allowing the mind to drift off into other things. Do you see what I mean? It is quite important to develop the capacity for directed thinking in this way; otherwise you will never be able to think things out or think things through. You probably won't arrive at a better or deeper or clearer understanding of things.

Abhaya: That does partly answer the question. You have said a lot over recent years about the importance of improving our thinking, of working directly on it. The passage on mindfulness of thinking in the lecture seems to imply that, if one applies mindfulness to one's thinking, it will spontaneously improve, spontaneously become more directed. Is it true that thinking clarifies quite naturally by virtue of mindfulness? If so, is this the chief way of improving thinking?

S: I am not so sure that thinking does improve naturally or spontaneously simply by virtue of the fact that you become aware of it. Mindfulness of the thinking process seems to consist simply in that mindfulness or awareness of whatever process of thought is actually going on; but I think, if one is to develop directed thinking to a greater degree, you need to make a special effort, an additional effort, in a sense, to do that. I doubt very much whether it will arise spontaneously just out of your awareness or mindfulness of the thinking process. I think

the fact that you are aware or mindful of the thinking process will have a slightly, even a somewhat, integrating and unifying effect on that thinking process, but I think it will take a very, very long time for that integration, that unification, to arrive at the point of greater directedness. I think, therefore, that one would have to make a definite, a special, effort to make one's thinking more directed. But perhaps awareness of the thinking process would help indirectly, because you would very quickly become aware, perhaps, of how scattered your thinking was, how undirected, how ununified, how unpurposive. Very often we decide things, for instance, on the spur of the moment this is diverging slightly. You know you have got to arrive at a certain decision, perhaps a practical decision, so you ought really to sit down and apply yourself to that particular question in a sustained and directed way, and then come to a sensible, maybe a logical, conclusion, and then [166] act upon it. But often what happens [is that] we sit down if we do sit down and we turn the matter over in our mind, but then we start thinking of all sorts of other things, even quite irrelevant things, or we are not really trying to come to a decision; but then, eventually, the time for decision comes. We have got to make a decision. And then we make it, more often than not, just on the basis of how we are feeling at that particular moment, or in response to maybe some external pressure or something that happens of a quite accidental nature. So the decision then is perhaps not properly based, because we have not been able to think our way through to that decision in a logical and connected way, which means a directed and purposive way. I think we find that that sort of thing is happening all the time.

Abhaya: It's true, also, with things like writing, isn't it? You've got the deadline to make for an article, and you just haven't thought it through clearly, but you've got to have it in in six hours' time and that sort of forces you into an unsatisfactory train of thought. Better than nothing.

S: Yes. Well, in accepting commissions you must plan your time, obviously; otherwise you sometimes are in the position of ending up having to do your thinking in a hurry. You can do your writing in a hurry that's all right; but you shouldn't have to do your thinking in a hurry. I think that is fatal. Though, again I mustn't over generalize; I have often I was going to say often done my own thinking in a hurry, but, no, that isn't quite right, again. I was thinking of situations in India where I am giving a full-length lecture on a quite different subject every night for weeks on end. So, yes, in a sense I do my thinking quickly, because I have just got half an hour to prepare a few notes. But, the thinking is with regard to the arrangement of the material. The thinking is not with regard to the material itself. That thinking was usually done years, not to say decades, ago. It is just a question of thinking with regard to the presentation. So the same thing applies to writing: provided you have done your basic thinking, you can write and you can do whatever thinking is required to arrange your material, very quickly and under pressure. But your basic thinking you cannot and should not do under any kind of pressure.

Sudhana: Do any special conditions come to your mind that are ideal or suitable for basic thinking? Should you be on a

S: Personally, I would say solitude. Because few things are more painful than being deeply involved in a train of sustained and directed thinking and you are just interrupted, and that chain of thinking is broken off, it's snapped, and it can sometimes be very subtle and intangible and delicate. So I think you need to be sure that you are going to be free from interruption for whatever length of time you need, which may be half an hour or an hour, or it

may be weeks and even months together. You can give yourself practice, perhaps, by doing mental exercises in your head perhaps doing mental arithmetic, things like that. Nowadays, of course, everybody has pocket calculators, which are very bad in that respect. You get less mental exercise. It should be possible for you to do accounts in your head. It is not quite the same thing as sustained and directed creative thinking, but it does require a certain amount of application and continuity of attention, at least. I believe chess players are capable of doing this sort of thing, aren't they? They can work out many, many moves in advance, and that clearly requires very great [167] powers of concentration. This is why perhaps a lot of mental tension is associated with important chess tournaments; even frayed tempers, sometimes.

Sudhana: May I just ask one more thing? Does mantra recitation exercise your mind in a way that will aid your thinking?

S: I don't think so not the mere repetition, because it is repetition, it is the same thing over and over again; which would concentrate the mind, concentrate it on a single thing, on a single point; and this, in the long run, will help you with sustained and directed thinking, in the sense of creative thinking, but you will have to make a special effort to develop that sustained and directed thinking; it will not arise naturally out of the concentration, whether on the mantra or on anything else. Not unless you have a very strong natural propensity to inquire into things, so that the minute you are concentrated you start actually thinking in a directed way. But that, I think, is quite rare.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, you mentioned that some trains of directed thought might really require several months uninterrupted to be completed. Do you find that your own circumstances mean that there are some kinds of thinking that you would like to do but which you are just unable to do?

S: Yes, I think that is true. Because you can keep a certain amount going on in the midst of other activities, while breaking off; but there are some very extensive trains of thought that you need to continue uninterruptedly for quite long periods, and that certainly is not possible at Padmaloka, I think, for anybody which, in some ways, is a pity. Think of someone, say, like Kant, who actually thought out the Critique of Pure Reason to take that example before he put pen to paper. He is said to have written the work in five months, because he had it worked out in his head beforehand. That would have required an incredible degree of prolonged concentration, because it is a highly abstract work, and a very complex, difficult work. I remember, years ago and even now, to some extent I used to be able to compose quite a number of poems mentally and then write them down when I got the opportunity. I can still do this to some extent. I can still compose, say, up to 100 lines of poetry mentally and write them down afterwards. Not so easily as before; I have to write them down quite quickly, otherwise they just evaporate. For instance, that poem I wrote on Dr Johnson a couple of years ago: I composed practically the whole of that, all except the last few lines, mentally at one stretch while I was lying awake in bed in the middle of the night. I think prose is more difficult! It is not easy to remember a long sentence, even of prose, that you have composed in that way. It is very easy to forget.

Abhaya: What as regards books? You mentioned Kant, and that was a highly abstract work. A work of yours, say, a book you sometimes say you've got a whole book in mind. Does that mean you have got a sort of vague outline, or actually sketched out?

S: I have got a rough outline, a rough rather than vague outline. I haven't got the sequence of paragraphs, for instance, and certainly haven't got the phraseology. But the general drift
Abhaya: You've got a whole chapter and contents -

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S: and trend of a book, and the way it will unfold, the kind of emphasis, the actual ideas I want to put across. Those are sort of mapped out mentally. But there is still a very great deal of work to be done. Perhaps, even so, one has in a sense only done a tenth of the work.

Sudhana: What about in the case of a genius like Mozart, for example, who was reported to have said that he had the whole of The Magic Flute in his head, and to get it composed was just a matter of mere scribble? Did he have sampajanna?

S: No, that seems to have been something different ...

Tape 11, Side 2

From what I remember, he said that he heard the whole work simultaneously, which would seem to be a different mode of apprehension altogether, spatial rather than temporal, and that he sort of translated it into the temporal mode; he sort of unwound it, as it were, in the process of as it were composition or just writing it out. This is what I understood at the time when I read this particular thing. But, as I said, that is different. How are we going on?

Tejananda: We have two more questions. Ratnaprabha has one on the effects of the four levels of awareness.

Ratnaprabha: Concluding the lecture, you say: 'Such are the four principal levels of awareness: awareness of things, awareness of oneself, awareness of people, and above all awareness of Reality; and each one of these has its own distinctive effect on the person practising it. Through awareness of things as they really are, we become free from the taint of subjectivity.

S: One could even say conditionality in general but let that pass.

Ratnaprabha: Awareness of oneself refines our psycho physical energy. Awareness of people stimulates.

S: Yes, depending on the kind of people!

Ratnaprabha: ' Finally, awareness of Reality transmutes, transfigures and transforms.' Can you expand on this, and say whether this passage is describing a progressive process in the development of awareness?

S: In a sense it is, because the objects of awareness do seem to represent an ascending series. Your material environment, yourself, then other people which really means yourself and other people and then Reality itself. Yes. It does seem to be cumulative and progressive.

Ratnaprabha: I was hoping you might say a little more about each of these. I wasn't quite sure I understood them. Shall I read them out again, the particular ways you describe the four

awarenesses?

S: Yes.

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Ratnaprabha: First, 'through awareness of things as they really are, we become free from the taint of subjectivity.'

S: Yes; well, free from things like projections.

Ratnaprabha: 'Awareness of oneself refines our psycho physical energy.' Are you talking there about higher states of consciousness specifically?

S: It would amount to the same thing. The more aware you are of yourself, the more refined your being does become, the more deeply you saturate your own being with your own consciousness of yourself.

Ratnaprabha: And then 'awareness of people stimulates'. Again, are you just thinking of friendship and conversation?

S: Yes, I am thinking of mutual awareness, especially in the form of kalyana mitrata; stimulating in the sense of encouraging one another to be more aware. Your awareness of him will increase his awareness of himself and his awareness of you, his awareness of you will stimulate your awareness of yourself and therefore of him. And so on. One finds this in the communication exercises.

Ratnaprabha: And well, I think the last one is clear enough you say 'Awareness of Reality transmutes, transfigures and transforms'.

S: Yes. Well, I think that is clear, yes.

Ratnaprabha: So you could say that is the Path of Vision, presumably?

S: Yes. Right.

Tejananda: The final question comes from Dhirananda via Ratnaprabha.

Ratnaprabha: Dhirananda asked me to bring up this question if we could, because he has been translating this series of lectures, and he has been having some trouble with finding an appropriate translation into Swedish of the word consciousness. So he has headed this: 'The use of the word consciousness [can consciousness be unconscious?]'

S: He discussed this with me.

Ratnaprabha: Oh, he has already discussed it?

S: Yes, we had quite a talk about it.

Ratnaprabha: Ah! Well, it could be that there is no need for me to read this out, although it

would get it on tape, presumably.

S: I don't know whether I can reproduce what I said, because we did have a quite thorough discussion about it. It is difficult to just reproduce it. Anyway, read through the question.

Ratnaprabha: (Dhirananda's question): From the way people use the word 'consciousness' it seems to refer either to an aspect, or a certain activity or function, of the whole [170] being, inseparable from it as the keenness of the knife is inseparable from the knife itself; or to a distinct entity, maybe with the capacity to exist independently, for instance, of the body. In the first sense, 'consciousness' is synonymous with 'awareness', but in the second sense it seems to have taken over some of the connotations of the word 'soul'. Maybe the first meaning corresponds more to a scientific tradition here in the West and the second meaning more to a religious tradition.

S: It does seem to me in this connection that if 'consciousness' is used to translate vijnana perhaps it would be better rendered as 'awareness', because it is a sort of reflecting, mirror like faculty. There is certainly no suggestion, when one speaks of sense consciousness, mind consciousness, of anything like a soul; though, again, when one uses the word vijnana in the sense of 'in dependence on the last consciousness associated with the present life there arises the first consciousness associated with the next life', something like soul does seem to be suggested though not, obviously, in a static, unchanging way. But in the context, as I said, of the terminology of eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness and then mind consciousness, the term vijnana is really probably better represented and less ambiguously represented by 'awareness' than by 'consciousness'.

Ratnaprabha: On the basis of this, he has three questions: 1) Is there in Buddhism any concept which corresponds at all closely to 'consciousness' in the second sense, i.e. as an entity, or is this whole idea a misconception and something to beware of when one uses the word 'consciousness'?

S: Well, in Buddhism there is never a conception of consciousness as an entity in The sense of an unchanging entity; but certainly vijnana is used in the secondary sense that I have just mentioned. So if one translated vijnana in that sense by the term 'soul', one would have to make it clear that that soul was not an unchanging or a static entity, but something which was itself in a process of change and even development.

Ratnaprabha: Then he raises the you mentioned about the last moment of consciousness; he says: 2) If there is no idea of 'consciousness' as an entity in Buddhism, what about the practice of Transference of Consciousness? What is transferred if not consciousness?

S: I think this is a question of semantics, because when we speak of something we cannot help speaking of it as though it was a thing, but actually it is a process. You might say, if you say to me 'Please give me an apple,' you are asking to be given an entity, so therefore in asking someone to give you an apple you declare your belief in entities. But actually an apple is not a fixed, unchanging entity; it is actually a whole series of processes, which you could actually see if you put the apple under a sufficiently powerful microscope. This applies to anything, physical or mental. You may treat it as though it was an entity; and Buddhism, linguistically and otherwise, may treat things as though they were entities, but it knows quite well that they are not entities, that they are processes. This applies to the so-called vijnana, in

the second sense, as well as to anything else.

Ratnaprabha: The third question is the one that raises [the subject of] unconsciousness: 3) What about a state of unconsciousness, like someone being in a coma? Either one has to assume that the consciousness has disappeared, in which case the question arises: how does it reappear

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again? Or one has to assume that it continues to exist throughout the unconscious state, in which case the paradoxical situation arises of consciousness being unconscious.

S: I think it is just a semantic question, not to say a semantic confusion. One has to work out the whole question, or rephrase the whole question, in terms which do not suggest any fixed or unchanging entity; in terms of conditionality. It is a bit like asking 'Where does the darkness go when it becomes light?' That is taking 'darkness' as an entity which has somehow been suppressed and therefore which needs to be located. When we discussed the matter, Dhirananda stuck more exclusively to matters of translating that term. Perhaps he thought of these questions afterwards. Is that it?

Tejananda: That's it, yes.

S: So tomorrow is the last one.

Voices: Thanks very much, Bhante.

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Day 8 Tape 12, Side 1

Tejananda: ... starting with one from Ratnaprabha on Theravada and Mahayana conceptions of samadhi.

Ratnaprabha: In the lecture you distinguish two kinds of samadhi, or two T definitions of the word samadhi: the first as concentration and the second as synonymous with Enlightenment; and you mention that the second is usually a Mahayana definition, while normally in the Theravada the first is used.

S: Though I perhaps should add, as I think I have made clear elsewhere, that there is an intermediate sense of samadhi even in the Theravada, which is lokuttara samadhi; as when one speaks of apanihita samadhi and sunyata samadhi and animitta samadhi, which are samadhis corresponding to the vimoksas of those names. These are the states of concentration in which one has the kind of Insight corresponding to those vimoksadvaras or doors to liberation, as they are called. So one might say that in the Theravada there is mundane samadhi and also Transcendental samadhi, but that in the Mahayana, in addition to those two samadhis, Enlightenment itself is sometimes spoken of in terms of samadhi. One must also say that, in the Mahayana, there are thousands of Transcendental samadhis; there are not simply those three corresponding to the doors of liberation, but many, many others are enumerated. I am not sure where that leaves your question.

Ratnaprabha: It leaves it floundering! Well, it basically answers my question.

S: In the Mahayana all these different samadhis, [which] in a sense developed out of the samadhis corresponding to the three vimoksadvaras, represent different angles from which one can approach the experience of Enlightenment. It is as though the Enlightenment experience doesn't have as it were three different aspects or three avenues of access but hundreds and thousands and even millions. Some Mahayana texts speak of 'innumerable samadhis'. So it is samadhis in that sense the samadhis in the sense in which the three samadhis associated with the vimoksadvaras are samadhis.

Tejananda: The vimoksa what is that second word?

S: Dvara, or door.

Abhaya: And are the three vimoksadvaras all termed lokuttara samadhi?

S: Yes, transcendental.

Ratnaprabha: So samadhi as the final stage on the Eightfold Path which of these three levels of samadhi would that correspond to?

S: I suppose if one was thinking in terms of the Theravada, one could say that it corresponded to or consisted of the three vimoksadvaras or the three samadhis corresponding to the three vimoksadvaras. But if one was thinking in terms of the Mahayana, it would correspond to Enlightenment itself.

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Ratnaprabha: So could one see the Transcendental samadhi in the Theravada teaching as being roughly equivalent, really, to the Mahayana view of samadhi?

S: In a way, one could, except that the Mahayana, as it usually does, has brought out the implications of the original Buddhist teaching much more fully and much more clearly.

Ratnaprabha: So if we compare the mundane Eightfold Path and the Transcendental Eightfold Path, could one say that on the mundane Eightfold Path, samadhi as concentration could be considered as the eighth stage, and on the Transcendental Eightfold Path the transcendental samadhi or the Mahayana samadhi would be the eighth stage?

S: Yes, provided that by concentration in that sense one understands all the four or even all the eight dhyanas.

Ratnaprabha: In other words, samadhi in the sense of the seventh stage of the twelve positive nidanas, just before ... Insight?

S: Yes, one could say that. That would in fact be technically correct.

Tejananda: The second question is from Ratnaguna on lower and higher degrees of samadhi as not mutually exclusive.

Ratnaguna: Can I just quote you from the lecture, Bhante? You say: 'Now although samadhi in the sense of concentration and samadhi in the sense of Enlightenment are quite distinct and not to be confused, it is important to understand that they are not really mutually exclusive. Perhaps one would not be going far wrong if one described them as the lower and higher degrees of the same experience, or at least of the same type of experience. So the question is: in what way can they be described as the lower and higher degrees of the same type of experience?

S: Inasmuch as when you gain Enlightenment, let us say, you don't lose your concentration. In respect of concentration, in respect of integration, they are so to speak continuous. Read that quote again and you will see I have worded it very carefully.

Ratnaguna: Yes, we noticed that. Well, we did see in fact that you had worded it very clearly and that there was really nothing wrong, except it just seemed a bit strange to make that point that they are lower and higher degrees of the same experience.

S: But then I qualify that.

Ratnaguna: Or at least 'of the same type of experience'.

S: Yes. You see? By 'the same type of experience' I mean the same type of concentrated experience. It illustrates the general feature of the Path, that when you ascend to a higher stage you don't leave behind the lower stage; the lower stage is as it were taken up into the higher stage and comprehended in a broader unity, one might say. So there is continuity between them in that sense not in the sense simply that there is only a difference of degree between them, because [174] in respect of mundane samadhi and Transcendental samadhi one could not say that. Even though whatever was gained in mundane samadhi was not lost in Transcendental samadhi, none the less, inasmuch as one is mundane and the other is Transcendental they are not strictly continuous in the sense of the one being nothing but a higher degree of the other. So there is continuity in respect of concentration; the lower is not as it were left behind; it is taken up into, and in a sense preserved in, the higher. None the less there is a vitally important difference inasmuch as one is mundane and the other is Transcendental.

Ratnaguna: I think the confusion arose from not quite understanding why you were making that point.

S: I think I perhaps did not want people to think in terms of, say, jumping from one utterly discrete step to another utterly discrete step.

Tejananda: The third question is from Surata on visualization.

Surata: I expect it will be a yes or no answer. In the samatha section of the lecture, you mention the practice of concentration on an image or picture of the Buddha. Do you think this practice could be usefully taken up by Order Members as an adjunct to their visualization practice?

S: Well, why does one need an adjunct to a visualization practice which is itself a visualization practice?

Surata: I suppose what I was thinking of was that, say probably for myself I could not expect to find the time to do this during my working time at my centre but if I went on a solitary retreat I could perhaps isolate, say, that part of the visualization and put extra time on it ...

S: You mean a picture of the same figure that you are visualizing?

Surata: Yes.

S: Oh, yes, I think that would be helpful yes, as a constant reminder. And also, even though you may look at it quite casually you are, even if unconsciously, taking in the features of that particular form: the colour, the shape, the ornaments, proportions and so on. So, yes, it is good to have it around. It certainly does help.

Surata: Maybe even you mentioned this thing about seeing your mind as a blue sky; maybe that could be another part that one could put extra emphasis on, say, on a solitary retreat.

S: Well, you could paint the whole of one wall blue and put your picture or painting of the Buddha or Avalokitesvara right in the middle of that. Or at least you could hang up a blue backdrop. If ever we get our own permanent solitary retreat centre or cell, perhaps we could arrange something like that permanently: have one wall just painted a light blue.

Tejananda: Fourthly, Ratnaguna on the subtle counterpart of the metta bhavana.

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Ratnaguna: I will just quote you again, Bhante: 'Samatha is often divided into three degrees or levels or grades: that of concentration on a gross, i.e. material, object, that of concentration on a subtle counterpart of the gross object, and that of the state of absorption into the subtle counterpart of the gross object.'

S: Ah, I seem to remember that I have had a very lengthy discussion about this on some other occasion recently.

Ratnaguna: On the metta bhavana?

S: It must have been with the chairmen. We sorted out the classification of these grades because that is slightly different from another classification. We worked it out that overall there were four grades, as it were. But that was a quite lengthy and complex discussion. I don't want to repeat it all, even if I could remember it. But, anyway, what was the question? Let's go on to that.

Ratnaguna: I was just wondering whether the metta bhavana practice is included here, in this schema

S: It can be correlated. At least, it is correlated by Buddhaghosa. I must say I can't remember the details. You can look it up in The Path of Purification, but to the best of my recollection he says that when you no longer make a distinction between self, friend, neutral and enemy when your metta is equal in respect of those four that corresponds to absorption. So I think that the other details you would need to look up for yourself.

Ratnaguna: Absorption being the third level?

S: Yes, indeed: apana samadhi. There is that lengthy section in the Visuddhi Magga on the metta bhavana.

Tejananda: Now a question from Ratnaprabha on the order in which Perfect Effort and Perfect Mindfulness appear in the Eightfold Path.

Ratnaprabha: If one regards the Eightfold Path as consisting of successive stages, then viyama(?) or effort comes before sati or mindfulness. In the series, you describe effort primarily in terms of developing positive mental states in meditation. On the other hand, in the series of the seven Bodhyangas, we have mindfulness coming before what is it called, the second one?

S: Dhammavicaya.

Ratnaprabha: Dhammavicaya which seems to correspond quite closely to effort. I was wondering why mindfulness had not been put much earlier

S: I am not so sure that it does correspond so much. Dhammavicaya is the classification of mental states as regards their being either skilful or unskilful. First you are aware, Smrti, of your mental state, which is of course a composite thing; and then dhammavicaya means you start investigating your mental states dhamma here meaning mental state, not Dharma in the sense of teaching you start investigating your mental states, you start discriminating between those which are skilful and those which are unskilful, and then, by means of virya, the third bodhyangas, you start eliminating the unskilful and cultivating the skilful. [176] I am

not so sure to what extent that can be correlated with the Noble Eightfold Path. I don't remember that it is actually correlated in any of our sources. Perhaps it could be, but one has to make sure that one is dealing with the same kind of thing. The Eightfold Path represents an overall path of practice, whereas in the case of the Bodhyangas it seems to represent more just a sequence of mental states or experiences. So perhaps one needs to compare them and to try to correlate them, bearing that in mind. For instance, the earlier stages of the Eightfold Path Right Speech, Right Action, Right [Livelihood] those are concerned with definite activities, specific activities. But in the seven Bodhyangas there is no mention of specific activities in that way. One seems to be concerned entirely with mental cum spiritual states and experiences. Therefore, the question arises in what sense or to what extent one can compare the Eightfold Path with the seven Bodhyangas. They seem, up to a point, at least in certain respects, to be concerned with two different things, or rather with two rather distinctive approaches. So, before trying to compare two things, one should ask oneself whether they can in fact be compared, and if so to what extent they can be compared. It is true that in both cases you have got a progressive sequence, but they seem to be different kinds of progressive sequence; or perhaps progressive sequences organized upon slightly different principles.

Dhammaloka: Leaving the possible comparison between the Noble Eightfold Path and the seven Bodhyangas aside, I still find it rather difficult to understand the logic of this progression from Perfect Effort to Perfect Mindfulness to Perfect Samadhi. You have been very much dealing with meditation in the sense of the dhyanas in Perfect Effort, and in the lecture on Perfect Samadhi you have been very much dealing with meditation [as] samadhi in

the higher sense. If one sees the Noble Eightfold Path as a path of successive stages, why mindfulness in between ...?

S: Mindfulness is usually considered the penultimate stage of the path, because if mindfulness is practised in the full sense you in a way spontaneously almost approach to a samadhi state. The practice of mindfulness has a naturally concentrating and integrating effect on you, and brings you very close to samadhi.

Dhammaloka: To samadhi even in the higher sense?

S: Higher samadhi in the sense of concentration.

Dhammaloka: Which you have dealt with in Perfect Effort, already?

S: Yes, because one must also bear in mind that when one is practising a particular stage of the Eightfold Path it does not mean that the others are entirely absent. In a sense, all of them are present all the time. One is not even really dealing with steps of the Path; one must remember that anga is not 'step', anga is 'limb' or 'shoot'.

Dhammaloka: Yes. In a way, both those images are suggestive, aren't they, because limbs you could arrange them like a flower, but 'path'

S: Yes. But, at the same time, the term 'path' is used. Though it is interesting also that, in the case of the seven Bodhyangas, the same term anga is used as in atangika magga. So perhaps that suggests that the emphasis is to be more on 'anga' than on 'step', despite the term Path. [177] One can say that each anga cultivated to the fullest possible extent goes beyond itself, in a way, because it is not just a step which ends where the other begins. It is a shoot which overlaps, in a sense, with successive shoots. Therefore, if you cultivate mindfulness, you start getting samadhi, but samadhi in its fullness you develop not just by going on and on developing mindfulness, but by going back a little bit to a more basic mindfulness, and then again proceeding. If one wants to illustrate it, one can say there are sort of shoots like this [drawing] there are two shoots; there is the mindfulness, you see, and there is the samadhi. So you can go on developing the mindfulness, but it sort of corresponds to medium samadhi level. Do you see what I mean? So you have got that sort of arrangement, and not this sort of arrangement.

Ratnaprabha: A bit like a leek with eight leaves, perhaps; so that, as each new leaf develops from the centre, the other ones are still growing.

S: Or, a better correspondence: a cheese plant.

Ratnaprabha: Yes.

S: I am afraid that is a rather neglected specimen, but if you look at my fine, well cared for specimen in my study you will see it more clearly!

Dhammaloka: I find that seems to be well illustrated by the word unfoldment ... as one leaf unfolds, the others do at the same time to some extent; not just one first.

Abhaya: Just one point of clarification. You cultivate mindfulness, and eventually you get to samadhi in the sense of concentration. Then if you want to develop the higher samadhi you what did you say?

S: Well, in a sense you slightly backtrack, just as you do when you want to develop vipassana after developing samadhi; that is to say, you stop as it were specializing in the lower anga, the lower limb. You cease as it were refining and refining upon it, because however much you refine it that by itself will not take you to the next anga, or if you like the next step. I think at the same time it is quite important to consult one's own experience and actually see what happens; because all these formulations are supposed to be formulations of what people actually experience. So actually the answers are all there within you. One has only got to look and see, really; or carefully observe oneself at different times and in different situations. If you didn't have a mind, there would be some point in asking me, you might say, but since you have a mind, in just the same way that I have, you can consult it. I do no more than that. Apart from the fact that I can also refer to my reading in the scriptures; but, as regards reading in the scriptures, there are several who are rapidly catching up on me now, so there is not much point in asking some, at least, of the questions. Do you see what I mean?

Abhaya: Toad (?) question time!

S: I wasn't referring to your question specifically, but I was just making a general point. A lot of questions can be answered by consulting one's own experience. This is what Berkeley was insisting upon. Didn't we talk about Berkeley the other evening? No, it must have been over supper. Berkeley kept asking his imaginary objector to look into his own mind, his own experience, and

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ask himself whether he did actually himself directly perceive a material object. It was not a question of argument or discussion or proof or demonstration; it was just a question of each person actually asking themselves, looking into their own experience and inquiring whether in fact they did perceive a material object; because he was quite sure that one did not. He did not want to spend time convincing people if they believed otherwise; he asked them simply to look and see for themselves, because he was quite convinced that, if they did, they would see things the way that he saw them.

Abhaya: Didn't Dr Johnson refute him by kicking a big rock and saying

S: Ah, but he didn't really consult his own experience. He didn't reflect; he didn't ask himself what was happening. He misinterpreted his own experience.

Abhaya: But it was Berkeley he was trying to refute?

S: Yes, Berkeley. He didn't refer to Berkeley, but I think Boswell says: 'I discussed one day with Dr Johnson Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry' I think he calls it 'and said that we all know that it is a sophistry and it is wrong, but it is impossible to refute it.' So Johnson said: 'I refute it thus!' and kicked a stone, which was really quite beside the point. I don't know how serious Johnson was.

Ratnaguna: Bhante, just to say one more thing on this. In your exposition of Perfect Effort,

you seem to identify the four efforts with meditation. Is that traditional? Is Perfect Effort linked that much with ?

S: I don't think so much emphasis is placed on it as I have placed here, but it does seem to logically follow. Because if your Perfect Effort consists in elimination of unskilful mental states and the cultivation of skilful mental states, what can that result in but an experience of the dhyanas? because the dhyanas are essentially, as I have explained on other occasions, an uninterrupted flow, an uninterrupted sequence, of skilful mental states. So your aim in practising Perfect Effort is to attain dhyana states.

Ratnaguna: I think the question came from the fact that Perfect Effort seems to be associated with meditation, followed by Perfect Mindfulness, followed by

S: So one might say that, if you have the Perfect Effort cultivated to the point of the dhyanas, and if those dhyanas are mundane, then as between the Perfect Effort and the Perfect Mindfulness and concentration, let us say, which you experience later on, there is no difference of degree. A difference of degree comes in only if a Transcendental element enters into and becomes associated with the effort or the mindfulness. If it does, then as between the effort and the mindfulness on the one hand, and the concentration or samadhi on the other, there is a difference of kind inasmuch as the samadhi is then Transcendental. One could say that an important difference between mindfulness and samadhi is that mindfulness is concerned not only with the inner flow of thoughts but also with external actions, even with speech. But in the case of samadhi, or the practice of concentration, the concern is only with mental states. So it is as it were more restricted, and therefore more concentrated. So, yes, there is an element of concentration both in virya and in mindfulness, but in samadhi, the last stage, there is only concentration, one may say.

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Ratnaprabha: You said virya; you mean viyama, do you?

S: Sorry, viyama, yes.

Dhammaloka: Seeing Perfect Effort as mainly the cultivation of skilful mental states,

S: That is the traditional explanation, yes.

Dhammaloka: That would include as well, apart from the dhyanas, perhaps as another way, the Brahma viharas?

S: The Brahma viharas, as far as I know, are never mentioned in this connection, but clearly they could be introduced. They also represent a cultivation, an intensive cultivation, of one particular class of skilful mental states. When you read about the Eightfold Path and so on in books, it all seems very straightforward and clear cut, but when you try to correlate it with what actually happened in your own experience it does not always seem quite so straightforward. That suggests that the Eightfold Path, the seven Bodhyangas, these give us frameworks for our experience, not a complete account of our experience as we try to follow the path or pursue the spiritual life. They isolate certain leading features, we may say. They do not give an exhaustive account.

Tejananda: Now Abhaya has a question on the use of the term samapatti.

Abhaya: In the introduction to a lecture on Tibetan meditation which you gave some years ago, you appear to relate the term 'samapatti' to experiences associated with neighbourhood concentration, whereas in this lecture the application is much more widely ranging, including even flashes of Insight. I have heard that, since giving this lecture, you have decided not to use the term samapatti because it is too inclusive. I personally find the samapatti section of the lecture a little unsatisfactory in that it treats as a separate stage what seem to be defined as experiences associated with the first stage, i.e. samatha. Would you care to comment?

S: Samapatti is a somewhat ambiguous term in the literature. In Pali you can check this up it very often includes the dhyanas, both the rupa dhyanas and arupa dhyanas. In the Mahayana it seems to be used quite loosely for all sorts of experiences, both as it were supernormal experiences and even experiences of a quasi insightful nature. I think in some contexts I have tended to use the term for all those experiences which are of a sort of supernormal nature, and also for those experiences which could be Insight experiences, or which could be intimations or anticipations of Insight experiences. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes it is very difficult to see when an insight with a small i becomes an Insight with a capital I; because, in a way, the concept is the same, the conceptual expression remains the same, but the degree of intensity greatly differs. In Chinese Mahayana tradition, as it was explained to me by Mr Chen, for instance, samatha, samapatti and samadhi represent three definite progressive stages; samatha meaning concentration, as we would say; samapatti all those supernormal experiences that you get as a result of concentration, as well as insight experiences with a small i, which experiences it may not always be easy to distinguish from the corresponding experiences with a big I, so that you are not really sure what you are dealing with; and then samadhi, where the experience is definitely of [180] fully Transcendental nature. So, yes, in view of the relative ambiguity of the term samapatti, I have rather tended to drop it lately; I think especially as I have been discussing these sort of issues mainly in Pali Theravada terms, and in the Pali Theravada tradition, as I said, samapatti includes dhyanas, so one might as well just speak in terms of dhyanas, and not use the term samapatti.

Tape 12, Side 2

Tejananda: Kuladeva has a related question on the use of the term vipassana.

Kuladeva: This ... to some extent. I understand that you have dropped the term samapatti as a suitable [intermediate term] between samadhi as concentration and samadhi as 'a state fixed in Reality'. Do you think, in view of the apparent assumption that the description 'in Reality' implies, that vipassana, implying 'development of' rather than 'arrival at' Insight, would be a more suitable intermediate term?

S: Do I think that ?

Kuladeva: [That] the use of the term vipassana would be more useful as an intermediate term between those two, samatha and samadhi in the full sense?

S: No, I think vipassana usually represents Insight with a capital I, as I have put it. I think that is fairly established standard Buddhist usage, so perhaps it would not be wise to interfere with that.

Kuladeva: I did realize that vipassana was Insight with a capital I, but I was thinking of it more in terms of development rather than seeing the experience of Insight already.

S: No, I think when one has that sequence of, for instance, samatha, samapatti, samadhi, one is thinking in terms of actual experiences or levels of experience, rather than in terms of the exercises or practices in which you engage to bring about that particular experience. So I think then you would be confusing two sets of terms, or two kinds of terms. In some Buddhist circles today, vipassana is used in the sense of vipassana meditation, that is to say that meditation which you practise so as to develop Insight. For instance, such people say: 'I was doing vipassana,' meaning 'I was engaging in that sort of practice which is meant to give rise to vipassana.' Well, that is a sort of loose, one might even say Western, usage that has crept in. Vipassana really means the flash of Insight that arises in consequence upon a particular practice, or perhaps in consequence on no practice at all not at that particular moment. So no, I think it probably would not be wise to mix up those terms, because they are terms of a different kind.

Tejananda: So if samapatti is not really satisfactory, could there be something inter[mediate]?

S: For ?

Tejananda: For that intermediate stage between -

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S: It is not in a sense intermedia[te]. Again, one must not think too literally; because that part, let us say, of samapatti which I described as supernormal experiences they grow out of the dhyana states and can be regarded as extensions of them. And those samapattis which are genuinely Insightful belong to the stage of Insight, or to the stage of samadhi in that higher as it were Mahayanistic sense. So really one does not need, in a sense, an intermediate term. I think why I used that threefold classification before was that, thinking about the Chinese meditative tradition as, for instance, expounded by Chih I and as Mr Chen used to talk about it to me, there seemed such a vast array of these samapattis that it seemed as though they constituted almost a class of their own and a stage of their own, one could say. None the less, their content can be divided between samadhi in the sense of concentration and samadhi in the sense of Transcendental realization. At that time I was rather overwhelmed by all these samapattis. How are we getting on, by the way?

Tejananda: That was question No. 7 out of 14.

S: Right, let's have one more, then.

Tejananda: This is from Ratnaprabha on sources of samapattis that you mentioned.

Ratnaprabha: You have already partly answered this question just now. In the lecture you list a number of samapatti experiences. Are there traditional lists and accounts of samapattis? If so, are all those you describe taken from traditional sources?

S: I don't remember all the ones I did mention, but there are a lot of Mahayana sutras which contain great lists of samapattis and samadhis of various kinds. What are the ones I give? just refresh my memory.

Ratnaprabha: You give quite a lot, actually: you start off with experiences of lights, and give

S: Ah, right, yes. Now I remember. Clearly, some of these are samatha type experiences, iddhi type experiences, just a product of concentration, just a product of dhyana. Others will be, if sufficiently ...(?), insight experiences with a small i, and some of them might be it is very difficult to distinguish in theory Insight experiences with a capital I, as when you have a very strong sense of impermanence.

Ratnaprabha: You called the ones based on dhyana iddhi-type experiences?

S: Yes, iddhi being the traditional term.

Ratnaprabha: Is that the same thing as a sign of psychic powers?

S: Yes, roughly speaking, one could say that.

Ratnaprabha: So could one say that samapattis are the sort of subjective pole of what objectively can manifest as psychic powers?

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S: No, I think there is no need to make that distinction. As I have made clear, samapatti is a sort of heterogeneous term; it covers both, as we would say, psychic experiences, it can cover insight experiences, and it can cover experiences which you cannot immediately identify, at least not from the outside, as either mundane or transcendental. I mentioned the example of a sense of impermanence. Whether that sense of impermanence was deep enough to constitute an Insight experience, only time will tell, because only time will tell whether your whole character has been permanently modified by that experience. Otherwise, how can you tell the difference? So all that is or can be covered by the term samapatti. So it is not so much that 'samapatti' is ambiguous, but it covers a very broad range of experience; so it is perhaps only the context that can make clear exactly in what sense the term samapatti is being used.

Ratnaprabha: So if we wanted to study accounts of samapattis we should just comb through the Mahayana sutras?

S: Right, yes. Sometimes the sutras just refer in a very general way to hundreds and thousands of samapattis, without actually enumerating them or naming them, but sometimes they do enumerate and name them. Often the term is translated as 'attainments', which is what it literally means; so if you come across the term 'attainment' it probably means samapatti.

Ratnaprabha: And this would include things like your mention of, say, landscapes unrolling and voices and ?

S: Yes. These are all lower-grade samapatti experiences, definitely of a non Transcendental nature.

Sudhana: So 'attainments' in the sutras is used [for] this type of thing, it doesn't mean of a Transcendental nature, one talks about

S: In the Pali texts, samapatti refers mainly to or includes the four rupa and the four arupa

dhyanas. It doesn't refer to anything of a Transcendental nature. All right, let's leave it there for half an hour, shall we say? ...[BREAK]

Tejananda: A question from Kuladeva on the Zen teaching of non difference of samadhi and prajna.

Kuladeva: You say in the lecture that the Zen school's specific contribution is the non differentiation between samadhi and prajna. Does this mean that Hui Neng and the Zen school were the first to make this identification or [that they] developed an already existing teaching?

S: I don't think they so much developed the implications of an already existing teaching as brought out the implications of an already existing experience. Let us say that the Enlightenment experience transcends thought, transcends the subject object dichotomy; but when you start talking about it, you have got to talk about it in conceptual terms. You have got to talk about it in a way that suggests there is a subject and there is an object. So when you do that, it is as though the subjective pole, as it were, of the Enlightenment experience becomes samadhi in the Zen sense, and the objective pole, so to speak, becomes prajna in the Zen sense. Do you see what I mean? So that it was not as though they were developing an

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already existing teaching; it was more as though they were going directly back to the experience itself, which was their own experience, and giving an alternative, perhaps more satisfactory or from a certain point of view more satisfactory, formulation of it that they saw transcendental samadhi and transcendental prajna as being both constituents of the Enlightenment experience; the one what I have called the subjective pole, the other what I have called the objective pole. And they saw that they are inseparable. Just as subject and object are inseparable in ordinary experience, so, from our point of view at least, transcendental samadhi and transcendental prajna are inseparable from the point of view of the Enlightened being.

Tejananda: One from Ratnaprabha on Perfect Vision on the mundane Eightfold Path.

S: Yes though I think I was trying certainly I have been trying recently to introduce the distinction of speaking of, say, Right Understanding, for instance, in connection with the mundane Path and Perfect Vision in connection just with the Transcendental Path. Perhaps that does make things clearer. Anyway, let's have the question.

Ratnaprabha: Yes, now we have gone over the last limb of the Path and are looking over the whole Path. For most people, does the mundane Path of Transformation have to take place on the basis of flashes, however small, of Perfect Vision, or can it be on the basis of right view in the primarily cognitive sense, or does it start more with faith following on from an experience of dukkha, or are all three equally likely?

S: I don't see them as necessarily being alternatives. For the ordinary person who has, as you say, a right view, transformation takes place more by way of a discipline, as it were, not spontaneously; because Perfect Vision is there and it cannot but express itself on the different levels of one's being. But one has, yes, a right view, and in accordance with that right view one makes a conscious, a deliberate effort, in a sense a willed effort, to bring different aspects

of one's life into line with that. Some people are better at doing that than others. Some people can have a very definite right view which is certainly not Perfect Vision; but it can be very clear, and they can be very determined, well-organized people and systematically bring different aspects of their life into line with that right view, without there being, for the time being, any element of Perfect Vision at all.

Ratnaprabha: When we discussed the issue, it seemed that most people felt that, in a sense at least, the way they had started on the Path had been through strong experiences which you might call as it were flashes of Perfect Vision rather than through right understanding; or, though I didn't bring this up at the time, perhaps not even on the basis of faith based on dukkha.

Kuladeva: I am not sure that that is true. I think only two or three people said anything. I certainly don't ...

S: It is difficult, in a way, to generalize, because one would have to conduct a sort of survey of the whole movement. But I do suspect, from my knowledge of them, that there are not many people in the movement who proceed entirely on or from a basis of right view. My guess would be that they would be rather in the minority. But that is just a guess, a personal impression, you might say.

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Tejananda: Bhante, do you mean to imply by that that you imagine most have some element of Perfect Vision?

S: No, some kind of experience or other. I think that is the way a lot of our Friends proceed or have proceeded in the past, if only because our original recruiting ground, so to speak, was among hippies and semi hippies who did not proceed in that sort of way. I know things have changed over the years, but in those days originally it would have been very surprising, almost, to come across, within the FWBO in the wider sense, someone who had a very clear, strong right view and then endeavoured to bring his life systematically into harmony with that. That was just not the way in which people operated in those days. I think the majority of people in the FWBO still don't operate in that way, at least not to begin with, not initially. That way of operating seems to be opposed to their general ethos, as it were.

Abhaya: In the Perfect Vision lecture, I had always understood, from the way you express it, that the Path does start with a flash of Perfect Vision, and you bring your life into line with that.

S: Yes; I think one mustn't forget the context of the lecture. I was speaking to people who were perhaps representative of people interested in Buddhism in the West generally, who have tended to think of Perfect Vision entirely as right view. The literature on Buddhism has usually given the impression that what we call Perfect Vision, that is sammaditthi, is just right view, is just a rational understanding. I wanted to counteract that. I wanted to make it clear that sammaditthi was not just right view; it was ultimately a Perfect Vision. You could even say that I overemphasised that, and perhaps that has given rise to a certain amount of confusion, in the sense that I emphasized Perfect Vision so strongly that right view was almost lost sight of. But I was doing that to correct an imbalance. Do you get the idea?

Abhaya: I see. Yes. That's good.

S: Perhaps if there is any imbalance within the FWBO, it is just a little bit the other way! Right view, after all, is the basis for the development of Perfect Vision, at least as regards the path of regular steps. Certainly Perfect Vision does not arise in dependence upon wrong view!

Sudhana: Bhante, why didn't you make quite explicit and clear the fact that there was a mundane Eightfold Path and a Transcendental [Eightfold Path]? It seems a bit unclear all the way through the lecture series that there are these two paths.

S: I thought I had made it clear, actually; but perhaps it was not sufficiently clear. It is certainly spelled out clearly in the Survey, isn't it? Perhaps I sometimes as it were take the Survey as read, because in a popular lecture you can't explain everything in the same detailed, precise way that you can in writing. I think this is one reason why, more recently, I am just not very satisfied with giving lectures. I prefer to prepare and read papers, especially as people in the movement, particularly, are getting much more knowledgeable than they were. Perhaps as and when these Eightfold Path lectures are published in book form, I will need to write a little introduction, perhaps making things of this sort clearer. It is very difficult for me to get a sort of overall view of the Eightfold Path lectures, partly because I delivered them, and delivered them many years ago, and also because I have answered so many questions about them on matters of detail, comparatively. It is quite difficult for me to see the wood for the trees, [185] in a sense, as regards these actual lectures. Also I don't always remember what I have actually said in the lectures and what I have said perhaps on other occasions, or what I have thought and perhaps have not yet got around to expressing. Perhaps, when they do come out in book form in Malaysia, I will have to read them through as if for the first time, and try to see them more objectively and perhaps prepare a preface or introduction for a Western edition.

Tejananda: [Now one from me.] In the talk, you invariably speak of Perfect Samadhi in terms of full Enlightenment or Buddhahood. In what way can perfect samadhi be spoken of in relation to the stages of the Path intermediate between Stream Entry and full Enlightenment e.g., to what extent does a Stream Entrant who is meditating experience perfect samadhi?

S: One is faced by this difficulty, in a sense: that the Noble Eightfold Path is supposed to be a comprehensive path. It is supposed to be all sufficient, it is supposed to lead up to the goal to Enlightenment, to Nirvana. This is one reason why I was so much concerned to stress the fact that the Eightfold Path is essentially a transcendental path. Perhaps I could say a word or two about that. Actually, if you take the Noble Eightfold Path in the traditional order of its angas, it is a transcendental path. It is not a mundane path. It becomes a mundane path only if you rearrange those angas and distribute them under the sequence of sila, samadhi, prajna. Do you see what I mean? I think this perhaps also accounts for my emphasis on Perfect Vision, losing sight rather of right view. I think I wanted to make it clear that the Eightfold Path in the true sense is a transcendental path, a path of Perfect Vision and of transformation in accordance with that Perfect Vision. One reason why I wanted to do that was not only that people took Perfect Vision to mean just right view, but that, because they understood what was in fact a transcendental path as a mundane path, they ended up with the goal of that whole path, the goal supposedly of the whole Buddhist spiritual life, [as] not Enlightenment, not Nirvana, but just right concentration; which seems an extraordinary anticlimax. Do you see what I mean? So if you are thinking in terms of the Eightfold Path as the transcendental path, the last limb

of that path must represent the highest spiritual goal. It must represent Enlightenment, it must represent Buddhahood or Nirvana. So Perfect samadhi therefore must represent that. This is mainly why I have relegated what is usually understood to be concentration, what is usually included under samadhi, under Perfect Effort. I think perhaps it is as well to think in terms of the Transcendental Path, simply. When you speak of the Eightfold Path in that particular order, you are talking about the Transcendental Path, ipso facto; you are not talking about the mundane path. If you wish to talk about the mundane path, you have to rearrange those angas in a way corresponding to the sequence sila, samadhi, prajna; where sila is mundane or is an expression of a mundane state of mind; samadhi is also an expression of a mundane state of mind, it is samatha though there is a bit of overlap between that and prajna; and prajna is, of course, mainly transcendental or essentially transcendental, though not exclusively so.

Ratnaprabha: Bhante, does this mean that, as a didactic framework for teaching people in the FWBO, the Eightfold Path is perhaps not as suitable as the three trainings?

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S: In a way, yes, because you can also put I have explained this at some length before; I think I have probably explained it in the Survey you can put the three trainings end to end, representing the mundane path, and then you can rearrange them to represent the Transcendental Path. For instance, in dependence on sila arises samadhi; in dependence upon samadhi arises prajna. As a result of your prajna your transcendental prajna, that is your conduct is transformed, so you get as it were a transcendental sila. As a result of that transcendental sila, you get a transcendental samadhi; your whole mental life is transformed. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaprabha: So if we rearranged it in this way, we would have to take the beginning of the mundane path, presumably, as being the first of the stages of the path which correspond to sila, and

S: You would probably have to go back before that. You would have to start off with right view. Yes, I think I have got it the wrong way round here. You start off with prajna yes, that's right, sorry; you start off with prajna in the sense of right view; that is, a rational understanding. As a result of that right view, that rational understanding, you start practising morality. Then, consequent upon that, you practise samadhi, concentration in the ordinary sense. That ordinary concentration gives rise to prajna in the sense of a flash of Insight, corresponding to Perfect Vision. Then, as a result of that Perfect Vision, you are able to practise sila in the higher sense, in the transcendental sense, and then samadhi in that higher, transcendental, sense. You could even then add on prajna in the full sense. So you have got prajna, sila, samadhi, prajna, sila, samadhi maybe there is no need to have that last one. So prajna, sila, samadhi corresponds to the transcendental Eightfold Path, and prajna, sila, samadhi corresponds to the mundane Eightfold Path. You can work it out in terms of the Eightfold Path itself, so that you have, instead of one, two, three, twice over, you have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, twice over, the first time mundane, the second time transcendental. So if you want to start work with beginners in a systematic way, proceeding by the path of regular steps, you start with right view and you just give an explanation of why you should lead a spiritual life, why you should practise the Dharma and so on; and on the basis of that understanding start observing the Precepts; on the basis of the observance of the Precepts you start developing concentration; on the basis of the concentration you have an Insight experience; then, in accordance with that Insight experience, you gradually start

transforming your whole being.

Ratnaprabha: So, as long as we made it clear that the path is twofold, with a transcendental aspect as well as a mundane, we could still teach the mundane Eightfold Path in its usual series, but starting with right view and leading on to right concentration, then Perfect Vision?

S: Yes, yes, indeed, yes.

Ratnaprabha: So we need not abandon that as a didactic tool?

S: No, you need not. But you need to be very clear and not confuse the mundane Eightfold Path with the Transcendental. But, if you take those formulations as given the traditional order of the formulations that is to say, the Eightfold Path beginning with sammaditthi, that is definitely a transcendental formulation. If you take the threefold formulation beginning with sila sila, samadhi, prajna that is definitely, I won't say a mundane formulation, but a formulation proceeding from the mundane to the transcendental.

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Abhaya: Just a very small practical point. In actual practice, we always start by teaching beginners meditation, don't we?

S: Yes. It is as though, if you spell out that sequence, you can begin anywhere. But sooner or later you have got to cover the whole sequence, both mundane and transcendental. But you can in fact start anywhere - anywhere the audience allows you to start! If they come along because they are interested in meditation, fine; you start them off with meditation. After a while, they find their meditation is not going too well - well, they need to strengthen their sila; they go back so that they can go forward. But that complete pattern or scheme of the Path should be clear, at least in the teacher's mind. I have gone into all this in one of the Mitratas, in the questions and answers. I believe they did them; those questions and answers were reproduced actually in print.

: Yes, I think it is

S: I said something like: supposing you take the path in as it were a mundane way, whether you realize that you are doing that or not, and you start off with a purely rational understanding of the Dharma; on the basis of that you make a very limited sort of effort, and you have a very ordinary understanding of right speech just not telling lies and right action, just the Five Precepts, and right livelihood, well, just not indulging in the usual forms of wrong livelihood, and then effort is, well, just an effort not to think bad thoughts, then mindfulness is just being a bit aware of what you are doing, and concentration, well, just sitting down quietly and being a bit concentrated. Well, it results in a very, very attenuated version of the Eightfold Path.

Tape 13, Side 1

I think I have spoken in terms of a purely rational understanding of the Dharma, on

the basis of which you have a purely formalistic observance of the Precepts and a very limited experience of concentration, so what Enlightenment can come from that kind of practice of

the Eightfold Path?

Ratnaprabha: I think the one point you perhaps didn't cover in the Mitratas was: looking at the Transcendental Eightfold Path in terms of, again, the three trainings on that higher level, samadhi (being the culmination of the Path here) is presumably Perfect Effort, Perfect Mindfulness and Perfect Samadhi would that be correct?

S: One could say that.

Ratnaprabha: So, in other words, samadhi, even on the transcendental level, is sort of process

S: Yes, it is not just samadhi, because, as I explained earlier on, each preceding stage is taken up into and preserved in the succeeding stage; so that samadhi is certainly not aloof, as it were, from effort or mindfulness. But, clearly, by being taken up into the Transcendental samadhi, their nature is to a great extent transformed, because you can't really speak in terms of making an effort once you are Enlightened but not that you have reached a standstill; there is life, there is movement, still going on, sort of spontaneous movement. It is that which is the Transcendental counterpart of mundane effort.

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Ratnaprabha: If it is not straining the comparisons too much, there is this fivefold Path that you introduced in the Precious Garland seminar, which I asked you a question about in the Order Convention. Now that one, I think, would be very straightforward to identify with the two paths at lower levels, in terms of integration, positive emotion, and then we have Insight

S: Yes, then you have got the Path of Vision, and in that fivefold classification the third stage is called the Path of Vision.

Ratnaprabha: Yes. But the last two stages there I think you described as the meditation that you do having gained Insight, or even the meditation that you do having gained Enlightenment you described that as the fourth stage; and the fifth stage is compassionate activity. Is it possible to align that with the Transcendental Eightfold Path, or is it too Mahayanistic to really fit in with that Hinayana teaching?

S: In principle it can't be; but you may have to go back to the basics of the Hinayana formulation in order to integrate that particular formulation with the Mahayana formulations. But, to the extent that they are based on actual experience or reflect actual experience, you must be able to integrate the two though it may not be very easy. We must be aware of the multidimensionality of spiritual experience.

Ratnaprabha: It does almost seem as if the last stage of the Transcendental Path is the fourth stage of your fivefold path, that is, the meditation that you do when you are Enlightened, and there is no room to put in the compassionate activity stage.

S: Maybe one should put all these stages and so on side by side in columns and just reflect upon the possible connections between them.

Tejananda: Bhante, I must confess I can't quite see how this relates to the question I asked.

S: Ah, let's go back to the question, then. Because we have had some supplementaries from Ratnaprabha, haven't we?

Tejananda: Well, the main point of my question was: to what extent does the Stream Entrant who is meditating experience Perfect Samadhi?

S: Ah. Well, a Stream Entrant is not unconcentrated. When you say Perfect Samadhi, you mean actually Perfect Samadhi in the strict sense?

Tejananda: Well, yes, in so far as you defined it mainly in the lecture as full Enlightenment.

S: Well, yes, in that case, obviously the Stream Entrant is not experiencing full Enlightenment, otherwise he would be an Arhant or a Buddha, not a Stream Entrant. I don't know whether one can speak of partial Enlightenment; in a sense, it is a contradiction in terms; but the Stream Entrant does experience a measure of Perfect Vision, and to that extent, apparently, a measure of Enlightenment, in a manner of speaking. But concentration in the ordinary sense, at least up to the level of neighbourhood concentration, is present throughout.

Tejananda: At all times?

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S: Well, yes; what is there to distract if one has reached that point? Well, there may be as it were little distractions, but nothing of a serious nature. The fact that Transcendental Vision has arisen to that extent means that that is holding as it were everything together, and all unskilful mental states are not eliminated, but they can no longer have the disruptive effect that they could have before. If one wants to introduce that classification of the Four Noble Persons, they would all be included in Perfect Samadhi, but then you would have to introduce the idea of degrees of Perfect Samadhi, degrees of Enlightenment. Inasmuch as you have degrees of Insight anyway, there is no reason why you should not do that.

Tejananda: It is just a way of speaking?

S: Right. When you speak of mundane samadhi, even, there are degrees of mundane samadhi.

Abhaya: Bhante; this is a problem that arose when you said, about the Stream Entrant, that it is not that unskilful mental states have been eliminated, but they cannot have the destructive effect that they had before

S: Disruptive, I said. Because if you have not attained Stream Entry, your spiritual life is liable to be totally disrupted at any time, but that does not happen once Stream Entry has been attained, because you may experience unskilful mental states at least subtle unskilful mental states but they cannot shake you, even. They cannot fundamentally disturb you, they cannot really disrupt you, they cannot really deflect you from the higher spiritual path. You are permanently established on that.

Abhaya: Could I just ask a question on that, in terms of the fetters? If the fourth and fifth fetters are still not weakened well, presumably on Stream Entry they are being weakened

S: The fourth and fifth?

Abhaya: Yes. the Stream Entrant could experience, say, onslaughts from his lower nature, but would just not

S: Oh, yes. He could experience quite strong onslaughts. But I don't know whether the text actually says this, but I would express it by saying that he would not act in accordance with them in an unskilful manner. For instance, he could experience strong anger, but he would not for instance act in accordance with that anger. The fact that he was a Stream Entrant would mean that he could control the anger, at least to the extent of not expressing it externally, or not expressing it in a way that was harmful to others.

Abhaya: This is a result of Insight rather than strength of will?

S: Oh yes. But, in a way, it is not a result, because he cannot but behave in that way, inasmuch as he is now a Stream Entrant. It is not that he has got a stronger will though he has a stronger will, at the same time but it is more that will, at least to some extent, is no longer necessary, because he is irreversible.

Abhaya: It is very hard to understand that!

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S: (chuckles) But it is quite clear and logical.

Abhaya: Yes, I can see that.

S: You could say that, when you have merely got a good mundane samadhi, it is like a boat on a stormy sea. The boat can ride the waves to some extent, but there is the danger of it being overwhelmed and sunk. But in the case of Perfect Vision, it is like the same waves battering the shore, battering the cliffs; the waves can't do anything against the shore, can't do anything against the cliffs. Of course, if you take the comparison too literally, they can in the long run, we know, but I am just trying to make the distinction clear. You might even say that Stream Entry represents the great rock in the midst of the sea which cannot be overwhelmed. The rock does not have to make any effort to resist the waves, whereas the little boat does; it has to be very skilfully steered. And if it is not strong enough, it can be broken up and be smashed.

Abhaya: The analogy seems to fit in quite well with ideas of individuality, doesn't it? the rock being very solid, and also connected with the sea bed.

S: Yes. Obviously, one mustn't push the analogy too far; because Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, etc. etc! How are we getting on, by the way?

Tejananda: We've got two more. One from Dhammaloka on your estimation of the whole series.

S: I think in a certain sense I have already dealt with that in some ways I find it difficult to see the wood for the trees.

Dhammaloka: Yes, so I can leave the question, I think.

S: Not the subject the subject is very clear to me but the lectures, and all the different questions I have answered at different times; I think I probably need to give it a rest for a little while.

Tejananda: Right, so this final question from Ratnaguna.

Ratnaguna's question: In Devamitra's scheme for the 3 year study course, the Noble Eightfold Path series comes third in the order of the lecture series, after the series 'The Higher Evolution of Man' and 'The Higher Evolution of the Individual'. As the Eightfold Path is a traditional formulation of the path, and the material in the lectures sticks more to traditional Buddhism, and is much simpler, would this series not be better placed at the beginning?

S: I think the reason why Devamitra put the two series on the Higher Evolution first, before the series on the Eightfold Path, was that he thought that, for Western people becoming or being interested in Buddhism, they would provide an easier entry into Buddhism. I think that was his belief or his assumption. I think he did discuss the matter with others. But I don't know; sometimes people do find the more traditional presentations more accessible. So perhaps that can be regarded as an open question, because there is no reason why, once we have gone through the three-year course, the whole thing should not be looked at again and [191] revised in the light of our knowledge and experience. I think it is up to Mitra convenors in particular to bring matters of that sort to Devamitra's notice. Perhaps even write to him about any such possible revision while you think of it; don't wait until the end of the three-year course, by which time you might have forgotten all about the matter.

: That is in fact how the question came up, Bhante, because Padmavajra wrote to all the Mitra convenors with that idea.

S: Yes, good. Well, you will just be able to find out from your own actual experience. There could be quite a few readjustments needed. I think this is something that new people especially this is a more general point need to realize in connection with the FWBO as a whole: it is a very new movement, it is a very young movement, and they must not take it that the fact that we have done things in a certain way for so many years means that we have to go on doing them in that way. Everything that we do should be subject to a process of constant scrutiny and revision where necessary. Not that we should change anything just for the sake of having a change, but if we come to the conclusion, after mature study and reflection, that something needs to be changed or that improvements can be made, we should not hesitate to do that. But, depending on the nature of the change, it should be made only in consultation either with all the Order Members in your chapter, all the Order Members in your region, or even in consultation with me and the whole Order. But we are certainly not committed indefinitely to our existing way of doing things. We have changed certain things in the course of the history of the movement, as you know. We have changed from Upasaka to Dharmachari, for instance. We have changed the insignia on our kesas. These are quite important things. We have even changed to having single sex retreats and single sex communities though those changes took place long before most of you came along, so you take that as being part and parcel of the FWBO, as though it had always been like that; but, no, it wasn't. Those developments took place just under halfway through our career. We have not always had coops. No doubt there are lots of other new things that we shall think of, new ways of doing things. So we must not ever get stuck in a rut, even though it is a good rut. We should be prepared to look at things from time to time in a sensible way, not just because we

are restless and feel like a change, but ask ourselves 'Is it really working?' Ask ourselves that question, say, in connection with classes: the order of classes in the week, the format of the classes. 'Is it really working?' You must be careful not to make so many changes and make them so quickly that people coming along get a bit bewildered, because they sometimes get accustomed to the existing way of doing things; they may even have adjusted their own lives, their own schedules, so as to fit in, so you must be very careful about changing things; not, for instance, change the beginners' night from Monday to Tuesday without sounding everybody out well in advance about it, because some people may have reorganized their domestic life to make it possible for them to go on Monday; so you mustn't suddenly switch to Tuesday. And reconsider things like the format of the shrine, the position of the shrine; how long a session of meditation you have; whether you have questions and answers at the end of the session or not; exactly when you have the cup of tea. Just consider all these things from time to time and ask yourself 'Is the present format working? Is it the best format?' The same with retreats. As yourself 'Is the standard retreat format working for us in the way that we intend it should?' Don't take it for granted: 'In the morning before breakfast, meditation, and I suppose [192] during the morning we'll have some study and then in the afternoon communication exercises, and in the evening a taped lecture' don't assume that that is always the best format. Think it all out: who will be coming? What sort of occasion will it be? Do we need to vary things in any way? But you can see the general principle. Always try to relate means to end; don't assume that something is the means to a specific end; always check, make sure that it is still functioning as a means to that particular end. You could conceivably even this is just off the cuff end up with two alternative three-year courses, one more traditionally oriented and one incorporating as it were a more contemporary or more Western approach. One can consider all these possibilities. So this is the third series; and when we all meet again and I hope there will be more of us then we will be meeting to consider the fourth series. Which series is that?

Abhaya: 'The Bodhisattva Ideal'.

S: Ah, that should be very interesting. And after that?

Abhaya: I think it's 'Aspects of Buddhist Psychology'.

S: Ah. That was the very first series of lectures I gave under the auspices of the FWBO, so it is interesting it comes in at that point. But it is a more specific subject, 'Aspects of Buddhist Psychology', but it covers quite a lot of ground.

Abhaya: Am I wrong?

Voices: It is 'The White Lotus Sutra'.

: It would be, it's Mahayana next year.

S: Aha! Oh, I see, yes, it's Mahayana year. All right. Anyway, I have reserved time in my diary already. I think we are meeting in January and again I think it is in June something like that so that we are keeping up quite well.

Abhaya: I think we will have to whip up a bit more support, not people coming in, a bit disappointing, so few people along.

S: Right. Anyway, I will leave that to you to speak to your fellow study group leaders. The standard of general knowledge, even among study group leaders, is not all that high. When we had more people on the study group leaders' retreat earlier on in the year, I noticed there seemed to be a very great difference of knowledge as among the different study group leaders. Some evidently were very knowledgeable and others were not so knowledgeable. So there are at least some who have to do quite a bit of homework themselves, I think. So I don't think anybody really can afford to miss.

Abhaya: Perhaps that should be brought up at the Mitra convenors' meeting.

S: Yes. Or bring it up in some forum.

Voices: Thank you very much...

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