

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Uryen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrans](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

THE THREE JEWELS

**Chapters focusing respectively on
The Round, The Spiral and The Spiritual Community:**

**Chapter 10 - The Wheel of Life,
Chapter 13 - The Stages of The Path
and Chapter 15 - The Assembly of the Elect**

(Sangharakshita, Windhorse, Purley, 1977.

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Note that the text has been revised since this seminar.

Held at: Aryatara Community, Purley, Surrey.

Date: 1977

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Vangisa, Vajradaka, Vairocana, Vajrayogini, Lokamitra, Suvrata, Abhaya (Mike Kennedy), Devaraja, Aryamitra, Ratnaketu.

[Tape 1]

Sangharakshita: Before we actually begin there are two points to be made. First of all this study retreat is a bit unusual inasmuch as we don't usually have so many people. Generally speaking we find the fewer the better, but inasmuch as this is also another kind of retreat, culminating in five ordinations, we are having more people for the study than normally we would do. So

let's see how it goes. We'll be following our usual procedure and just taking it in turns to read from the text, one by one, and then just commenting on or discussing, any point that happens to arise from the reading. So we'll follow that usual procedure and see how it goes, even though we do have twice as many people as we usually do have for study purposes.

[2]

The second point relates to what we shall actually be studying. We are studying the Wheel of Life, and the whole chapter falls quite naturally into two halves more or less. The first covering karma - certain technicalities of karma, and the other covering the Wheel of Life itself. Now what I suggest we do is - because we've only three hours for this particular chapter - we to through the first half rather more rapidly, that is up to our coffee break, discussing only a few passages which raise matters of general importance. We shall find a lot of detail in this part of the chapter and it isn't necessary to discuss every item.

So we'll just read, more or less, straight through this first half of the chapter, just stopping to discuss sections which raise quite important matters of principle, and not allowing ourselves to be bogged down in detail very much; and then of course after the coffee break, we'll be into the Wheel of Life proper, which is our main theme for this morning.

So let's start off with the Wheel of Life and go round in a circle, each reading a paragraph at a time.

"The laws in accordance with which individualized consciousness determines conditioned being are covered by the compendious term Karma, while the actual process is elucidated in the complex of teachings pictorially represented in Buddhist art by the 'Wheel of Life' (bhavacakra)"

S: This is rather cryptic. It follows from what has been said in the previous chapter, but as it may not be altogether clear, as it's very condensed, I'll just briefly explain what that means.

We have first of all, as it were, two things. There's consciousness and there's being. So far as human beings are concerned at least you can't altogether separate the two. You can certainly distinguish. There is an aspect which we can call consciousness, there's an aspect which we can call being, and these two are related. And as regards consciousness, there is consciousness which is individualized, consciousness at the centre of which there is as it were an ego, or self, for want of a better term, and consciousness at the centre of which there is not any such ego or self. That's as regards consciousness. Then as regards being, there is being which is conditioned, being which arises in dependence on conditions, and being which is unconditioned. Now the conditioned being is determined by the individualized consciousness, according to certain laws, and these laws are all summed up in Buddhism by the word karma. Karma is the sum total of all those laws in accordance with which a particular kind of conditioned being follows from a particular kind of individualized consciousness. The laws governing that transition as it were are called karma, and the actual details of the process, how it happens, its different phases, these are all pictorially represented in Buddhist art in the Wheel of Life.

So therefore in this chapter first of all karma, and then the Wheel of Life.

___: What kind of beings are not conditioned by karma?

S: Those beings which represent, we may say, or embody, different stages of the path, which is non-conditioned, or different aspects of the goal itself, that is the bodhisattvas, buddhas and so on. Not that if they have a physical existence that physical existence isn't governed by ordinary natural laws, but in their inner being they are no longer bound by that or even they enter voluntarily into that sort of situation. But the situation in which they are, including their own, as it were, embodied being, doesn't follow from any limitation of their consciousness.

[3]

"So far as its usage in connection with Buddhism is concerned, the word karma is often employed in a gravely erroneous manner. Some writers make it mean not only action, its literal meaning, but the result of action, for which Buddhist literature reserves separate terms such as karmavipaka and karmaphala."

S: We're very familiar with these sort of misusages of the term. If you say. 'Oh I guess it's my karma, oh that must be my karma, something has happened to me, it's my karma', this is a very loose usage of the term indeed. Strictly speaking karma means just action, not the results of action. There's a separate term for that, as I've said, karmaphala, which means the fruit of karma, the result of karma, or karmavipaka, which means the fruition of karma.

"Others use it in the sense of fate or destiny, sometimes even going so far as to maintain that according to Buddhism whatever happens to us, whether pleasant or painful, comes about, as the result of previous karma. The confusion must be cleared up before the different types of karma are enumerated."

S: This is the first thing. Before we go on to deal with the different kinds of karma, we must be absolutely clear what karma is. Karma is just action. Action as it were of the individualized consciousness. Willed action as we shall see a bit later on. It's certainly not action in general. It's certainly not fate, it's certainly not destiny. We are going into now these various confusions.

Devaraja: Karma vipaka. What was that again?

S: Vipaka means sort of fruition.

Devaraja: Fruition of action, and karmaphala is...?.

S: Fruit, that's literally fruit. It's the same sort of idea. You can say vipaka means ripening. Ripening or fruition.

"Though having the literal meaning of action, karma in this context invariably means act of volition..."

S: That is willed action.

"Thus we get the important equation $karma = cetana$ (volition) = $samskaras$ ('formative' or rebirth-producing psychological factors)."

S: Yes, this is a well known, as it were, equation in Buddhist thought. First of all karma, the action, then karma is cetana - what sort of action? - not just action as mind in the conception sense but action as it were of your total being, the total energy of your being, which is, in some cases conscious, and then of course we call it willed. And these in term equal the $samskaras$ as they're called when they appear in the list of the twelve $nidanas$, that is to say the so-called formative or rebirth-producing psychological factors. So it's quite important to bear this in mind, that karma means cetana and cetana means $samskaras$. Cetana's often translated as mind, but it isn't that, it's more like volition. Volition or will has been explained as the sum total of psychic energy available to the conscious subject. But sometimes you're not quite clear where the conscious subject ends and when it begins, because sometimes the conscious subject is a bit more conscious than it is at other times. It sort of shades off. So what then enters into the definition of will shades off. Sometimes the energy is very clear because the conscious subject is very clear, and sometimes the conscious subject is not so clear. So the energy is not so much the energy of volition in the fullest sense, [4] but a sort of drift, a sort of tendency not completely conscious, in a particular direction.

Vajrayogini: It's quite a difference when it's conscious!

S: Yes, right. This is how it is. So we mustn't interpret the word volition too as it were sharply. There are different grades, different, as it were, degrees of the impetus, different degrees of clarity. But all this, whether clear or relatively unclear or even confused, is

summed up in cetana or samskaras. Cetana to me - I don't know if this is borne out by the text, has the suggestion more of the rather clear volition. Samskaras means the whole sort of muddled heap of conscious decisions, actual volitions, vague drifting tendencies only partly conscious, sort of glimmering with a bit of consciousness every now and then, the whole sort of heap and collection, all that drift and general tendency of one's being, this is known as the samskaras, and it's they, according to Buddhism, which ultimately are responsible for us coming into yet another life. It's the motive force in all of them to bring about yet another life.

"As opposed to Jainism, Buddhism maintains that involuntary actions, whether those of body, speech or mind, do not constitute karma and therefore cannot bring about the results accruing to karma."

S: I've given another illustration here but the classic one from Buddhist literature relates to the incident in which a monk, a follower of the Buddha, was invited to somebody's house for lunch as we would call it, though this was before twelve o'clock, and no one was present in the room. Inadvertently he sat down on a chair, or rather he sat down deliberately, but inadvertently he crushed a child that had been laid on the chair underneath a cloth. He probably thought it was some sort of cushion. So there was the cloth on the chair, he just sat straight down, and of course crushed the child and killed it. So the question arose, what action had he committed? Had he murdered the child? Was he morally responsible for the death of the child? So the Jains who were apparently around in that place said he had committed murder, because according to them it was the action which counted, not the volition, the intention, but the Buddha said no, he had no intention of killing the child, so he was not guilty of murder. But on the other hand, the Buddha said, he should not have sat down in the house, one, without being invited to by the owner of the house, and, secondly, without making sure that he knew exactly where he was sitting. So he was somewhat unmindful. So he wasn't guilty of murder, of deliberately intending to take someone's life and then taking it, but he was certainly guilty of a rather culpable degree of carelessness and unawareness in somebody else's house. So he was guilty on that score, but he wasn't guilty of murder as the Jains maintained. So this is the sort of classic story to illustrate this point and I've given another one here.

"This does not mean that such actions produce no results at all: the unintentional dropping of a brick on our own toes hurts no less than if we had done it deliberately, perhaps more so. It only means that unwilled actions do not modify character."

S: Perhaps one should say do not modify character in the true sense in nearly the same degree, because you could say that if you were going through life just drifting without any sort of very deliberate volitions, well your character would be modified but not as it were as a character, it would be weakened and undermined, and you'd become a sort of human vegetable more and more.

[5]

"The confusion arises because the fact that according to Buddhism, there is a relation of cause and effect between karma or act of will and karmavipaka, the fruit of that act in the form of pleasant or painful experience, has led some unwary students to jump to the conclusion that the law of karma and the law of cause and effect are synonymous."

S: This is a very important point. This is perhaps the biggest misunderstanding as regards

karma and I'm going into it in greater detail in the next paragraph. Karma is the cause, the karmavipaka is the effect. You perform a certain willed action and as a result of that you have a certain kind of experience. So karma is the cause, the experience is the effect. Because of that some people seem to believe that karma means cause or causation or the law of causation in general, but it isn't that. It's just one particular form of causation, as we shall see later on.

"Karma (or more correctly karma and karmavipaka) is only particular type of cause-effect relation. The Nikaya/agama discourses represent the Buddha as repeatedly condemning the doctrine of fatalism and as declaring that though He teaches that every willed action produces an experienced effect He does not teach that all experienced effects are products of willed action or karma."

S: There are several points here. I suppose you know what the nikayas are? Nikayas means collections, collections of discourses of the Buddha in Pali. There are five collections. We need not go into that now, and the agamas are the corresponding Sanskrit version which we mostly don't have in Sanskrit now, only in Chinese and Tibetan translations. So it means the dialogues and discourses of the Buddha according to quite early tradition. So these discourses represent the Buddha as repeatedly condemning the doctrine of fatalism. The Buddha says that to hold any sort of fatalistic philosophy goes right against, directly against, the spiritual life, because the basic assumption of the spiritual life is that you are free, at least to some extent. If all your actions are determined, well forget all about spiritual life, what will happen will happen. And also the Buddha declares in these discourses that though He teaches that every willed action produces an experienced effect He does not teach that all experienced effects are products of willed action or karma. You have to make that distinction. Whatever you will produces its effect. You will experience that, but you can't work it the other way around. It doesn't logically follow that whatever you are experiencing is the result of some act of volition of yours in the past. That does not logically follow. If you think it does that's just your sloppy logic!

So everything you deliberately will under the law of karma results in an effect which you will experience with certain exceptions as we shall see - even here there are exceptions. But all the experiences that you have, that crowd in upon you all the time, are not due to previous willed action, previous volitions. Some are, some are not. We will see that in detail in a minute. Is that clear? These are quite important basic points about karma. All right, on we go then.

"This important distinction is elaborated in the formula of the five niyamas, or different orders of cause-effect or conditionality obtaining in the universe. They are utu-niyama, physical inorganic order; bija-niyama, physical organic or biological order; mano-niyama (non-volitional) mental order; karma-niyama, volitional order; and dharma-niyama, transcendental order. To distinguish effects produced by one niyama from those produced by another is not always easy."

[6]

S: Let's stop there for a moment and take this word niyama. Niyama means a sort of order. Order in the sense of processes occurring in a regular manner on a particular level of existence. So here there are five niyamas enumerated. These are enumerated in the Abhidhamma. Utu-niyama which means physical inorganic order. This is quite simple. It's the order for instance to which physics and chemistry refers. And then bija-niyama, the physical organic or biological order. Then mano-niyama, the non-volitional mental order. The level of

mental processes which do not amount to volitions. For instance the process of perception. Then karma-niyama, the volitional order, that is to say the order of willed, deliberate actions. And then dharma-niyama, the transcendental, or at least we may say here the spiritual order. We'll see what that is in a minute. So to distinguish effects produced by one niyama from those produced by another is not always easy. Let's go on from there.

Vajradaka: Just before we do go on. Are these five niyamas the usual explanation of conditionality because when we were going through Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism I think there were only four enumerated.

S: No, there were five but mano-niyama was called citta-niyama. There were five.

Vangisa: Could you repeat the definition of niyama.

S: A niyama is a regular process or an order. In this sense it's a regular process occurring on a certain level of existence. [Pause] Go on to the explanation of the difference between the niyamas.

"Some effects, in fact, can be brought about by any niyama. Suppose there is a man suffering from fever. The complaint may be due to a sudden change of temperature (utu-niyama), to the presence of a germ (bija-niyama), to mental strain or worry, or to tension due to experiences taking place in the dhyanas (mano-niyama), to the fact that in a previous life he had harmed someone (karma-niyama), or to chemical and cellular changes occurring in the body consequent upon transcendental realization (dharma-niyama)"

S: Let's go into this just a little bit. Suppose there is a man suffering from fever. Now if you aren't careful, whether it's a fever or any other sickness, if you just have a little bit of knowledge of Buddhism, you might say well according to Buddhism it's because of his past bad karma. That's why he's suffering. Whether he's suffering from a fever or whether he loses money or whether he gets run over by a bus, it's all his past bad karma. But Buddhism says no this is not so. In this particular case, the fever, it may be due simply to a change of temperature, which has got nothing to do with karma directly. There is a very general indirect connection inasmuch as why have you got a body at all, a body which is subject to the utu-niyama, which can be affected by changes of temperature, well that is surely due to karma, so that's an indirect and remote connection. But the fact that this specific incident occurs, that you fall ill and you suffer from fever, isn't directly dependant upon karma, it is not because you've induced fever in somebody else in the past. It's simply due to the change of temperature occurring perhaps. Or to the presence of a germ - bija-niyama. To mental strain or worry. It can be psycho-somatic. Not coming from anything that you've willed in the past, or any willed action in the past, but from mental strain and worry here in the present. Or from tension due to experiences taking place in the dhyanas. This is quite important.

[7]

I was reminded of this a few days ago when I was reading in a Sunday newspaper a lengthy article by a man who'd had a nervous breakdown and come through it. Did anyone see this? He was a professional psychologist, and it did strike me at one point that very often we don't know what is going on. I had a letter also two days ago from someone who used to come and see me years ago when I was at the Hampstead Vihara who is now in a mental hospital, and it was quite an odd letter. One would certainly say - well people would normally say - that he

was mad and he was in a mental hospital and he certainly was a very strange and odd person. But from the letter it was clear that quite strange and almost sort of Buddhistic experiences were going on too. He said in the letter, that of course here they think that I'm mad and they have been giving me treatment but it doesn't do me much good, so they've stopped now. He said that suits me, I'm looked after here and I get enough food and it's warm, and of course he was roaming around from some years before that and was picked up by the police. And he says of course I know that what is happening to me is because of the meditations I've been doing and so on and so forth, so I just go along with the treatment that they want to give me. But he said they can't understand anything of a spiritual nature so I keep quiet about all that.

So is this person mad or not? One just doesn't know. And certainly some of the so-called symptoms or rather symptoms of so-called illness, even mental illness, are due to sort of spiritual changes taking place. So we have to be able to distinguish these too, even within the citta-niyama. Those sort of physical symptoms, i.e. in this case fever, which are definitely due to strain and worry and what we may describe as negative mental states, and those outer changes, including even changes of temperature, which happen as a result of spiritual processes and even aspects of our development which are taking place; and it isn't always easy to distinguish these two. You might think someone is just ill when he's only developing. And the developing can sometimes have symptoms which are almost the symptoms of illness including mental illness. This, for instance, this simple instance of fever which I've given, certainly does happen in connection with meditation and so on, quite spontaneously, and this is why, according to some Indian authorities, that the general word for spiritual practice, the word which goes straight back to the Vedas, this is tapas, which means to heat. Tapas is fire, heating. So to practise this tapas is to heat yourself up as it were, and quite literally you can get a high temperature which you feel yourself and which others feel as a result of certain changes going on within you internally, spiritual changes. Not just mental upsets.

So we have to be very careful how we talk about these things and how we evaluate them. So all this is mano-niyama, nothing to do with karma, that is past karma. If it's karma at all it's karma which you're directly creating here and now in the present.

Vajrayogini: Isn't the difference in the karma I choose for something, and all the other ills, it overcomes me.

S: What do you mean by overcomes. Something comes up as a ...

Vajrayogini: Without making conscious my decision.

S: Yes, because here it's the momentum of your whole being as I described before which may not be clearly conscious. A general tendency of you as a whole person, or whole being at least, yes. But it again may be due to past karma. To the fact that in a previous life he has harmed someone - karma-niyama, it could be that.

[8]

Or to, again, chemical and cellular changes occurring in the body consequent upon transcendental realization. So here we're distinguishing between the spiritual which is a higher mundane, where there's no basic transformation of consciousness as regards the ego, and that state where there is this basic radical transformation where the ego is, as it were, seen through, and one does see something which we can only describe as unconditioned or

nirvanic, and where one is permanently transformed by that. Not only transformed in one's mind but very often the change extends even to the physical body, and I have a yogi friend in Bombay who has done a bit of study and experiment and he maintains that the cells of the body undergo a change. The very constitution of the cells undergo a change as a result of higher spiritual, transcendental experiences, and this is certainly a Tantric teaching. They have the teaching of transforming the body into the rainbow body. That is a completely purified and changed physical body even, the physical body becomes different, not just the mind. The realization percolates down even to the, as it were, lowest level. Brings about changes there, so it may look the same body but it's sort of chemically and cellularly different from before.

Vajrayogini: And also the opposite happens? If someone is doing a lot of things with his body - running and - also the mind is changing.

S: Yes. The mind could change, but I don't think you could bring about the transcendental change. So this is quite important, that from the highest levels as it were, the change and the influence and the effect percolates right down to the lowest. Anyway this is a little by the way. What we are mainly concerned with here is to show that karma is not synonymous with the whole law of cause and effect. Karma is only one kind of cause and effect process. That there are five in all. Karma is only one of them. This is the main point that is being made here. So therefore you must not think of karma as causation. Karma is one kind of causation, operating on a particular level, and in the universe there are all these other modes of causation or rather conditionality also operating. Karma is just one. And not only that but, to make it even more difficult and complex as it were, when something happens, when we experience something, it isn't even that this particular happening is always due to that particular niyama, this particular happening is always due to some other niyama, no. The same experience or what seems to be the same experience, can be due to the operation of any one of those niyamas as in this particular instance of the fever. It could be physical inorganic, it could be physical organic, it could be mental, it could be psycho-somatic, spiritual, it could be karma, it could be something even transcendental. So karma is a rather complex subject. What we have to beware of most of all is thinking that karma simply means the law of causation. No, it's just one particular variety of the law of causation, or law of conditionality to use the more Buddhistic term.

So let's go on and clear up another misunderstanding.

"This doctrine has an important practical bearing. Critics of the Dharma sometimes allege that Buddhists are indifferent to human suffering, and take no steps to relieve it, because their religion teaches them to regard it as the result of past karma."

S: Yes, this is a common criticism, isn't it. I take it that most of you have heard it or read it at sometime or other - that according to Buddhism, all the suffering in the world is due to past karma, so when people suffer, they are simply expiating their past karma, and therefore you should not interfere with that. This is how some people look at Buddhism or interpret Buddhism, but from [9] what we've just seen as regards the five niyamas, we can see that this is certainly incorrect, because not even every suffering is due to past karma. If you indulge in unskilful volitions you will suffer, but you cannot reverse it and say that all your sufferings are due to previous unskilful volitions therefore karma, no. There are quite a few sufferings that we have to undergo which are not directly connected with any karma of ours in the past

at all. In fact you don't know whether a particular suffering, a particular experience, is due to karma or not. Sometimes you may have to work it out and even think reflect, but even then very often you just don't know, whether about yourself or about other people. So we have not to sort of jump rather rashly to conclusions and if we see someone suffering say oh well I guess it's his past karma. You just don't know. It may be, it may not be. Let's go into this a little bit more.

"However true this may be of Hinduism, which generally inclines a fatalistic view of karma..."

S: This is certainly true of at least many Hindus in India. You often hear this and I've often heard this, that all your suffering, all your worldly life, your worldly misery, is due to your past karma. What can you do about it, you're expiating it, you've got to live it through. And especially this is applied to the whole question of caste. For instance the higher caste people teach that if you are born into a low caste, this is the result of bad karma you performed in the past, so it is extremely wicked for you to try to alter your caste status, to try to raise your status because if you do that then you are sort of rejecting the fact that you are responsible for your present lowly status. So if you accept it, if you accept that you are a low caste person, and are very humble and faithful and serve the higher castes, then you can expiate the karma due to which you have been born as a low caste person. So in this way the doctrine of karma is very often interpreted by the upper caste Hindus in such a way as to support the social status quo and to keep the lower castes down, but this is certainly not a Buddhist interpretation.

Hinduism by the way doesn't have that teaching of the five niyamas. For some reason or other, though the belief in karma is so widespread in India, the Hindus on the whole have got no detailed teaching about karma as the Buddhists have. It's rather odd. The Jains have, just as the Buddhists do, but not the Hindus. Hindu utterances about karma are really very vague and very general indeed and very often strongly tinged with fatalism. They never seem to have applied their minds at all seriously to the subject of karma.

Devaraja: This is really connected with something that happened to me personally. In the previous little section you were talking - in that paragraph before we went on to Hinduism - and that was that when I was travelling in India and through Europe, a couple of times I saw insects which had been very badly damaged, so I just killed them - once it was a beetle and once it was another insect, but somebody who was going to become a Buddhism monk, an English fellow, he said that I shouldn't do that because it might be working out its karma. Is my action of actually killing an insect that was suffering like that - I suppose it really brings up the whole question of ...

S: Well it might have been suffering as a result of its past karma, you don't know. On the other hand it might not. Your guess is as good as his. He was saying that it must be its past karma, it's therefore expiating it, you were saying well not necessarily, so I'll take a chance on that.

Devaraja: Not that I'm bothered about it, I'm just interested [Laughter]. It's more a sort of theoretical point.

S: Of course in the case of the insect, there is the point of view well to what extent is it individualized? To a very lowly extent indeed. One can hardly speak of karma in the case of an insect. At best one can speak of a collective karma of the species as a whole. So I don't think you can regard an insect in the same way as you would a human being or higher animal [and] therefore think of it as working out its karma etc., etc. I mean you can't commit karma really individually at that level of existence. Only in a very very sort of analogical way. So I think he was being perhaps sentimental in thinking of the insect possibly or even definitely working out his karma, that you shouldn't interfere with that, I don't think I'd agree with that at all.

On the other hand you didn't definitely know that it wasn't. You were simply looking to the present and wishing to end the present suffering, and you may have been right, you may have been wrong. Put it this way, if he thought that it was definitely working out previous karma, then he was wrong. Because even if there'd been a human being who could work out previous karma, how could he know that it was karma and not something else. So there was a bit of blindness in his attitude certainly, and in your case also at that time you didn't know, at least you weren't sure, whether insects had karma and whether it was working out previous karma or not, so you might have made a mistake, but I would say more likely not, inasmuch as the degree (break in tape) result of previous karma or it may not be. But even if it is as a result of previous karma, it doesn't mean that they've got to expiate that by suffering. For instance in some books on Buddhism or about Buddhism, you get expressions like The Iron Law of Karma, the Rigid Law of Karma, the Inescapable Law of Karma etc., etc. It is not so at all according to Buddhism. The law of karma is not an iron law. For instance you will see a bit later on that there are some karmas which if you do not experience their results within a certain period, you do not experience them at all. They just sort of fade away. They lose their force as it were. So it isn't that you've absolutely got to, whereas one can read books about Buddhism which say, 'under the Iron Law of Karma even the tiniest offence will catch up with you after millions of years!' This is rubbish! This is not Buddhism at all. There are some offences which are offences and they are unskilful volitions, but if circumstances don't permit of their fruition for a life or so, then they lose their force. You don't experience them. So there is that also to be considered.

So supposing that person was even suffering that particular illness or whatever it was as a result of previous karma, even then it isn't that if he or she doesn't experience it now they'll have to experience it later on. It may not be that kind of karma even. But supposing they are suffering as a result of a really serious bad karma of such a nature that they will have to experience that over again if you put a stop to the suffering at the end of this life, supposing they have to go through it again, well that is a possibility and you have to weigh that when you are deciding upon that person's euthanasia if you are a Buddhist.

This also - I'll just elaborate a little bit more - this also brings us up against well how do we know that something is due to karma? One way is what we may describe as the method of residues. That means supposing someone is suffering take again the question of illness, and you apply all known remedies and it should have cleared up. Obviously there are some illnesses that we don't know very much about and it may be due to simply limitations of our scientific knowledge we can't cure them, but in some cases we are pretty sure of what we are dealing with, so we apply all known remedies and nothing happens. Only then perhaps we are justified in concluding it's probably due to karma. Also when we try to do something and we fail, we can't succeed, there's no reason why we should but everything goes wrong again [11]

and again. It's as though some factor is working against us. So we are justified then in concluding it could be karma. It seems too much just for a coincidence and there's no reason. We've taken all precautions, we've taken all the necessary steps but we're not able to achieve that. Something is always working against us.

[End of side one side two]

...then we can justify it and say that is karma. The method of residues. It could hardly be anything else. But even then we're not absolutely sure but it is very likely. So in the case of the person with regard to whom we're considering whether their suffering should be terminated we have to consider this too. That if all our efforts to relieve it have failed and should have succeeded as far as we know, then it may well be due to karma. So if it is that we just have to accept the responsibility for our action if we decide that all the same that person's life should be terminated because the suffering is so terrible. But we take a chance to some extent. We don't completely know.

Vajrayogini: It's not up to the person himself if he is asking to die?

S: It's a question also up to the person himself. When you just want to get rid of pain for instance is it you, is that a volition or is it just an instinctive reaction. But apart from that - this question was discussed on the radio last night and we listened to it - there was a panel of people and they were all in favour of voluntary euthanasia, and it seems quite reasonable to me that the decision is yours morally and it should be yours legally. Suppose you are sedated and suppose you are sort of just conscious but you know that your life is going to be a life of just suffering if it's going to be prolonged, and if you've got a sort of clear respite because the pain has been alleviated to some extent and you can think it over and you come to the conclusion, no life is not worth living on these terms, and in that sort of state of relatively clear consciousness you say well please can it be terminated, please can my life be terminated, then that seems quite reasonable and even if that suffering was due to previous karma, I think as it were that that decision in the long run, karmically speaking, would not count against you.

It depends very much, our attitude depends very much on the extent to which we bring in this whole question of karma.

Vajrayogini: I've got a question of a woman who has had cancer for ten years and was operated eight times and now she wants that I will euthanatize her and I'm in doubt. I don't know. I think she has to go through a lot of pain anyway.

S: You mean the mental suffering.

Vajrayogini: Yes.

S: Yes, the questions that arise are quite difficult and complex. The main point of course that we're concerned with here is that whatever suffering we undergo is not by any means necessarily due to our own past karma, and that therefore from the Buddhist point of view well I accept the responsibility that I may be interfering in her karma but I think it's better that I should, I accept that. This is my personal view. There's no sort of official Buddhist teaching about this. I have though mentioned in the past that the teacher of one of my own teachers

did, as it were, you could call it commit suicide in this way - have I mentioned this to you before? He was an Indian and he was a very well known scholar and he was helping to revive Buddhism in Western India - his name was Dharmananda Kosambi - he was very well [12] known indeed - and he was a very old man by Indian standards, early seventies, and he was at Sarnath and one of my own teachers, or someone who became my teacher many years later, he was only a young man, was looking after Dharmananda Kosambi, and he was completely bedridden and helpless. He wasn't suffering much but he just couldn't do anything. He was completely, as it were, useless and he felt he was a burden on others, that others were having to look after him. It wasn't that he sort of minded it in a way because Indians don't mind being looked after. They have none of our inhibitions about that but he thought what's the use, I've done my work, I've written all my books, I've done what I could to revive Buddhism in India, and here's this young man who is having to look after me. He's got his work to get on with, what's the use of it? So he decided to terminate his own existence, my teacher told me, quite sort of calmly. And he decided simply to stop taking food, and he stopped taking food and after about three weeks he simply very quietly and calmly passed away in that weakened state.

So this is what happened in his case and this seems to be completely justifiable. He took the decision mindfully, he certainly wasn't suffering unduly but he was quite useless and he was requiring someone else to attend upon him and he thought that isn't correct. He'd done his work. He was passing away at the end of a quite long and quite full and successful life. He was quite ready for the next time round if there was one.

So this seems to be quite justifiable, this sort of thing. He certainly didn't seem to be creating any bad karma there.

___: I'd be very surprised if the intention with which you are doing an action is important for influencing karma in future. Does it make any sense when you are killing animals because you want to eat for instance their meat, or whether you are killing them because you want to stop them suffering?

S: I'd say there was quite a difference. I mean there's no difference in the act but there is a difference in the mental attitude, so from a karmic point of view I'd say there was quite a difference between the two. Many Buddhists do believe that even a sort of mercy killing has got some negative karmic component, that you cannot in fact take life without doing a sort of violence to yourself, even when your motivation is as it were merciful.

Vajrayogini: But on the other hand, do I have the right to make the pain longer if the person doesn't want it, for example a physician?

S: Well there is also that. In the case especially of the physician. I'm rather sort of dubious about any discussion of these things in terms of rights. The whole conception of rights, and I've been thinking about it quite a lot over the last few months seems to get more and more vague and dubious from a philosophical point of view. I almost come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as right, it is a sort of legal fiction, and not really corresponds to anything.

Vajrayogini: It's a law for the physician. You should make life as long as possible.

S: Yes which very often means you should cause as much suffering as possible. So it very

much in such cases is a decision for the individual because you could also ask can I really go on creating so much suffering for this person by keeping him or her alive? There comes a point when you say well I can't do this any more. I can't prolong their agony, and I'm quite sure that some physicians do feel this and just quietly give a slight overdose and [13] nothing is said. I'm quite sure that some do this but they of course do not admit it, could not.

Vajrayogini: I meet a lot of crippled people who are lame and resent that they were kept alive after an accident.

Suvratta: Perhaps sometimes in this urge to kill suffering beings in many cases there is a strong element of hatred towards the suffering that is making you feel uncomfortable. Not because you are really genuinely...

S: You'd like to have the suffering out of the way because it makes you uncomfortable. There is this also to be taken into consideration. Or to be weighed as one possible factor.

Vangisa: (unclear) practice to just dope them up completely, just a habit, it's just taken for granted, the idea of approaching... (drowned out by traffic noise) ...

S: It rather looks as though in the same way that we've discussed having a Buddhist school we shall also need a Buddhist hospice [Laughter] so at least people can go and die in peace without being doped up to the eyeballs, and even be assisted on their way if necessary.

Vangisa: (inaudible due to plane passing overhead)... it so happens I haven't died yet but it will no doubt come, and there are just some safeguards ... guarantee that ... befuddled consciousness.

S: Yes, they seem over preoccupied about the wrong things. Over preoccupied about the mere prolongation of existence - it can hardly be called life in some cases - but they're not in the least concerned about the prolongation of your state of clear consciousness which from a human point of view is much more important. So it's not so much the question of can you go on existing and can your existence be prolonged somehow, but whether it is possible for you to go on living as an individual with a clear consciousness or a reasonably clear consciousness. If that isn't possible it would seem there's no further reason for your existence. We know that - for instance in this radio programme people make these reasonable points but then someone else pipes up and says well I don't want to be sentenced to death by a panel of doctors, but it's not that which is being suggested at all. We're actually sometimes so emotive (unclear due to tape distortion) Anyway we've gone a bit away from our main point which was that karma is not fate and if you are suffering, including suffering from some terrible disease, it's not necessarily to do with your past karma and therefore efforts to relieve suffering are completely justified. (Change of tape on original recording)

S: ... where we were.

"...or even of some less instructed Buddhists in Asian lands, the accusation certainly does not hold good in respect of the Buddha and His Teaching. Buddhists are urged to make every effort to remove disease, privation and want in all their ignoble, soul-crippling, life-destroying forms because not being enlightened they cannot know by which niyama they have been brought about."

S: This is a practical point. You are not enlightened and you don't know whether someone's suffering is due to his past karma or not, so therefore you have to make every effort to relieve that suffering if you possibly can.

"Only after making every attempt to remove a certain [14] condition, and finding that although other circumstances are favourable an unknown factor frustrates our efforts, are we entitled to apply the method of residues and conclude that the condition is due to karma. In any case, it would be a mistake to regard the karma-niyama or any other niyama as an absolutely self-contained system. Despite the contrary impressions sometimes created by modern Theravadin writers, the five niyamas not only all act one upon another, but are collectively acted upon and influenced by the higher and wider containing reality of the Universal Consciousness (alayavijnana). Unless this is borne constantly in mind, the drily analytic manner in which such writers tabulate and chart the workings of karma may make us feel that we have to do not with the heart-throbs of a living human mind and character but with an intricate piece of dead mechanism."

S: As I mentioned earlier on, there is quite a bit of Buddhist literature on the subject of karma, especially in the Abhidharma, but it must be admitted that much of it is very dry, very analytic. So if you are not careful you get the impression that the workings of karma are sort of very mechanical and it's just a question of cogs and wheels going round. Whereas of course it isn't like that at all. That one is dealing, as I say here, with the heart-throbs of a living human mind and character and not with an intricate piece of dead mechanism. But very often if you read the literature on karma without due mindfulness and without relating it all to experience of concrete things, you get the impression as though you're just a piece of mechanism being taken to pieces as it were, but it really isn't like that at all.

___: Could you elaborate on the previous sentence - the reality of the Universal Consciousness?

S: One can't really say very much because this would take us very far afield indeed but broadly speaking it's related to the teaching that you find in the 'Awakening of Faith' about the mutual perfuming of the conditioned and the unconditioned, the defiled and the undefiled. You can't keep the different kinds of karma in separate, as it were watertight little boxes. It's a very complex sort of system indeed, and though we distinguish different kinds of karma () each person's own path as it were there's a constant overlapping, a constant mutual influencing and so on, and in the end the whole thing becomes very very complicated or rather complex indeed. So that you get an influence not only as between different karmas as it were on the same level, but even from higher levels of consciousness and feeling where other laws altogether are operating. They too have their own effect on the whole karmic system, the whole karmic set up. Just as for instance, to put it more pictorially and popularly, when the Bodhisattva () descends into hell what is happening? He's interfering with their karma. We can't have that. Maybe he is, in the context of karma, but Bodhisattvas consider themselves quite entitled to interfere with the law of karma because a higher law comes into operation, the law of compassion and so on.

So the law of karma is not a sort of watertight little system. Higher laws, higher realities can break in from time to time. Otherwise if everything were due to karma, and karma itself (was a rigid?) system, you'd never get out. There would be no such thing as emancipation, no such thing as Nirvana. Luckily for us karma is not a rigid self-contained system. But unfortunately

some presentations of Buddhism rather give you that impression, even if they don't actually say so. Some expressions that I've mentioned earlier on - The Iron Law of Karma, the Intractable Law of Karma - and these references to karma catching up with you, even if you kill a mosquito in this life, after millions of years you'll have to pay for it. This is a fantastic caricature of the [15] teaching of karma. You can get away with it! There are loopholes. It's a living thing, not just a blind mechanical law. Because it isn't a rigid self-contained system you can help others and they can help you, and between you can get beyond the law of karma.

Vajrayogini: The more I'm conscious of what I am doing the more I can change.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: This brings in another form of conditioning or would it be of the same type - that one's merit I suppose...

S: That's good karma. So far we've been talking in terms, as it were, of 'bad' karma. There is such a thing as good karma.

Lokamitra: What I mean is transference of merit. For the Bodhisattva working from a higher level obviously one has to react to that in a positive way, and so that would come back to karma again.

S: But the fact is you might be predisposed by the very experience itself, to react or respond favourably or positively. In other words there are certain things that come to you which you don't deserve. For instance a Buddha appears in the world. That is something transcendental. How can you deserve the transcendental? How can any amount of good karma which is purely conditioned and worldly, qualify you for your contact with something which is quite transcendental. You can't possibly do that can you?

So karma fails here too, from that point of view, in that context. You go beyond karma. You don't come into contact with a Buddha as a result of your good karma.

Vajrayogini: What about pain as a gift?

S: I'm very suspicious about that. This seems to tie up with a whole ideology of pain being good for you and experiencing guilt. No. But it seems to. What did you mean by pain as a gift?

Vajrayogini: () The things that happened to me and I suffered from. Afterwards I can look upon that as a gift.

S: You look upon it as a gift. What we mustn't do of course is look upon the pain and sufferings of other people as a gift for them.

Vajrayogini: That's not what I'm saying.

S: No, but sometimes the connection is made isn't it. Or sometimes in the Middle Ages in Christian Europe you go on to the next stage and say well if I inflict pain and suffering on him that will be a gift that will help him. Suffering is good for him so therefore I shall inflict

it! This is what we've seen isn't it constantly in the past. I read the most dreadful story - a short story but it's still long - by a French short story writer of the last century about the Spanish Inquisition. Anyway we're wandering a little bit. Let's go on to the next paragraph.

But I said all that because with this next paragraph we do start going into details of karma.

"The different types of karma are described in the Abhidharma literature with a wealth of illustrative detail."

[16]

S: The Abhidharma literature. Anyone not know what that is? It's more the commentarial and scholastic side of Buddhism which developed a few hundred years after the Buddha's death, but which was regarded by some schools as being actually taught by the Buddha but not so regarded by others. It may be that in some cases the sort of seeds of explanation were found in the Buddha's own teaching but in its fully developed form the Abhidharma is a very elaborate scholastic (edifice) and was certainly not created by the Buddha himself but the Abhidharma does has the benefit of discussing karma in detail.

"Here we shall be briefly concerned only with the broad principles of classification. These are seven in number. Karmas may be grouped in accordance with their ethical status, the 'door' through which they act, the appropriateness of the resultant experiences, their time and relative priority of taking effect, the nature of their function, and the plane of existence on which they mature.

S: ... the seven as it were principles according to which karmas are classified. We're going to go briefly into each of them in turn.

"Of these principles, the first is the most important, since this constitutes the basis of the rest. From the point of view of its ethical status or quality, a volition (including its concomitant mental factors) is either wholesome (kusala) or unwholesome (akusala).

S: Kusala literally means skilful but it's very often nowadays translated as wholesome and akusala is unskilful.

"Unwholesome volition is that rooted in greed (lobha), hate (dvesa) and delusion (moha) - another primitive formula - and wholesome volition that rooted in the opposite of these passions, that is to say rooted in contentment, love and mental pellucidity. Each of these two types of volition can act either directly through the 'door' of the mind (the terminology is not to be taken too literally) or indirectly through the door of body or the door of speech."

S: The first of these is the basic classification according to whether our volition, that sort of conscious trend, a relatively conscious trend of our whole being is motivated by greed or by hate or by delusion. Delusion here meaning a sort of mental confusion, bewilderment, lack of clarity of motive, distraction and so on and so forth, or in the opposite of those, that is to say whether we are motivated by love in the sense of a positive outward going emotion, motivated by contentment - this is the best English word I could find - contentment being a sort of harmonious acceptance, not of just the way things are but first of all of yourself, not just as you are and sort of being finally satisfied with that, but feeling as it were pleased with yourself, contented with yourself, and therefore contented with others. Not that that represents

a limitation on your development, but you've no sort of neurotic self-hatred. You are satisfied with yourself even though you recognize that you have to change quite a lot and grow quite a lot, so contentment, and of course, mental pellucidity, increasing mental clarity, which isn't just intellectual but as it were one's whole awareness which is growing brighter and brighter and you're more and more motivated and guided by that. It's almost sort of non-volitional. You see quite clearly that that's what you should do, so as it were automatically, perhaps better spontaneously, you just do that. There's no conflict, there's no choice, there's no decision; you see it has to be done, you can see it quite clearly, and your whole tendency then is just to do it.

[17]

So that is skilful, that's good karma as it were, wholesome karma as opposed to the unwholesome. So the basic distinction as regards karmas is the skilful and the unskilful, the wholesome and the unwholesome, distinguishing in these ways. That the skilful or the wholesome is motivated by love or is an embodiment or expression of love in the true sense, and of contentment, harmony, being at peace with oneself, and with increasing mental clarity carrying you forward because you are so harmonious and so integrated that as soon as you see what needs to be done you at once start doing it, and of course unskilful karma, unwholesome karma being the opposite when your basic motivations are greed - not just sort of healthy animal greed in the sense that you need food so you feel like eating but a sort of neurotic, possessive compulsive, clutching greed, like that of the pretas, and in a state of constant irritation and frustration. Being dissatisfied with yourself and displeased with other people and being bitter and angry and annoyed and being very confused in your thinking and not at all clear, rather muddy.

So all these make up the unskilful, unwholesome kinds of karma. You can see the two trends very clearly. So the basic distinction, as regards karmas, is between the, as it were, love, content, clarity syndrome if you like, and the greed, hate and bewilderment syndrome on the other. But these are the two, so this is the basic distinction as regards karma. One need not bother too much with the precise tabulation - this applies to that, this applies to that, get just a good clear idea of the basic types. What skilful or wholesome karma broadly is, what unskilful karma or unwholesome karma broadly is. Get the feeling of these two and the difference between them. And each of these two can act either directly through the 'door' of the mind, just our mental state or mental cum volitional state, or it can be expressed in action or in speech. So then you get another classification of karma. Karmas working through the door of the mind which is within you, and karmas which pop out, as it were, through the door of speech or even through the door of action.

Vajrayogini: Why are speech and action distinguished?

S: Ah! Why indeed. You always find them distinguished in Indian thought, not only Buddhist thought - body, speech and mind. Speech represents the whole as it were principle of communication. It's regarded as so important it's given a separate enumeration. It's not just lumped together with action. Speech is more than action. It's almost midway between body and mind. It represents a sort of subtle principle between body and mind. As I said, the whole principle of communication.

Lokamitra; Another thing is that as feelings are translated into actions they go first of all through thought, then speech, and then down to a very gross level of action.

S: Right, yes indeed. So therefore you find often in the case of the Buddha, that is the enlightened being, his body speech and mind become the three kayas, Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. Again body, speech and mind - you can be a little bit more philosophical - are not quite body, speech and mind in the ordinary colloquial English sense. It's not quite easy to convey. Guenther has gone into this in quite a few contexts but let me give you a brief idea:- Body means your concrete individual existence, here and now. That's body. Not just your physical body as opposed to your so-called mind. Your concrete individual existence, here and now. Your speech is your communication, in whatsoever way, with other people. And your mind is not just your thought as opposed to your body, but your sort of deepest personal essence. This is more what it means - body, speech and mind. What you are in reality as an individual, that is your mind. Not just mind in the ordinary English sense.

[18]

Vajrayogini: ... influence around you?

S: That's your speech, that's your Sambhogakaya or your developing Sambhogakaya.

Vajrayogini: Aura?

S: Yes aura would be included in speech. Your influence, your field of action. That's all speech. So body, your individual concrete existence as it were for yourself. Your speech is your existence for others, and your mind as it were is that sort of even higher dimension of yourself which contains the two and goes even beyond that.

Vajrayogini: So speech is the result of body and mind.

S: You could say that. Not quite a result in the sense of the product but when the deepest essence of you wants to express itself to others, well it has to go through your individual systems first. Your own hand to make a gesture, your own voice to think, to express. So in that sense the speech is the product of the mind and the body. But it's rather as though mind is up there, body is here and they come together there and communicate midway between.

Lokamitra; The body when one is say in salutation one takes the hands to the forehead for the body and to the heart for the mind.

S: Yes. When you raise the hands here for body, of course we tend to think of this as brain, but there's no association of that sort here at all. It's the head, the head is known as the *uttama angama* - it means the chief limb, the head is the noblest part of the body, so the head stands for body here. It doesn't stand for the mind, it stands for the body, and then the throat centre is the speech centre, and the heart stands for the inner consciousness, the mind. Mind is not here, according to Buddhism, mind is here. This is only the head, this is only the noblest part of the body.

Vangisa: (unclear - very quietly spoken)

S: You can have it either way round actually. The only one that doesn't change is the speech which is always Sambhogakaya.

Vangisa: Dharmakaya in that sense being the universal body.

S: Yes. So the speech principle is regarded as very very important, so you can understand now why speech isn't just included under action. It's a whole sort of as it were independent principle in itself, a principle of communication with others, your influence on others, your effect upon others, in a way on every level. All that is speech.

But of course speech in the narrower sense is as it were the main vehicle and almost speech par excellence.

Devaraja: It also seems to stand for activity or communication without an object or a subject.

S: Well yes because in the case of a Buddha, there's no ego idea either with regard to himself or others, so what does his communication represent? It's a sort of play, a spontaneous overflow, not a sort of transaction between a rigidly defined I and a rigidly defined you. It's something that we can hardly sort of conceive.

___: Action could be a part of speech.

[19]

S: Action in the sense of say gesture could certainly be regarded as speech inasmuch as it is communication. Dance is included here under speech. It's a language. We speak of the language of dance, the language of gesture. And it's also not only communication in the sense of a deliberate communication of something to someone but your whole effect upon others, your aura, the influence you set up, the influence you radiate. The little sort of ray of sunshine you are or the black cloud that you are - this is all under speech.

So this sort of classification of karmas according to body, speech and mind is again quite important and fundamental because that very distinction is important and fundamental. And also it occurs to me to say the arts are included under speech. All the arts come in here.

Devaraja; It's almost the (most important principle?) the speech precepts, in a sense. It's that that links the other two. It seems to be the one that says the most about Buddhism. () process of communication.

S: We mustn't sort of overdo it. All three are equally important here ultimately, but maybe for us speech is of the greatest practical importance, because it helps us make the transition from body to mind as it were, and links the two. It goes far beyond any sort of reconciliation of conscious and unconscious in a psychological sense, much more than that. To hazard a comparison - I'm not going to go into this, I refuse to be drawn [Laughter] - it corresponds to Kant's critique of judgement. There's quite a lot in that really. Just read a little bit about Kant, his critique of judgement, and you'll see exactly what I mean. A whole world of meaning will open out. Very very important.

Anyway let's press on.

"On this fact are based two of the most important ethical findings of Buddhism. First, that a man will reap the consequences not only of what he has intentionally said and done, but also of what he has deliberately thought, or allowed himself to think, without giving it overt

expression in word or deed."

S: Yes, karma doesn't catch up with you, that is the results of karma don't catch up with you simply as a result of or in consequence upon what you have concretely done or said. It also catches up with your thoughts because your thoughts are karmas, your thoughts are the most powerful karma. Carry on.

"One who, in the vigorous language of the New Testament, looks at a woman to lust after her, not only has already committed adultery with her in his heart but, under the operation of the karma-niyama, will one day suffer the consequences of adultery. This does not quite mean that we are no less answerable for a passing dirty thought than for the actual unwholesome deed. Volitions admit of varying degrees of intensity. A volition that fulfils itself in word or deed is generally stronger than one that does not, and a strong will obviously produces greater results than a weak volition."

S: So the basic principle that we're being reminded of here is that karma is action and in the first place it is mental action. So even when the mental action hasn't expressed itself in physical or verbal action, it is still karma and consequences still follow. Nevertheless when a karma in the sense of a mental state, a mental volition, is very very strong, its natural tendency will be to express itself in words, in deeds, as it were sort of reinforcing itself in this way and making itself even more powerful. And so when we do not only pick something but also act it and speak it, [20] if it is something of a karmic nature, then the karmic consequences will be more powerful still than the thought, but we are accountable for our thoughts and we'll see an instance of this in a very positive way a bit later on.

"Whether wholesome or unwholesome however, a mind-volition of the degree of intensity that normally results in word or deed or both will, even if denied overt vocal or bodily expression, undoubtedly brings about the same pleasant or painful experiences that the actual performance of the deed would have done. The point is illustrated by a number of charming traditional anecdotes, like that of the Chinese pilgrim about the old woman who worshipped a dog's tooth thinking it was the Buddha's"

S: Do you know this anecdote? Apparently a pious old woman had a son who went off on a pilgrimage to the holy places and before leaving he asked his mother what he could bring back for her, so she said well what I would really like to have is a relic of the Buddha, if you could possibly bring that back I'd be really happy. So he promised to bring it back. But anyway the pilgrimage took rather a long time, and he was away about two years, and on the way back he got quite near home and then 'oh good heavens, I forgot all about that tooth for my mother, what to do? So he was really sort of perplexed and wondering, he saw by the wayside the skeleton of a dog, and of course there were some teeth so: ah, that'll do. He took a tooth and wrapped it up in a piece of silk he had and took it home to mother and he rapidly presented it to her. She was overjoyed and put it in her shrine and was worshipping it with great zeal every day, and developing great faith and devotion, and after a few weeks a light started to shine from it, just like a rainbow. The old woman was very very pleased with this, and to cut a long story short, she gained Enlightenment.

So, it's the mental state that counts. This is one little popular anecdote, and then there's another one.

"or the Zen story of the monk who carried a pretty girl across a stream and then forgot her while his more strait-laced companion 'carried' her in his mind all the way back to the monastery."

S: You know this story too? No!?! Really? This is one version anyhow. Two monks going for a walk during the rainy season and they came to the edge of the river which was rather muddy, and the () up there going to wade across when they noticed a pretty girl wanting to cross and rather upset because she was wearing her finery and it was going to get splashed with mud as she waded through the torrent. So one of the two monks seeing her distress picked her up, put her over his shoulders like a bag of coal, strode across and the other one followed. When they got to the opposite shore the monk put down the girl, she thanked him and left. So after these two monks had been walking on their way for about a mile the second of the two started getting quite agitated and he was thinking to himself that wasn't a very good thing to do. Here are these monks, () actually picked that girl up, actually got into physical contact, put her over his shoulders, that wasn't very monk-like, that wasn't very good, I think I'd better report him to the Abbot etc., etc. So in the end he was so upset he couldn't contain himself and he said to the other one, 'Why did you do that, why did you break the rule, why did you touch that woman, why did you carry her across the river?' So the other one who was deeply in thought said, 'Woman, oh you mean the one I put down after we crossed the river.' So he said, 'Yes, the one you put down after we crossed the river.' So the first monk then realized the situation, he said, 'I put her down, why are you still carrying her?' That is the mental preoccupation. He wasn't mentally [21] preoccupied, he was just doing a good deed, a good turn and that was that. He forgot all about it as it were. It was out of his mind, his mind wasn't disturbed. But the other monk who didn't carry her was much more mentally disturbed by the idea of the woman.

Vajrayogini: In a negative way.

S: In a negative way.

[End of tape one tape two]

S: So that's the little moral there. Of course Buddhism also says don't fool yourself. Don't think well that you can say to somebody, don't judge me by that action - my mind is quite all right. I'm not really attached. You might think so by looking at my behaviour but I'm not really attached in my mind. Don't fool yourself in this sort of way. But actually it is the mental state that you have to (help pass), not necessarily by the action, but make sure you really do know what your mental state is. All right on we go.

"Tales such as these, which generations of Buddhists have found more illuminating than pages of psychological analysis, link the first with the second of the two important ethical findings based on the relation between volition and 'doors'"

S: You can usually infer the first door from the second and the third but not necessarily. You have to be quite careful about that. You might think someone is being quite cruel but he might be quite kind and vice-versa. But one of course can deceive one own self very easily in this respect.

All right on we go, next paragraph.

"On account of this second finding Buddhist ethics has been described as an ethics of intention. Words and deeds are wholesome or unwholesome, it says, not in themselves but according to whether they are the expression of wholesome or unwholesome volitions. Despite its formidable lists of rules, therefore, Buddhist ethics consists essentially in the cultivation of a morally healthy mental attitude towards life. The rules, whether those prescribed for the monk or those prescribed for the layman, merely represent the normal behaviour-pattern of one in whom such an attitude is predominant"

S: This is quite important to understand. Where do the rules come in? The rules are only a rough and ready guide. If you are psychologically healthy, morally healthy, karmically healthy, you will tend to behave in a certain way. Suppose for instance your attitude towards other people is positive, is loving, is kindly, is affectionate, you'll tend to behave in a certain way. Your behaviour will be considerate, it will be helpful or kind as we say. So therefore if it comes down to a question of rules, the rule roughly speaking corresponds to the normal behaviour patterns of the healthy person. Not in a sort of rigid hard and fast way because sometimes the healthy person's behaviour may not be connected in a very straightforward way with the mental state. It may seem sometimes, if you're not careful, to be non healthy. Although actually it isn't. And broadly speaking the ethical behaviour pattern or the ethical rule simply represents the normal or standard pattern of behaviour that can be expected under normal circumstances from the psychologically, karmically, healthy and positive minded person. Is that clear? But there can be little exceptions and deviations because you're dealing with a living person operating in a living situation. You're not dealing [22] with a machine.

All right on to the third principle then.

"Both ethical status and doors..."

S: Doors being the three doors - body speech and mind.

"...enter into the third principle of classification, that according to the appropriateness of the resultant experiences. In the Cula- and Mahakammavibhangasuttas or Greater and Lesser Discourses on the Analysis of Volitions, the Buddha makes it clear that those who are given to the taking of life, cruelty, anger, envy, avarice and pride, all of which are acts rooted in unhealthy volitions, will be reborn in states of suffering, or, if reborn as men, will be short-lived, diseased, ugly, despised, poor and of mean descent"

S: Here we perhaps come to something a bit controversial, because () is applied to a series of lives, well empirically speaking at least we don't know. We are taking the Buddha's word for it. But we can see it does seem reasonable in principle that the, as it were, punishment should fit the, as it were, crime. If you take life, well life should be taken from you etc. But if we want to come closer to our own actual experience and maybe can find all this within the limits of one lifetime, where we can see it working, we can look at this principle of appropriateness in this way: Supposing we are ourselves full of very negative inimical thoughts towards other people, so we don't like others. Suppose we even have feelings against people or to obstruct them or we are normally very critical and unhelpful and uncooperative and even quarrelsome - we set up a sort of aura about ourselves don't we? At least there's a certain association. We come to have a certain reputation and then what happens? It's as though we tend to attract or draw incidents and people of that kind to affect us. Do you see what I mean? So therefore the fact that we were of that kind volitionally would tend to attract

to us experiences of that kind, just because we are functioning as it were on that sort of vibration. That isn't to say that sometimes quite innocent people won't suffer - that's another consideration - but if we ourselves are imbued with these sort of thoughts it's as though we do tend to attract other people who are imbued with those sort of thoughts. So if two quarrelsome people get together well obviously there's going to be a clash sooner or later, so each of them will suffer and it's as though each has been reborn in accordance with his own particular kind of karma.

So you can look at it like this, certainly within the framework of the present lifetime and if that principle is so because (appropriateness is) based on sort of attraction as it were in that way, and if there is such a thing as a series of births, a series of lives, well you can imagine it applying over that series too. It's not like the law. Karma is not like the legal law that you are punished. You've made yourself of a certain nature due to your own thought, words and deeds. Because you've made yourself of a certain nature you tend to attract other things of similar nature to yourself.

Vajrayogini: [unclear]

S: Are you thinking of something negative or something positive? Well sometimes you don't even know which is really positive and which is really negative. Sometimes the negative can become the basis for the positive or the positive for the negative. But that doesn't mean of course the negative isn't negative or the positive isn't positive for the time being at least. But in the same way you can see that a person who is gentle and kindly will tend to attract gentle and kindly influences and people and so on. So [23] this is simply in explanation of this third principle of appropriateness. We don't know as regards the series of lives so we can at least try to understand it within the context of one single life. We do see this principle at work. We tend to attract people who are like ourselves. We tend to draw to ourselves the sort of experiences that correspond to our mental state and we do notice that certain people seem to have certain experiences that we sometimes don't have. We see some people are accident prone for instance. Why is this? Have you ever noticed that? Some people are very accident prone.

So this is something of the same kind it seems. So this is simply appropriateness of the resultant experience. What comes to you though this is not the only thing to be considered, very often or nearly always has some relationship to what we are and this is all that this principle is saying. The principle of the appropriateness of the resultant experience. So once again we mustn't look at it too sort of narrowly or rigidly or legalistically. It's not like a punishment inflicted on you by a court according to the crime you've committed. It's something more broad and general and, as it were, psychological than that.

Lokamitra: So also if one is sort of fairly () one can draw out those characteristics which we find in oneself from other people so they can be sort of () unhealthy.

S: Yes, right.

___: Can you say a bit more about that?

Lokamitra: If one is a strong person and maybe a very quarrelsome person then they'll bring out the sort of argumentative side of others around them.

S: Who are not normally like that.

Lokamitra: Yes, Or if one's ...any characteristic.

S: For instance you may be so argumentative and quarrelsome and difficult you get into discussion with some rather meek gentle person but who after all, being human, has got a spark of that sort of thing somewhere, and due to the force of your karma you may become so argumentative and quarrelsome that meek little person may even hit you on the nose in the end. You've activated that same sort of thing within himself. So [laughter] the result of the experience is according to the karma [laughter].

Vangisa: ... (I noticed apart from that recently, something more simple which isn't being quarrelsome,) just a general state of confusion. Certain specific people, quite a number of people just cannot escape from this ... you speak to them, you say something to them and immediately you are involved in the confusion. (unclear and very faintly spoken)

S: This is also very important - it is not an aspect which is usually touched upon but I certainly have been very much aware of this lately even within the Movement and especially on the fringes of the Movement, our own Movement, the prevalence of what to use the Classical term we call Micchaditthis - wrong views. I know some people - both Order members and Friends - have become very conscious of this. It's basically a sort of confusion of thought. We were very much preoccupied with this on our last study retreat which was on Suzuki's "Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism" with Suzuki himself labouring under so many misconceptions and confusions. It was really quite frightening for some people. With even Dr Suzuki falling () victim to these things in his relatively earlier days. Most people are really muddled in their thinking, especially people who take up with [24] Buddhism and oriental religions and so on. You get all sorts of weird statements thrown up "All is one" and "It doesn't matter what you think" and things of that sort - these are very simple examples - It becomes much much more complex than that. So clear plain straightforward thinking is very often called for, but as Vangisa says you are not allowed to retain your own clarity. They extend their confusion and they make you confused too and you have to resist. Sometimes it's very difficult because to sort out their confusion might take weeks and months of discussion very patiently bit by bit for even years. One hasn't got time for that so what does one do? Sometimes the best thing you can do is to shut them up in some way or other. At least retain your own sanity even if you can't help them develop theirs! [laughter]. I think ruthless treatment is quite justified sometimes. Kindly but kindly - you're being kind to yourself and really to them too, though you may not feel very kind, but if you have deep down a lot of confusion in you which they are only activating and you are thinking up to then how clear you were well that's probably a different matter. There very often is a lurking confusion in ourselves with regard to certain things. But here again you tend to be appropriate as a result of experiences. You are bringing out from or in others what is in you and you're experiencing the backwash from that. That's the karmavipaka on the spot. So this is all that is being said here except that in this context it's being extended over a whole series of lives. The fruit is according to the tree - perhaps it would be better to put it that way rather than to say the punishment fits the crime. The fruit is according to the tree. The volition is the tree, the resulting experience is the fruit.

All right let's go on.

"Contrariwise, those whose acts of body, speech and mind are the opposite of these, being rooted in healthy attitudes, will be reborn in the blissful higher planes of existence, or if reborn as men, will be long-lived, healthy, handsome, respected, wealthy and of distinguished family."

S: You notice that Buddhism doesn't neglect sort of worldly blessings. All these things are the result of good karma, that you're long lived - it's a good thing to live long, in the sense of completing the full span of human existence. Going through childhood, youth, maturity, middle age, old age. It's good to go through the whole cycle. It's a blessing. When you are healthy health is a blessing. Also handsome, Buddhism doesn't depreciate even such an apparently mundane thing as good looks. It's regarded as the result of good karma in the past, not necessarily so but if you are, it is said, good tempered then you'll be reborn good looking because the explanation is that anger disfigures the face and if you have not disfigured your face in the past with anger well you'll be born with a beautiful smooth countenance in your new life. And then respected, honoured and wealthy even. An abundance of material goods - and of distinguished family - a cultured family, a good tradition. So these things are considered to be the results of good karma. Not that if you have them you must have committed those good karmas. You can't work it that way round. But that if you do commit those good karmas these will be the resultant experiences. You have to be really careful otherwise you end up by sanctifying the status quo.

"Other texts give further examples of this type of correspondence. One declares stupidity to be the result of mental indolence,"

S: If you don't use your mind well you just become more and more ignorant - you're reborn ignorant.

[25]

"..and intelligence of a desire to learn. In the case of this principle of classification one should be careful not to pervert the Buddha's Teaching by arguing that, for example, poverty is invariably the punishment for 'bad' and riches the reward of 'good' karmas performed in past lives, for this would be to fall a victim to the very misunderstandings which we have tried to clear up at the beginning of the section."

S: All right then, on to principles four and five. We seem to be getting quite near to break and coffee time.

"With regard to time and relative priority of effect, the fourth and fifth principles, the classification of karmas is in each case a fourfold one. A karma may ripen in the very life in which it was performed, in the next life, in a succeeding life, or, owing to the preponderance of 'counteractive' karma or to its being too weak, it may never ripen."

S: That's quite important. It may never ripen. So some karmas it can be counteractive - opposite karmas, and others which are so weak that if after a certain time they haven't produced their effect well they won't produce it at all. So from this very fact one can see that karma isn't something rigid and mechanical.

"The classification according to priority of effect refers not to the effects of karma in general but only to one kind of effect, that which we call rebirth, or, more correctly, rebecoming.

From this point of view karmas are classified as 'weighty', 'death-proximate', 'habitual' and 'residual'."

S: This is quite important. Some karmas are 'weighty', some 'death-proximate', some 'habitual', some 'residual'. We'll see now what these are.

"The dhyanas are all reckoned as healthy weighty volitions."

S: That's quite important. It sounds rather technical but it isn't so. What are the dhyanas?

Vajradaka: The higher states of consciousness.

S: The higher states of consciousness or even super-conscious states that one enters into as it were as a result of the practice of meditation, sometimes in other ways. So the dhyanas are all reckoned as healthy weighty volitions. First of all the dhyanas are volitions. When you are meditating it is a state of volition. Now that is very important. It is an active powerful state, it is a karma. You are doing something and in fact it is so powerful that it is called weighty. It is the most powerful of all volitions, all healthy volitions, skilful volitions. When you are in the meditative state. You are doing things more than at other times. The higher the level of consciousness the more powerful it becomes. It's not just higher - it is higher of course - but it's also more powerful, there's more energy in it the higher that you go.

Lokamitra: How about (unclear) then. Devadatta who attained the four dhyana states also tried to kill the Buddha?

S: Well you haven't got rid of ego.

Lokamitra: So it's like two weighty volitions struggling against each other.

S: Yes, yes. Devadatta, even though he had this higher experience and therefore was as it were a powerful personality, there was a deep rooted egotism and selfishness in him and competitiveness with the Buddha. He wanted to take the [26] Buddha's place and get the Buddha out of the way. But even though he had had these experiences previously it only sort of reinforced his bad intentions. Even the dhyanas are mundane. They don't directly pertain to the path. They are higher but they are more refined states of the mundane - they're not transcendental.

Vangisa: (unclear)...Buddhist system or method of dhyanas and so on have been dealt with the destruction of the idea of ego ...they can achieve a similar state of consciousness from a different ideological point of view and therefore has a much stronger residue of (unclear)

S: What you need in addition to the dhyanas from the Buddhist point of view is insight which goes far beyond the dhyanas. But the dhyanas in themselves are healthy, they are positive, they are skilful inasmuch as they represent a more refined level of consciousness and therefore they're much more powerful than ordinary states of consciousness. They can have a much more refining effect upon the whole being. So therefore they're called weighty volitions and weighty volitions as regards their effects, as regards their resultant experiences take precedence of all others. You experience as it were a sort of conflict between results such as

in terms of karmas, precedences taken by results of weighty volitions whether healthy or unhealthy including the dhyanas. The dhyanas are all reckoned as healthy weighty volitions. So when you are meditating, when you are experiencing the dhyana state you are doing something, you are creating karma, you are bringing about certain very powerful consequences for yourselves even though, inasmuch as the dhyanas are mundane, they may be only temporary if not kept up, if not reinforced.

Vajrayogini: You are talking about meditation and body mind and speech are all together in the meditation. It's not just the second one...

S: Oh no, all your energies are involved. Well yes in some cases you can be walking but it's quite difficult actually to experience a dhyana state when you're moving about. It is not impossible though. It can happen. Or even when you're speaking, but it isn't usual. Because usually you're so absorbed you can't speak, you can't move, but the point that is being insisted on, the point that is being stressed is that one: a dhyana state, a state of higher, is an action, is a volition, but we tend usually to think of the dhyana states as something passive and restful. No, that you are creating karmas in those states, even though the karma that you create is finite, but you're creating karma. It's positive, it's a volition and you're setting up very powerful consequences for the future, so powerful that those consequences have to take precedence of the consequences of other weaker kinds of karmas. So that when you're meditating you're doing something very very important. I think this is what we have to put across to people much more perhaps than we do. They tend to think of meditation as a sort of dreamy, drifting off into a rather vague pleasant mild state. It's very much more than this.

Vajrayogini: (unclear) ... into all my senses. I think that is a lot () karma.

S: Yes, yes. So those are examples of healthy weighty volitions. Now let's go on.

"Matricide, parricide, killing an Arhant, wounding a Buddha and creating a schism in the Sangha, together with erroneous opinions of the type negating the very possibility of a life dedicated to the attainment of Enlightenment, are all unhealthy weighty volitions."

[27]

S: Ah, this is quite important. The unhelpful or unskilful weighty volitions, First of all matricide, matricide is put first. Matricide is killing one's own mother, murdering one's own mother. So why do you think that is. It's not surely just convention just because it's conventionally regarded as being wicked to kill your own mother so it's put first on the list. Why do you think matricide is regarded as an unhealthy or unskilful weighty volition? Why is killing your mother worse than killing somebody else to put it crudely?

Lokamitra: It's much more intense and unhelpful.

S: But why.

Vajrayogini: It's in some way killing yourself.

S: Yes, in some way killing yourself.

___: She created your life, even your life came through her.

S: Yes but that's more like a reflection. It's true, certainly, but why should it be worse to kill someone who gave life to you?

Lokamitra: They've given you so much. Maybe that.

S: Ah yes, take it a step further.

___: (Unclear)

S: I wouldn't say that. The tie or the bond between mother and child is a very strong one, possibly the strongest natural biological human bond of all, so to murder your own mother you have to overcome that. So that means it represents something much more powerful and much more strong. If your desire to kill is so strong that it can overcome your strongest natural human attachment of all then that desire to kill must be very very intense indeed. So in this respect it becomes even a more serious matter than killing somebody else, because the natural tendency not to kill that you have to overcome by virtue of the fact that it is your own mother is so much stronger, even in the case of other people. Do you see this? But I think this is why matricide is regarded as so great an offence or so weighty an unskilful volition. It represents a negation of so much, of so strong a natural bond. You have to overcome so much in you which is quite good and positive and healthy in order to carry out that act. Even to carry out you must have degenerated to a very great extent indeed. Do you see this? So matricide, killing one's own mother is regarded as a weighty unhealthy unskilful volition.

And this brings me to another point which I've mentioned fairly recently not only with regard to mothers but with regard to fathers. As one's spiritual life develops and one progresses and becomes more healthy and positive it is very important that if in one's own case one's relationships with ones parents have not been or are not positive that one should try to make them so. Because if there is within you a residue of negative attitude, especially hatred and dislike, towards one's own parents, inasmuch as you are so deeply connected with them it will stand in your way to...

Vajrayogini: It's very important. In Gestalt therapy or philosophy () first you have the mother, the father and mother before you can have () now translating the actual () now I realize that the last month I've changed my way of working and all the time I can have () and to see the positive things and then working through the other relationships.

[28]

S: It's not so much that you have to murder your parents but to realize that you have murdered them. Well you have murdered them. You've done it already in thought and you just have to recognize that that unskilful attitude is there before you can start working on it and getting rid of it and making it positive.

Vajrayogini: Yes and suddenly the person finds his own trust (). ().

S: Well sure. You can't relate positively to others until you are positive yourself and relating positively to yourself. As I said this is something I've been pointing out recently to people within the movement that at a certain stage you must definitely think in terms of establishing a positive relationship with your parents. You can't just sort of as it were discard them, this is not possible by virtue of the fact that we're so intimately connected for so many years. So

you've either got to clear up any mess that may be left over or it remains mess and it continues to get in your way. But if there is mess there it can be cleared up. So this is quite important and I'm a bit suspicious of someone who seems to be getting on well with his spiritual practice and meditation but who remains on bad terms with his parents in the sense of feeling very negatively towards them or still having resentment towards them. This is a sign of non-progress. If of course the parents are uncooperative and they don't want anything to do with you and they don't like you and condemn you well you can't change their attitude by force - you have to accept that that is the way they are and if necessary even stay away from them. But you won't be feeling anything negative towards them on your own account. You will be ready for a positive communication if they will allow you to have it.

Vangisa: Doesn't this include (the sorting out of their relationship?)

S: I think not necessarily in the sense of going into all the gory details. No I don't think you need to remember every incident and mull it over - no I don't think so. Make yourself positive here and now in the present and here and now in the present you make positive links with your parents. I don't think you have to drag up the past in detail all the time. I don't think that's...

___: Maybe you don't have to drag it out but often it will come up surely.

S: If it does well one deals with it. Deal with it in the present as it were.

All right let's go on, Matricide, parricide, killing an Arhant and wounding a Buddha. This is violence directed towards people who normally one ought to be looking up to. Sort of it's a violation of one's natural feelings to reverence something that is greater than oneself. If you violate that it's a very serious thing indeed. Just as you're dealing here on the spiritual level with what before you were doing on the biological and psychological. If anything it's even worse. To even think of murdering some holy person. It's a very very serious matter indeed. It's not just that you're trying to harm that person. You're negating something within yourself. You're doing terrible harm to yourself in that way.

___: Can one make a distinction here between a definite like part that one wills as it were and one that just arises or seems to erupt from a lower level.

S: Well it is the sort of set conscious intention and the wish and the willingness to carry it out. Not just the sort of fleeting thought which you may well have especially for instance in the case of the Arhant or the Buddha who may be laying down the [29] law and [Break in tape until...]

And then creating schism in the Sangha, dividing the spiritual community itself. So this is regarded traditionally as unhealthy, unskilful weighty volition. It's one of the most serious of things to create schism within the spiritual community itself. As Devadatta tried. In other words you must be really a very sick person to try systematically and deliberately to do that. If you have a harmonious body of people who are united on the spiritual principle and have a real brotherhood and fellowship, deliberately to go about dividing that and splitting it up means there's something really bad and vicious and nasty in you. So this is regarded as unskilful weighty volition, and one of the most serious. To break up or try to break up a sort of good fellowship. Unfortunately one does come across people who tend to do this sort of

thing.

___: This doesn't mean that you completely avoid and sweep under the carpet any dissension. Any point of controversy.

S: Well points of controversy and genuine differences of opinion - these are quite different things aren't they.

Then, opinions - that is ditthis - of the type negating the very possibility of a life dedicated to the attainment of Enlightenment, are all unhealthy weighty volitions. To be set in an opinion even if it amounts to a philosophy, according to which no higher development is a possibility for human beings. Then that is an unskilful weighty volition. This is very important indeed and not according to current modes of thought, that if you are consciously and deliberately committed to a system of thought which precludes higher human development, that is an unskilful way to develop. You are doing harm to yourself as well as to others.

So these are examples of positive and of negative, skilful and unskilful, weighty volition. Particularly powerful karmically efficacious mental states.

Let's go on to the other...

"Death-proximate karma is the healthy or unhealthy volition occurring immediately before death, which may be the reflex of some previously performed healthy or unhealthy karma, or of something connected with it, or of a sign indicating the future plane of existence."

S: So Death-proximate karma, that is the karma which is near the time of death, is the healthy or unhealthy volition occurring immediately before death. Buddhists traditionally attach great importance to your mental state just before you pass away and this is one of the reasons why Buddhists are very concerned to pass away in a state of clear consciousness, because this is a volition, and not to pass away in a state of unconsciousness. If possible not to pass away in sleep, though one isn't necessarily unconscious even in sleep. So this death-proximate karma which may be healthy or unhealthy, that is the mental state just before death, may be the reflex of some previously performed healthy or unhealthy karma. In other words if you're habitually doing something during your lifetime, the chances are that you'll think about that just before death. And in that way what you've been habitually concerned with will become the subject matter of your death-proximate karma. There's the famous story about a rishi, a sage, who's very much attached to a deer that came to him in his hermitage and his last thought, his dying thought was about the deer just when he passed away. So according to the legend he was reborn as a deer. So that's another little illustrative story. For instance it's also said that if you were a butcher then at the time of death or just before death you may see blood, you may [30] see animals being slaughtered. I did actually hear of one case of this, a butcher near Darjeeling, this sort of story was reported about him. Just before his death he kept seeing, as it were, visions of animals being slaughtered and got into a very bad mental state because of that. But it is only as it were natural or reasonable, that, other factors being equal, if you're not making any special effort to sort of watch your state of consciousness just before death, that you should think about something that you've been preoccupied with for quite a few years. Something to do with your work or family or your interests and so on and so forth. If you've been collecting stamps all your life just before death, ridiculous as it no doubt is, you maybe are thinking about your stamp collection and what's going to happen to it

and in that way pass away.

And also again if you have been in the habit of meditating during life the chances are that just before death you will be in a meditative state of consciousness or at least repeating a mantra. If you have been in the habit of doing that during your lifetime. On the other hand a great deal may depend upon the attitude of the people around you, you may be in a weakened state, physically weakened, you may be a bit mentally suggestible and if the people around you or people with you at that time are saying well just forget about things, we'll look after things for you. Don't worry about your wife and family, we'll see to all that - just don't worry, don't think about it - just think about the Buddha or just repeat your mantra. Or if you chant for them and they are just listening to you chanting - this is quite good inasmuch as it helps them to develop certain mental attitudes, volitions, just before they pass away, but therefore in this sense think how unpleasant it could be to pass away in hospital with nurses bustling to and fro and someone's just going to take your temperature and all that sort of thing - all cold and clinical and none of your friends may be around. All right so that's death-proximate karma.

Or a sign indicating the future plane of existence. This of course is a matter of Buddhist belief, it isn't something that we can say either is or is not with any confidence, but it is generally believed that if for instance you have a vision just before death of some happy sort of heavenly paradise like state well it probably means that you're going there. Or if you have a vision of people fighting and quarrelling well you may be reborn among the asuras and so on. It is certainly a popular Buddhist belief. But it isn't something that we can very easily verify. But even apart from all that we can say, even from a purely human point of view, how you pass away is quite important, the mental state, and we should make sure as far as we can that we ourselves pass away in a positive state of mind and that we help others to do so also if we happen to be with them at that time, help them to die happily. So that's death-proximate karma. In other words the karma, the healthy or unhealthy mental state or volition occurring immediately before death.

All right then on to habitual ...

"Habitual karma is a healthy or unhealthy volition either repeatedly performed or performed once and repeatedly reflected upon."

S: So two kinds of habitual karma, which can be of course either healthy or unhealthy, skilful or unskilful. It's either an action that you go on doing again and again which obviously builds up quite an influence on you after a certain time. Or it's an action that you just do once but you're repeatedly reflecting upon it. That also is habitual karma. It may be a good action, it may be a bad action, it may be skilful, it may be unskilful. For instance you might have had a wonderful meditative experience. If you go on [31] reflecting upon it well it can become a sort of habitual karma, even though you don't have the experience itself exactly. If you're reflecting upon it again and again it can become as it were an habitual karma and you can increase its effect. And on the other hand if you committed a crime, if you only committed it once but it troubles you and you go on thinking about it more and more and sort of living it through again and again then again it can become a sort of habitual karma.

All right let's go on to the next kind.

"Authorities on the Abhidharma agree that as a factor determining the nature of the next

rebirth a weighty karma, whether healthy or unhealthy, invariably takes precedence over death-proximate or an habitual karma,"

S: Authorities on the Abhidharma agree about this, that when you are reborn, out of all the different kinds of karmas that you've committed and all the different effects that are now sort of about to come into operation, which has the greatest effect and determines the nature of your next existence more than any other? Which takes precedence? And they agree that it's the karmic consequences of the weighty karmas, whether skilful or unskilful. They have as it were the greatest say at that time. They determine more than any other kind of karma just exactly what your next birth, your next life will be like, at least to begin with.

Lokamitra: Can I just say something about the previous habitual karmas. Just something which occurs to me as quite a micchaditthi among some people. I've always been very regular in meditating and so on and I've been attacked by several people in the past for this. It hasn't really hurt me because I've been convinced myself that it's like setting up a positive habit which seems to me important at the moment, but sometimes it's thought that it's necessary to break these positive habits. I've felt them rather from a negative point of view actually but I don't think it's so prevalent as it was.

S: I think it's quite true if for instance you've kept up your meditation faithfully every day say for seven or eight or nine years then you might consider that perhaps once, in a way, you shouldn't sit that particular day. But this is something you think of after seven or eight years for instance, not after a couple of weeks!

Lokamitra: Personally I've got so much from leading a regular life and establishing positive patterns like that.

S: I think this is very important, especially when one lives in a very distracting environment such as a big city always is. I think it's very important to establish the positive pattern and regular pattern.

Devaraja: I can see the possibility ... I was just thinking where it might be good say to deliberately decide not one day to meditate, if you start realizing through meditation that you're doing it for very sort of guilty reasons...

S: I don't think that's any reason to stop though. You go on meditating but without the guilty reasons.

Devaraja: I can see that's possible. Just to say decide for one day or something not to do it just to show that you weren't kind of...

Lokamitra: But that's a reaction. I think that's wrong. I think that's what these people are sort of saying. As long as one can [32] stop and not get hung up about it, not be very upset that one hasn't done it and feel guilty then, but if one just doesn't because one thinks one might feel guilty then it seems to...

Devaraja: Yes, one maybe doesn't stop because one is frightened of some kind of awful guilt or...

___: But sometimes these things, maybe not fear in that sense, but they can spur you on too. You can use them to...

S: I think we have to be really careful of that particular micchaditthi which is against any sort of regularity of practice which really means it's against commitment. You just want to sort of drift and do things in a lazy sort of good for nothing way. One has to be very careful about that. It's so prevalent especially in sort of pseudo-Buddhist, pseudo-Zen, pseudo-Krishnamurti circles that one just has got to be very much on one's guard against that and not sort of fall victim to it oneself and not encourage it in others and not go along with that sort of line of thought even by implication.

___: Do you think that for some people there's a danger of so structuring time and activities that in effect they exclude themselves from reality. You can do this as a way of not facing up to reality.

S: I think I'll deal with that problem when I encounter it. I haven't met anybody yet who does over-structure themselves in this way, whereas I've encountered scores of the other kind! But I would say also this. If you are meditating, even supposing you are over structuring it, you are meditating, and the meditation eventually contains its own antidote. You would not be able to go on structuring in that rigid way if you get on sufficiently with your meditation. The meditation itself will start loosening you up, so there's no real practical danger.

Vajrayogini: I get lots of priests, catholic priests in my groups and () use the word meditation, they get angry because you were for years and years sitting and so on.

S: Well they don't meditate. That's the trouble. They don't meditate. If they had meditated for years and years they'd never have to come to you to be sorted out. No, they don't meditate. You mentioned about that once Mike didn't you, meditating when you were in seminary and what happened.

Mike (Abhaya): Well they use this word meditation for a half hour session before the morning mass. There was no kind of instruction at all. People were completely at sea. The session began with a few prayers and well no one gave any guidance at all so it seemed quite clear that no one was actually meditating.

[End of side one side two]

Vajrayogini: ...their knees and moving forward.

S: Don't they kneel on peas also sometimes?

Devaraja: I think maybe it's occurred to me before that there's a problem when we use the word meditation and I think that it's not really a satisfactory translation.

S: When I say meditation here, people practising meditation, and especially within the group, I mean that they are practising according to proper instruction, that there is someone keeping an eye on them and they will know whether they are really meditating or not, so if there are these safeguards and they really are meditating i.e. entering into higher states of consciousness [33] from time to time, then any over structuring in their way of life including

their regular pattern of meditating will be looked after by the loosening, as it were, effect of the meditation experience itself. So for anyone sort of regularly functioning within the framework of the FWBO there's no problem at all. We don't have to worry about that. Let them be as over-structured as they like. If they do meditate in this sense it'll be resolved almost automatically before long. In any case hardly anybody tends to over-structure, it's much more the other way around. We have to encourage them to structure much more than they do - positively. Maybe in other sorts of groups and circles over-structuring is a danger - it certainly isn't for us. Under-structuring is the danger, a vague jelly-like drift.

"In the absence of a weighty karma, the determining factor is either a death-proximate or an habitual karma, the order of precedence being here a matter of dispute."

S: You can see also the two overlap a little bit anyway so it's not surprising that there's a difference of opinion. OK.

"Residual karma is a healthy or unhealthy karma not included in the previous three classes which has been performed once and can determine rebirth only if it has been repeatedly reflected upon."

S: I don't think we need go into that in any great detail partly because we haven't got time and partly because at present we'd best just get a general picture of the whole thing or even a general impression. So let's go straight on, finishing a bit rapidly now.

"Karmas are also fourfold according to function, the sixth principle of classification. From this point of view they are either 'reproductive', 'supportive', 'counteractive', or 'destructive'. The first function produces the psycho-physical 'personality' of the next birth and maintains it for the period of its existence; the second produces no effects of its own, but supports and strengthens those of a reproductive karma; the third, on the contrary, weakens results of a reproductive karma."

S: This is quite important - the counteractive karma, that karmas can be counteracted and in this way negated. They can be balanced out as it were.

"The fourth destroys them and produces effects of its own. Reproductive karma is likened to sowing seed, supportive to manuring and irrigating the field, counteractive to a hailstorm that spoils the crop, and destructive to a fire that consumes it and leaves only ash.

Though enumerated one after another, the thirty two types of karma so far described are not mutually exclusive, for we have to deal not with a machine made up of a limited number of cogs and wheels, each with its own separate function, but simply with a play of healthy and unhealthy volitions which can be looked at from various points of view as represented by the principles of classification".

S: A play of healthy and unhealthy volitions. This is what it really is, which can be looked at from various points of view as represented by the principles of classification. Don't get bogged down too much in those principles of classification and the sub-divisions of them and so on and so forth. Just try to see in a very broad, general, impressionistic way the sort of thing that is going on. Because it is all after all a picture of our own mind and its workings. All right let's carry on. We're getting quite near the [34] end of this first half of the chapter.

"With regard to the plane of existence on which they mature, the seventh and last principle"...

S: I think actually we can stop there. We come on to the planes and therefore to the wheel, so I think we'll leave that seventh principle of classification of planes for the present until after coffee because it brings us right into the Wheel of Life.

[Coffee Break]

Lokamitra: ... murder. I think this is a quite dangerous proposition or whatever but could one just put it down to the child's karma that one was...

S: Well it might be but one doesn't know.

Lokamitra: But one couldn't deduce from that that it was.

S: No, it might be, one doesn't know, but one couldn't say positively that it was. Also I think in this connection one must beware of saying well it wasn't very serious - he didn't murder, he was only unmindful, but unmindfulness is regarded as a very serious matter indeed in Buddhism. Not that he simply didn't think or he was only a bit unmindful and it didn't matter much - No - unmindfulness is a very serious matter.

___: Perhaps in terms of Christian theology it would be worse than a sin because you can't be forgiven. But you can be forgiven for a sin.

S: It's sort of culpable negligence.

___: What's culpable?

S: For which you are accountable, which is as it were a sin or fault, for which you can be held to account. As in a factory if you don't observe proper safety precautions and someone has an accident through the result of your carelessness it is culpable negligence and you are responsible for that because you should have taken those precautions and knew that you should. You can't argue simply well I forgot, I didn't think. It was your duty to think and you knew you should think, so then the negligence is culpable. So in a way Buddhism holds that all negligence is culpable.

Lokamitra: So we have to be careful where we draw the line between an act which isn't a conscious act and an unmindful act. Because people often use the excuse in their unmindfulness as saying, I can't help it, that's how I am, that's how I do things, it wasn't conscious and so on.

S: Yes, because if it was something that the person had never thought of before and has never had their attention drawn to before it's not to be expected of the sort of ordinary person, well fair enough, you can plea I didn't think of it, I didn't know. but if it's something that the ordinary person should be expected to know or which they have been told about or reminded of, then they can't plead that because it was their responsibility to remember. All right on we go then.

"With regard to the plane of existence on which they mature, the seventh and last such

principle",...

S: That is principle of classifying karmas.

"four classes of karma are distinguished: unhealthy volitions [35] maturing in the four lowest, sub-human kamaloka planes,"

S: Let's take this bit by bit. The basic principle here is that karma, that is volition, can have its fruition, can bring about results on a number of different planes. In other words according to traditional Buddhist thought, there are a number of planes of consciousness, planes of existence. There is another dimension as it were to existence. There is a lower and a higher, which goes beyond the lower and the higher of modern scientific knowledge. Broadly speaking there are three great sub-divisions. There's what is called kamaloka, which is the world of sensuous desire which includes the human world, we could even say the material world if you like. Then what is called the rupaloka which is the world of pure form, we could say archetypal world; and then there is the arupaloka, the formless world where there is mind or different states of mind without even archetypal form. These are usually conceived of in terms of pure light of various kinds. Beyond that is nirvana, beyond that is the transcendental. So this is the basic classification according to level. So here it says

"unhealthy volitions maturing in the four lowest, sub-human kamaloka planes, namely those of the antigods (asuras), revenants (pretas), animals and infernals, all of which are planes of misery; healthy volitions maturing in any one of the seven higher kamaloka planes"

S: You notice these planes are subdivided. The kamaloka consists of a number of subdivisions and the four lowest of these are those of the antigods, the revenants, the animals and the infernals, and then there are seven higher ones which consist of the human plane, which is the fifth up as it were and then above those six other sort of heavenly spheres which are still as it were material, though the word material doesn't really apply here in the ordinary sense, but which are still kamaloka planes. These are the lowest realms of the gods.

"namely the human plane, where 'joy and pain are woven fine'"

S: A quotation from a poet, meaning where there is a mixture of joy and pain. The lower world is mainly pain, the lower kamaloka world. The human world, a mixture of pleasure and pain, the higher heavenly worlds above still within the kamaloka, only pleasure, only joy, though not lasting.

"and the six lowest divine realms, where there is only joy; healthy volitions (namely the four rupa-dhyanas) maturing according to their degree of intensity in any one of the twelve higher divine sub-planes of the rupa-loka, where from the fourth sub-plane upwards even joy is transcended; and healthy volitions (the four arupa-dhyanas) maturing in the four sub-planes of the arupa-loka. Counting the human plane and each of the three lowest kama-loka planes (omitting that of the asuras) separately, and reckoning all the divine planes, lower and higher, as one plane, we get the panca-gati or five 'goings' of sentient beings according to their karma as depicted in the five principal segments of the Wheel of Life"

S: In other words in a sense the Wheel of Life distorts the picture. Do you get that? Add up all the sub-planes. How many sub-planes are mentioned all together in this paragraph so far?

___: Twelve kamalokas, six lower divine...

S: In other words how many kamaloka, how many rupaloka, how [36] many arupaloka?

___: Aren't there thirty-three?

S: There's the heaven of the thirty-three gods. That's one particular heaven. That's the highest of the kamaloka devalokas. Don't go into that.

How many kamaloka sub-planes then? The four lowest, then there's the human, so that's five and then six above - that's eleven, and then healthy volitions maturing in any one of the seven higher kamaloka planes, that is seven of the eleven already enumerated, and the six lowest divine realms where there is only joy. So it's six lower divine realms ... healthy volitions namely the four rupa dhyanas. How many there? I think there's a bit of overlapping that needs to be taken into consideration.

___: Well it seems to have said there's eighteen rupaloka planes.
Twelve higher and six lower divine realms.

Aryamitra: No, because the seven is still in the kamaloka. The seven higher kamaloka planes.

S: So you come on to the healthy volitions, namely the four rupa dhyanas maturing according to their degree of intensity in any one of the twelve higher, divine, sub-planes of the rupaloka. So there's twelve in the rupaloka ... healthy volitions, the four arupa dhyanas maturing in the four sub-planes of the arupaloka. Actually the four sub-planes of the arupaloka are again sub-divided but that hasn't been mentioned here. So you've got eleven, twelve and four. How many does that give you. Twenty-seven. I think you will find that with the sub-divisions it brings you up to - I think it's thirty two, but anyway that doesn't matter very much at the moment. What I'm coming on to point out is this, that ... let's work for the moment with the list of eleven plus twelve plus four. In other words twenty seven. All right, then you've got five or six in the Wheel of Life. So what has happened here? Out of those twenty seven one is represented by a complete segment. In other words the asuras, yes. If you take six divisions. The asuras, who are only one out of twenty seven, get a complete segment to themselves. The pretas who are one out of twenty seven get a complete segment to themselves. The animals who are one out of twenty seven get a complete segment to themselves. Human beings who are one out of twenty seven get a complete segment to themselves. Infernal beings who are one out of twenty seven get a complete segment to themselves. So that's five. Five away from twenty seven is twenty two. That leaves you with the devaloka. The devas, though they represent twenty two segments, twenty two sub-planes, they only get one segment of the Wheel of Life. So in other words, if you look at the Wheel of Life you get the impression that all the six different kinds of beings who are reborn there represent an equal percentage of the total, but they don't. The sphere of the gods is twenty two times out of scale as it were.

___: In excess?

S: No, the other way around. It should be twenty two times bigger than it is to give you the same proportions, because the world of the gods, even though it's only one segment of the Wheel of Life, represents twenty two sub-planes when each of the other five represents only one sub-plane.

Lokamitra: You quote something about Lama Govinda later on in the Stages of the Path...

[37]

S: Right, so if you put the world of the gods at the top. To make it proportionate you should multiply that twenty two times to give you the correct proportions as it were. Or even more if you go into the sub planes of the arupaloka properly. In other words what it really means is that the Wheel of Life, though it's very good from certain points of view, does not represent the scale of existence in depth correctly.

___: But on the other hand there may be all these different levels but couldn't most of humanity be right down on the bottom five as it were, so that proportionately in another way the world of gods is perhaps...

Devaraja: In terms of our experience of the world I think that probably the Wheel of Life is very accurate. For most people that's their experience of the world within those limitations.

S: Yes. The majority of human beings would not experience the world of the gods at all.

Vangisa: On the other hand for the gods in fact, it sometimes said of the Chinese that the (light) was an obvious difference between animals and hungry ghosts. That's purely from our subjective human point of view.

S: Yes, but looking at it objectively in terms of number of planes actually existing as it were and therefore realms of experience open to us, there is a much further possibility of development at the devaloka line than the Wheel of Life suggests. Otherwise we get the impression of almost something a bit cramped, whereas the devaloka should be opening up in the direction of nirvana as it were, with many many more sub-planes, so that the human, animal, preta, asura range of experience represents a very small proportion of the total.

Devaraja: Perhaps again maybe it's what the Wheel of Life's trying to say about the devaloka is not the devaloka in terms of the path and higher states of consciousness but a kind of a realm of being trapped in aesthetic and sensual delights.

S: But that applies all the way up. That applies to all the twenty two.

Devaraja: But from the point of view of saying that one could be trapped in that, because isn't the emphasis laid on breaking through and getting outside the wheel.

S: The higher up you go, the greater the possibility or the danger of being trapped, because it becomes more and more blissful and more and more entrancing. So if one looks at it from the point of view of the trap you should include all twenty two and represent the trap as becoming more and more and more refined. But anyway I'm only sort of pointing out that the two don't square. You've got these twenty seven or even thirty two planes, and the Wheel of Life doesn't illustrate them fairly because these twenty two planes at a conservative reckoning are all lumped together in one segment whereas the other five planes each gets a segment to itself, so we mustn't take that bit too literally.

Vajradaka: So in terms of the path, practically, in terms of the experience of the five lower and the twenty two higher, you are actually calling the devalokas higher spiritual planes. You

are referring to them as spiritual experiences which are necessary for the refinement of the psycho-physical organism to be open to...

S: Yes. But you can of course branch off as it were and develop your insight without traversing the whole length of that spiritual [38] path. Insight can begin before that, but that's a quite different thing. But albeit a certain measure of development of that to a higher spiritual part is necessary as a basis for the development and much more so the retaining of that insight. Otherwise you've got no sort of basis to settle down upon as it were. Your ordinary consciousness can't sustain it. It's not refined. So that the higher you go up that path of the gods as it were, the more satisfactorily you can retain your higher spiritual insight, but also the greater the danger of getting trapped on those levels. As the rewards increase well the dangers also increase. The more you stand to gain, the more also you stand to lose, which seems to be entirely as it should be. Until you pass the point of no return. But anyway, having said that let's go on. So we get the five goings or six if you reckon the asuras separately, between which or among which are distributed all these sub-planes but as I've said not very fairly. OK Carry on.

"A sixth segment is often made by dividing that of the gods into two and allotting one half to the asuras".

S: That's rather interesting. Any reason anyone can think of for this? There is a reason.

Devaraja: Isn't this to make the point of the struggle between the two, as it were aggressive and quite negative and aesthetic.

S: There is a conflict.

Vangisa: The tree has its roots in the world of the asuras and its branches and fruits (in the other).

S: That's true, yes, it spans the two and they are also struggling for that, for the good things of life as it were. You notice in the wheel of life all the other segments are definitely marked off from one another but the world of the asuras and the world of the gods, they are not marked off because they are fighting, they're in contact, as though in a sense it's one world, one segment. Even though they're in conflict and so different from one another, and sometimes the gods win and sometimes the asuras win. So that's also quite interesting.

___: It's seemed strange to me that it was split up - one is one of the lower kamaloka planes and the other represents the higher and it's brought these two right together. The two extremes.

S: Right. The asuras are generally regarded as higher than the pretas and of course the animals and the beings in hell. In other words you could say putting it in your terms aggression is a step up.

Abhaya: I'm not quite clear why these two are put together.

S: Well the connection is that they're fighting. They couldn't be fighting if there was a wall between them as there is between say the human beings and the animals, the animals and the

pretas, but just here there's no sort of spoke of the wheel coming between them. They are in contact, they are fighting.

Abhaya: So it represents higher aspirations fighting in conflict with lower or...?

S: I think you could even say from a human point of view, it's an example of the better being the enemy of the best. The asuras have got wealth and prosperity and vigour and strength but the devas have got something even more and there's a conflict between them.

[39]

Vangisa: How strongly are the gods fighting back?

S: Again, the thangka, the painting, doesn't give you the facts of the case or at least it gives only one part of the picture. The gods at ease enjoying everything, but the gods also fight according to legend and the gods are fighting with the asuras just as the asuras are fighting with the gods and sometimes the asuras win, sometimes the gods win. It's almost like sort of positive and negative forces which are in conflict but which are also interchangeable, which are going up and down like that, and you can only resolve that conflict by getting on to some as it were higher level still, which is the transcendental, the path of wisdom.

Lokamitra: It's opposite the preta realm and it seems quite relevant there because it seems just like hungry ghosts on a higher level in a way.

S: They're successful hungry ghosts! Satisfied craving. At least for the time being satisfied, up to a point, but just wants more still. They've got a lot and they want more. The pretas haven't got anything but they want more.

Vairocana: There's a tree growing isn't there.

S: That's the wish granting tree.

Vairocana: And they can't get the benefit of the fruit, is that right?

S: Well according to Indian legend, here Buddhism is making use of general Indian legend, Indian mythology, the wish granting tree is the one little tree that grants all possible desires, gives you everything you want and the asuras and the gods are fighting over this tree. It's a sort of Aladdin's lamp, the same sort of mythologem. It's what gives you all your desires so they're naturally fighting for possession of it. In India mythologies of a wish fulfilling tree, a wish fulfilling cow and a wish fulfilling vase or pot which reappears in Buddhism. They're all symbols of the satisfaction of all one's desires and wants and so forth. Sometimes the gods manage to secure this tree and sometimes the asuras.

Vairocana: It seems to grow in the realm of the asuras. It doesn't grow in the realm of the gods.

Aryamitra: Maybe it's supposed to be in between because there is no real dividing line with quite a lot of them. It's usually just between the gods and...

S: It does sort of demarcate the two spheres of influence as it were, but it is also what they are

fighting over and therefore also what unites them.

Devaraja: In quite a lot of paintings I've seen the roots do definitely appear to be in the realm of the asuras and the fruiting seems to occur in the realm of the gods. Maybe there's that particular sort of vigour and energy and decisiveness that is maybe associated with sort of businessmen who you referred to as asuras. It's kind of necessary to stimulate a fruiting growing that can be collected in the...

S: But then again the scales can reverse. You can have all this sort of powerful energy and vigour and as it were get up into the higher meditative levels represented by the gods, but inasmuch as it isn't joined yet with Insight, you can come down again and go back to the previous asura state. That's why the victory is never constant. Sometimes the gods win, sometimes the asuras. Sometimes the spiritual life, sometimes the worldly. It's only [40] when you get on to the transcendental path and you start getting past the point of no return that victory becomes constant and you don't fall back. Otherwise you just go up and down like a yo-yo all the time from the world of the asuras to the world of the gods. At least with the asuras the energy is aroused and it can go in that direction. With the pretas and the animals and the beings in states of torment it isn't like that. The animals can't understand. They're blind as it were. The beings in hell are suffering too much, and the pretas are so famished they sort of don't know what to do. But the person whose energies are sort of out, that are vigorous and he is aggressive and he can make some sort of effort towards the world of the gods but he can't stay there without insight. He comes down again.

Devaraja: I was thinking there's quite a connection really between this thing of the path of regular steps and that until we can develop insight really there seems to be only one thing you can really do and that's to follow the precepts and...

S: Accumulate merit. Keep up the meditation.

Lokamitra: Don't the asuras have less enlightenment seeds than the pretas and the infernal beings?

S: They do. This is a Chinese Buddhist teaching that I referred to in one of those lectures. But seed is potentiality, not something actually existing. In the case of someone who's intensely suffering you can become completely fed up with conditioned existence and go directly for the transcendental, whereas the asura type may get bogged down in the higher goodies as it were of meditative states.

Lokamitra: This is what I've always thought of the asuras - not striving after enlightenment but striving after something...

S: Oh yes, not striving after Enlightenment.

Lokamitra: Striving after a sort of joy which will keep them satisfied for a long time.

S: You could say that the approach of many people in the West to the spiritual life itself is very asura-like.

Lokamitra: I notice this in myself and I notice it in other people in the Order and the Friends,

that people come along because they're very hung up or unsettled and so on and they get together - again it came up in your lecture - and they start being more outward going. Their problems are solved for the time being and they forget about Buddhism.

S: So in a way after a while down they go again.

Lokamitra: So they don't really want the heights.

S: Right, and also it works the other way around, that sometimes they're doing the right thing and really progressing but if they don't have this rather nice blissful feeling along with it all they think that something must be wrong.

Vangisa: I've noticed this in my (). You've got to be careful () general euphoric state of mind.

S: For instance sometimes people say well here are Buddhists doing all that meditation. Why aren't they more happy? It doesn't necessarily bring happiness. That may just depend more on your constitution and temperament. That you find it just as more or less agreeable, but so long as your basic willing, your basic attitude is skilful, that's all that is needed. You may not necessarily be particularly blissful or ecstatic but you're certainly [41] going in the right direction. In other words to put it again in Dantean terms, the criterion of the good is not the agreeable. He didn't say that, that's my own paraphrase. The criterion of the good is not the agreeable, or the agreeable is not the criterion of the good. Therefore you're not necessarily doing what is good because you feel good and you can be doing what is good in every sense and not be feeling good. But what sometimes people are not happy with is they say, oh I'm doing what is good therefore I ought to be feeling good and if I'm not something must be wrong. This isn't so at all. You can be not feeling good but you can be doing karmically what is good. So you mustn't expect sort of psychological and spiritual goodies all along the line, which is what some people do expect. All that you can ask is that your own consciousness of your volition or that your consciousness of your volition is that it is a positive and skilful volition. If you're conscious of that, that's all that is needed. But you don't have to feel good too. You may - if you do you're lucky, that's a bonus, but it's not an essential part of the skilful willing, the skilful mental attitude.

___: I'm a bit confused about the realms from the point of view as the realms rather than psychological states and the earnest disciple on the path who is looking for nirvana, but is it right that in the state of the gods you have to come down as it were and be a man again and if so how can you avoid this time-wasting episode in heaven?! [Laughter]

S: Get Enlightenment straight away!!

___: I haven't expressed it very well but it seemed like a bit of a time-wasting diversion to go up to the gods...

S: Well also one can look at it positively. There is the analogy of sleep. You could look upon sleep as a waste of time couldn't you, but also it is said that the stay in the realm of the gods on the part of someone who's reborn there after death, someone who's led a sort of healthy positive life, represents a sort of rest from mundane existence, an opportunity to assimilate and digest experience, absorb experience and then as the sort of residue of his skilful deeds

which have caused him to be reborn among the world of the gods he then has subsequently a happy and positive human rebirth among good people with long life and so on and so forth. So one will de cease from the world of the gods - sure - but one need not look at it completely negatively as a waste of time. It's a sort of ... it doesn't go on for too long, it's like a sort of sleep, but with awareness, according to tradition. It's a sort of archetypal state more of absorption and assimilation until you come round the next time you can make another positive effort. But in the state of the gods it's not easy, though not impossible, to make a positive effort. It is just as doing sleep , doing dreams.

___: Are you liable to lose your as it were resolution by having a spell...

S: Apparently not. I don't remember that possibility being actually discussed but apparently not. If anything the opposite. Again depending on your temperament. If you've had a good night's rest, a really good sleep, how do you feel when you wake up in the morning? You feel a healthy human being, you feel like getting on with it, don't you. Unless you're one of these sluggards that nestle down into the bedclothes and want another couple of hours snooze. That's another matter, but if you are healthy, well when you've had a good night's sleep you feel like getting up and getting on with things. So it's just like that when you emerge from the realm of the gods and are reborn here on earth. There's that sort of positive experience behind you which was pleasant and agreeable and happy. You feel in a good mood. You can even see it with some babies. Apparently quite [42] irrespective of their experience in this life as far as one can see, some seem more happy than others within themselves. Why is this? You could say as a Buddhist that well maybe those babies have come straight from the deva-like state, whereas others perhaps might have come straight from a human state or some other state not quite so comfortable as that. But there does seem to be a difference. It could be due to something like that. If one does have any sort of belief or faith...

[End of tape two tape three]

...necessarily in a negative way.

___: Can I clear up another point. This is about the gods being in a painless realm. Does this mean that they're not subject to dukkha because it seems to me they're just as much subject to dukkha as humans are.

S: Now just a minute. Which kind of dukkha. There are three kinds of dukkha. They're subject to viparinama dukkha aren't they. It comes to an end doesn't it and that isn't very pleasant and so on. Sometimes that is represented graphically that they feel that they're coming to an end of their span and they feel some sort of decline in their powers and they're not very sort of happy about that. Anyway we mustn't take these details sort of too literally or sort of theologise upon them too confidently because we don't know strictly speaking.

Devaraja: How does rebirth in a Pure Land relate to where one can attain Enlightenment in just one lifetime? I just wondered if that sort of slots into this scheme because I have heard it put by a Geshe and I was never really totally satisfied with it.

S: How did he put it?

Devaraja: Well he said that it was outside the Wheel of Life but at the same time it was kind

of, it was rebirth, it wasn't the same as Enlightenment.

S: That is correct. That just about sums it up. It isn't included in the Wheel of Life and it isn't rebirth in the ordinary sense. It isn't nirvana, it's a sort of half way stage. It's a sort of irreversible state. You're not reborn back into the world, so it's analogous to the pure abodes of the Theravada. The pure abodes at the top of the world of form. There's no regression from them and that's where the anagami, the non-returner, is born. Because he's exhausted the karmas which would bind him to a lower rebirth or lower realms of being, but he hasn't completely freed himself from karma. There's still some slight pull of karma remaining, so he's reborn in this higher heavenly archetypal world, and from there gains nirvana directly. That's straightforward Theravada teaching; and the Pure Land idea seems to in a way be a slightly Mahayanistic form of that. So what the Pure Land people are in fact saying is that by virtue of the (nibutsu) or so on, the repetition of the name of Amitabha, you can in fact become an anagami. This is in fact what they're saying isn't it. So in that case, strictly speaking, those worlds are included in the Wheel of Life but the anagami is not born there in the ordinary way but he's got his transcendental consciousness too, whereas in the case of the other deva occupants of the Pure abodes, they've been reborn there as a result of positive karma without insight, but the anagami retains his insight. So presumably when one is reborn to the Pure Land it's rather like that. As it were outwardly it's a deva world but inwardly it's a transcendental state.

Devaraja: Which of the twelve positive nidanas does that correspond to. Is there a correspondence equivalent to one of the stages?

[43]

S: Where do you mean?

Devaraja: In the twelve positive nidanas.

S: Yes, but they only represent the process.

Devaraja: But presumably a stage in that process of spiritual development would correspond to the...

S: It's that point of transition where in dependence upon craving grasping does not arise.

Devaraja: No I meant the positive nidanas.

S: Ah, there of course it's in dependence upon the higher meditative state of consciousness there is insight into things as they really are. To be an anagami you must develop insight, so in the case of the Pure Land school, their faith in Amitabha, which is not just belief, corresponds to insight. I discuss this in the Survey. Faith as being the emotional equivalent of wisdom. That's in the chapter about the Pure Land school. So it seems as though the Pure Land conception of the Mahayana has some connection with the anagami and Pure abode conception of the Theravada and the latter throws light on the former. I think that the comparison is usually made.

Vangisa: I'm not very clear on one point here. Devaraja said that the Pure Land (does value human life, human rebirth?). I think you talked about it as not being rebirth any longer.

S: It's not rebirth in the normal sense because... there are rebirth factors - I mean there are samskaras otherwise you wouldn't be reborn at all - but they are very light as it were, so you're reborn higher up. But you have developed insight otherwise you wouldn't be an anagami at all. You are on the transcendental path, and that insight you retain over into that birth. So even though phenomenally you occupy a certain place in the ladder of existence, internally you are on the transcendental path. Whereas other occupants of those same realms wouldn't be. Externally you belong there, internally you don't.

Vangisa: As regards the other occupants, there are a number of references to gods being reborn and being about to be reborn in a state of woe, where you are advocating, to some extent anyway, the world of the gods as being a good place for rebirth. But you are thinking more in terms of the transcendental state, than of the (common devas?) in which rebirth in the states of woe take place, but is there in fact a connection between what you are saying and the Pure Land idea or the anagami idea?

S: I think there is a connection though this is not traditionally worked out. The anagami conception is that of the Hinayana and the Pure Land conception is that of the Mahayana. I don't think they've been compared along these lines, but the broad outline, i.e. of a world or a realm which is not part of the world of the gods in the ordinary sense, in which a measure of Enlightenment already has been achieved, from which you do not regress into the world, and from which also you do attain nirvana directly, these features are common to both conceptions.

Vangisa: But you yourself are actually saying that this is an aim of our particular path.

S: Well it's not a particular path because in the case of the Hinayana the stages of Stream Entrant, Once returner, Non-returner, these are actual halting places on the way for everybody. So that if you died as an anagami you would be [44] reborn in one of these pure abodes as they are called. Whereas of course in the case of the Pure Land schools of the Mahayana you seek to be reborn in one of the Pure Abodes, you do not want to come back to this earth, so you try to get so far in this life that you won't have to come back. You don't aim at attaining Enlightenment - that's too much - but at least you think you can get to a place or a sphere or a realm where you can continue your spiritual development and from which you will not have to be reborn back in the world, from which you can go straight on as it were to nirvana or Enlightenment. So in the case of the Theravada, rebirth in the Pure Abode happens sort of incidentally but in the case of the Pure Land school rebirth in the Pure Land comes about as a result of definite aspiration to be reborn in that Pure Land.

Vangisa: But in a sense this is what we are doing all the time even if it's not stated as succinctly as you've now just put it. In one sense or looking at any practice from this particular point of view, any practice could be described as an aspiration towards rebirth in a more satisfactory state on the grounds that our present state in which we are starting is logically unsatisfactory. Therefore the only thing to do is to (improve at least). Once you...

S: Well sure, that's why I've said that when we come away on retreat it's the same principle - you're getting into a more satisfactory environment so that you can make a more undistracted and therefore stronger effort.

Devaraja: I think, I may be wrong, I think I've heard you refer to something like a retreat as

being a bit like the Pure Land.

S: I think I have, yes. So you can think of the Pure Land as a sort of glorified retreat going on for ever and ever until you get nirvana. [Laughter] If food and drink are provided. You don't even have to cook. Fruits appear just floating and bobbing in front of your lips. Raiment appears on you, beautiful new clothes and dresses. You don't have to do anything about it, and music sounding in the air - no tape recorders necessary, just the voice of the Buddha sounding in the air all the time. No possibility of tape recorders going wrong! In the Pure Land you mustn't say he or she only it.

Lokamitra: To get to the Pure Land implies irreversibility.

S: Yes, and the Pure Abodes too.

Lokamitra: But here you say that the worlds of the gods are made up only of the higher rupalokas and the divine realms, but those only consist in the attainment of the rupadhyanas and the arupadhyanas, which aren't irreversibility.

S: You're not reborn anywhere as a result of irreversibility at all. For instance if you die as an anagami there's not sufficient force of sort of what I call gravitation, spiritual gravitation, to keep you down in the lower realms. You sort of float up, but you're not completely released, so you stay there as it were and that's your rebirth in these higher worlds with your partly enlightened consciousness intact.

Lokamitra: It seemed to me that those came completely outside the scope of the Wheel of Life.

S: Well yes and no. Internally - if you can distinguish in this way - internally the person born there does not belong to that sphere. It's just the same case say with a person who gains Enlightenment with a human body. Well he's got a human body but he's not in the human world, so there they've got this rupaloka body but [45] they're not in that world. Let's go on otherwise there won't be any lunch.

"According to the Divyavadana or 'Divine Heroic Feats [of the Buddha and His Disciples]', one of the best known avadanas of the Sarvastivadins, the original model of the Wheel of Life was painted over the gateway of the Veluvana Vihara at Rajagrha on the personal instructions of the Master, Who indicated exactly how the work should be done. Whether or not of so ancient an origin, it undoubtedly figures on the wall of one of the rock-cut monasteries at Ajanta, and is still well known in Tibet, where it is often depicted inside temple porches for the education of the faithful.

The Wheel consists of four concentric circles. Working from centre to circumference, the first circle, which constitutes the hub of the Wheel, contains three animals representing the three poisons: a dove (or cock) for lust (lobha), a snake for hatred (dvesa), and a pig for delusion (moha), each biting the tail of the one in front."

S: I've translated these terms just for one single word but obviously you can't really do that. Lobha is not just lust, it's craving, greed, clinging, possessiveness, grasping, attachment, all these things, and in the same way dvesa is not just hatred, it's aversion, spite, opposition,

aggressiveness, and then in the same way moha is not just delusion but mental bewilderment, confusion, unawareness, wrong views and all the rest of it. Each one biting the tail of the one in front. What do you think that means? They're all interconnected. You can't really have one without the other two lurking somewhere nearby.

"They represent different aspects of egocentric volition which, whether in its subtle healthy or its gross unhealthy forms, keeps going the whole process of conditioned existence. The second circle is divided into two equal segments, one white and one black"

S: Can you see this as it were in your mind's eye?

"In the former, human beings whose volitions were healthy joyfully ascend into the realm of the gods; in the latter those whose volitions were unhealthy plunge terrified headlong into hell"

S: It's rather interesting to see in most thangkas those who are plunging downwards are chained together. Have you noticed that? In the case of those who are ascending they're ascending individually. They are not linked together, though they're obviously on the same path, but those who are going down are chained together. It's sort of force of mutual attachment. You're clinging on to other people, pulling other people down with you, whereas in the case of those who are ascending on the other side they're going up as it were one by one, though of course they are in contact, influencing one another, but they're not chained together. They're not sort of visibly linked. The link if anything is (internal) but the others are chained together. That's quite significant.

"The third circle is divided into six segments, one for each of the six classes of sentient beings already described. At the top is the realm of the gods, next (in clockwise order) the asuras, then the animal kingdom, at the bottom the infernal regions, after that the plane of the pretas, and finally the human world. In each sphere of existence the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, representing the omnipresence of Absolute Compassion, appears in a differently coloured Buddha-form [46] with insignia appropriate to the needs of its inhabitants."

S: Here you find the sort of compassion of the Buddha, the Transcendental aspect, breaking through in every realm of the conditioned. These realms do not represent self-contained karmic systems. They are in contact with other realms or at least other realms are in contact with them and insist on breaking through into them as it were, and that fact is represented by the form of the Buddha Avalokitesvara in each of these. He is present in each of these realms on the thangka, on the painting of the Wheel of Life, in a particular Buddha-form, and he bears insignia appropriate to the needs of its inhabitants. Let's see what they are then.

"As a white Buddha he plays the melody of impermanence on a lute to the long-lived gods".

S: So among the long-lived gods, the realm of the gods, the transcendental breaks through in the form of a Buddha, a white Buddha, something peaceful, playing a lute, and that lute plays the melody of impermanence. The Buddha here reminds the gods don't hang on to this, it isn't going to last, it's only mundane. However pleasant, it's going to come to an end one day. Remember the truth of impermanence.

"as a green one brandishes at the warlike asuras the flaming sword of knowledge, which alone wins the true victory,"

S: Like the sword of Manjushri. It's only through knowledge that they can get what they really want, spiritual knowledge. Not just by fighting for material possessions.

"as a blue one shows the animals a book,"

S: The book representing knowledge of Enlightenment. The animals are in a state of ignorance.

"as a smoke coloured one showers the infernal beings with ambrosia,"

S: Because they're hungry.

Devaraja: I've also seen the smoke coloured Buddha cooling the flames, sort of purifying fire.

S: Could be, but it's usually ambrosia.

Vangisa: (unclear)... can. actually make use of the divine flames, purify.

S: It doesn't seem nearly so appropriate as the ambrosia though. In each case the insignia is appropriate. What is being offered is appropriate. Purifying flame could be offered in any of the spheres I would have thought.

Vangisa: (unclear) ... just because of the association of flame anyway, the infernal regions.

S: That's the infernal regions, you might think it appropriate there, but why in the case of the pretas? You could say the animals could be offered the purifying flame to purify them from ignorance and so on. But it seems that the gift of ambrosia which as far as I know is the general one, the more common one, is much more appropriate. Sometimes of course in some descriptions it's simply just food and drink, not even ambrosia, but food and drink.

Devaraja: But the red one regales the pretas with food and [47] drink.

Lokamitra: Ambrosia goes to the hells.

S: Oh sorry. Yes, showers the infernal beings with ambrosia, yes. You could say that the ambrosia represents a direct antithesis of their state, because ambrosia is a synonym for nirvana. But in the case of the pretas it would seem more appropriate to give them something they can eat and drink.

Devaraja: Yes but the flame was for the hells.

S: Oh sorry I thought you meant the flame was for the other ones.

Devaraja: I think it's as appropriate as well. It occurs to me that the fires of hell are like a purification through suffering of karma.

S: That isn't really. Purification through suffering isn't really a Buddhist idea.

Devaraja: Well that there's only one direction they can go up. They can only go upwards from the hells.

S: But then the ambrosia though represents the upwards doesn't it. Much more so than the purifying flame which should only be the process, but the ambrosia is nirvana. As you say there's only one way to go now and that's up, like in the case of Milarepa. [Laughter]

___: In the case of all of us.

S: No, we're not all quite in hell! Some people are sort of sideways () and slither off round the corner. [Laughter] All right let's get it straight then at least for the sake of the tape recorder or whoever's trying to edit it, and that is that the smoke coloured one showers the infernal beings with ambrosia, or sometimes with a purifying flame, and the red one regales the pretas with food and drink. OK.

"and as a yellow one bears among men a staff and begging bowl, symbolical of the holy life which they alone of the different classes of sentient beings are fully capable of leading."

S: The begging bowl and the staff of the Sarvastivadin monk standing for the practice of the spiritual path in general, and that broadly speaking is possible only amongst human beings. They only have the leisure and the relative freedom from suffering to make that effort. At the same time they're not overpowered by hedonism and enjoyments. They're not intoxicated by them. It's sometimes said that the human state is a middle state. There's enough suffering to keep you on your toes and enough pleasure to keep you moving forward. [Laughter] All right on we go.

Aryamitra: Can I just ask is there any other significance of the colours, of the different forms of the Buddha or Avalokitesvara. The smoke-coloured one doesn't seem to apply in anything other than that, and the white one in the gods.

S: I don't know why these particular colours are assigned. They are different from the colours of the different Buddha families; one can't quite correlate in that way the particular Buddha family and therefore which colour is connected with a particular segment of the Wheel of Life. It doesn't seem to work quite like that. But also don't forget when they're represented pictorially each one needs to be a different colour. Smoke coloured is of course grey, so it may be as simple as that. You need to [48] distinguish them. The simplest way to distinguish is by way of colour, so each Buddha gets a different colour. Perhaps there's no sort of symbolical reason why one is red and another is green and so on. Perhaps some meaning could be given and maybe has been, but it could have originated, as it were accidentally.

"The fourth and outermost circle of the Wheel is divided into twelve segments, each representing one of the nidanas or 'links' in the process of the pratyasamutpada or 'conditioned co-production' of the so-called individual stream of consciousness-volition as appearing now in one, now in another of the six spheres, it twists round and round in the vortex of conditioned existence. The first two segments (again counting in clockwise order from the top) depict a blind man with a stick and a potter with wheel and pots. These represent avidya and the samskaras ('ignorance' and the 'formative' psychological factors)."

S: The psychological factors which are formative (of a) new birth, a new life.

"which together constitute the karma-process of the past life and in dependence on which arises the result-process of the present life. This result process is covered by the next five segments which respectively depict; a monkey climbing a flowering tree; a boat with four passengers, one of whom is steering; an empty house with six apertures; a man and woman embracing; and a man with an arrow stuck in his eye. The monkey is vijñāna, consciousness;"

S: Because it sort of clutches now here and now there. The monkey clutches at the flowering branch. In the same way the rebirth seeking consciousness clutches at another new physical organism.

"not in the widest acceptance of the term, but in the narrower sense of the initial flash of consciousness arising in the mother's womb at the moment of conception in dependence on the last flash of consciousness of the previous life. This patisandhi or 're-linking' consciousness, as it is technically called, is neither the same as nor different from the cuti-citta or 'death-consciousness'"

S: Literally 'cutting off consciousness'.

"by which it is conditioned. Hence it does not constitute an unchanging, transmigrating entity. Though the requisite physical factors are present, in the absence of the re-linking consciousness no conception can take place."

S: This is sort of standard old Buddhist teaching. For rebirth, for reconception rather to take place there must be at least three factors, that is the parents representing the first two, and the consciousness to be reborn, representing the third.

"The boat and its four passengers are the skandhas, the five 'groups' or heaps into which Buddhism analyses the psycho-physical personality. These are rūpa or body (the boat) and vedāna or feeling, sañjñā or perception, the saṃskāras or non-volitional mental phenomena, and vijñāna or consciousness (the four passengers): consciousness is steering. They will be dealt with in Chapter 12. The empty house with six apertures stands for the six sense organs (śaḍāyatana), mind being reckoned as the sixth, while the man and woman embracing represent contact (sparśa) in the sense of the mutual impingement of the sense organs on the external world. The man with the arrow stuck in his eye depicts feeling (vedāna), whether pleasant, painful or neutral. The eighth, ninth and tenth segments of the circle [49] show a woman offering drink to a seated man, a man gathering fruit from a tree, and a woman great with child. These represent the karma-process of the present life. The woman offering drink to the man symbolizes thirst or craving (trṣṇā), the man gathering the fruit from the tree grasping (upādāna), and the woman great with child 'becoming' (bhava) or conception. Though the Theravadins include the last of these three links in the karma-process of the present life, it ought really to be reckoned as the first link of the result-process of the next life. According to the Sarvastivādins, who interpret the world differently, it refers to the antarabhava or period of 'intermediate existence' between the two lives of which the Bardo Thodol, known in the West as the Tibetan Book of the Dead, paints a vivid picture. The eleventh and twelfth segments, representing the two links which constitute the result-process of the next life, show a woman in childbirth and a man carrying a corpse to the cemetery on his back. The first obviously illustrates birth, the second (old age, disease and) death."

S: I think we had better carry straight on because we have gone quite a bit over our time.

"Thus after being divided into karma-processes and result-processes the twelve nidanas of the pratityasamutpada are distributed over the past life, the present life and the future life. Herein it should be noted that ignorance and the formative psychological factors, the karma-process of the past, coincide with craving, grasping and becoming, the karma-process of the present. Likewise consciousness, name and form, the six sense-organs, contact and feeling, the result-process of the present, correspond with birth and death, the result-process of the future. In each life karma-process and result-process go on simultaneously, the result-process of the preceding co-existing with the karma-process of the succeeding existence."

S: Is that clear? Well think about it. It's actually quite clear but just needs a bit of reflection. 'In each life karma-process and result-process go on simultaneously'. They are successive too of course. You've got the whole process in the twelve links of the individualized consciousness sort of flowing on, and there's a sort of twofold movement or twofold phase, you can say. There's the phase of action and the phase of reaping results of action. A positive phase, or an active phase, and a passive phase, or a receptive phase. So these alternate - Active, passive, Active, passive - just like waking and sleeping as it were to some extent.

So not only that but the whole thing goes over several lives, the past life, the present life and future life, and not only that again, but you can have an active process or action process going on side by side with the passive process or receptive process. The one sort of relating to the past and the other relating to the future. So in each life karma-process and result-process go on simultaneously. The result-process of the preceding co-existing with the karma-process of the succeeding existence. So in other words you've got side by side in the present life, the result-process of the preceding life and the karma-process of the succeeding life. So it's not as though you're being totally active or totally receptive all the time. Both are going on. As it were one part of you, one aspect of you is active, another is passive, but on these different aspects or within these different aspects, the active and the receptive are alternating all the time. So it's a rather dynamic sort of conception.

Abhaya: Is that how positive karma can overcome negative karma? Is that how it works?

[50]

S: No, that's two kinds of active. They are both active, aren't they. One cancelling out the other. For instance the body that you have now is the embodiment of resultant karma, because it's on account of the samskaras of the past that you have this present psycho-physical system and all its powers of perception and receptivity. So you've got that now. The use you make of it volitionally is setting up karma for the future. The body that you've got represents the effect process of the karma process of the past. And the use that you make of your body now means that you are setting up by means of this karma process in the present an effect process for the future.

Abhaya: I was thinking of it in terms of state of mind. Say you do something which is considered bad and then you are suffering the effects. Like that's the effects of past karmas, but then in the present moment while you are suffering the effects of that, you can create good karma and your effort might be stronger than the...

S: That's exactly what I said because you are experiencing through the body, aren't you? Your

psycho-physical organism is in its capacity to secede and recede. It's through that you experience the karma resultants of the past. At the same time as you say, and you can create karma and set up more positive karma resultants for the future. So in this way action process and result process are going on at the same time. You can say that very broadly speaking body and its powers represent result process. Your mind and what you do is action process.

Lokamitra: Why do you need to even separate things like that? As a result of past karma you are in a good state of mind. That good state of mind is in itself a samskara, a volition, for future...

S: It's not a volition. You have to set up the volition again, because it can come to an end.

Lokamitra: Yes, but from that good state of mind the volition comes.

S: When the energy behind it originally is exhausted it comes to an end. It passes to some other mood as it were, depending on circumstances. So until you've passed the point of no return you have to set up your positive, your skilful states of mind, again and again. That's why you can never afford to let things slide and why you have to keep up your regular practice. Scour away at the pot every day because otherwise it will gather rust. You might say well it's clean and bright, what's the need of scouring it every day, but you soon find if you miss even for one day the rust accumulates.

___: The roof hasn't been leaking.

S: Right, well, or to change the metaphor, because the roof hasn't been taken off and the house completely dismantled! [Laughter] Anyway on we go. No more sidetracking.

"The karma process in a way resembles the Wille and the result-process the Vorstellung of Schopenhauer's philosophy."

S: We're not going to go into that now.

"To summarize the message of the twelve segments: Sentient existence consists of activities set up through spiritual ignorance; as a result, beings take rebirth as psycho-physical organism equipped with sense-organs by means of which they establish contact with the external world and experience pleasant, painful, and neutral sensations; developing a [51] craving for the pleasant sensations, they try to cling on to the objects that produce them, which leads (according to the Theravadins) to fresh conception in a womb or (according to the Sarvastivadins) to the plane of intermediate existence; in consequence of this they again have to undergo birth, old age, disease and death.

Finally, peering over the rim of the outermost circle a fearsome monster wearing a headdress of skulls is shown clasping the Wheel with all its circles and segments in his teeth and between his arms and legs. This is Death or Impermanence. Outside the Wheel above the monster's head, floating on clouds to the right, the Buddha compassionately points out to sentient beings the way of release from conditioned existence.

The details of the Abhidharma discussion of karma and the pratityasamutpada, a few of which have just been given, should not be allowed to obscure the great truth of which they are both

expressions, namely that, on the level of individuality, consciousness precedes and determines being, and that being is therefore in essence consciousness."

S: You could say that consciousness very broadly speaking corresponds to action and being to reaction.

"Consciousness-volition is of two kinds, individual and collective. As Takakusu, using a slightly different terminology, puts it: 'Individual action influence creates the individual being. Common action-influence creates the universe itself'. The Wheel of Life is the objectivization of the lust, hatred and delusion in the mind of man. A modern writer, Ben Shahn, seems to have understood this more clearly than some scholars in Buddhism. 'In a monastery near the border of Tibet', he writes, '(where I went hoping it might be over the wall) I found a portrait of myself: Someone in saffron told me that it was called the Wheel of Life, the Round of Existence, but it was myself, exact and representational. There were all the many aspects of myself, painted crude and clear: the pig, the lion, the snake, the cock, all animals, angels, demons, titans, gods and men, all heaven and hell, all pleasures and pains, all that went to make me, and all as it were, within the round of myself, within the wall, exactly as I had found it. All that I could be was within the enclosure of myself; all that I could do would only turn the Wheel around and around. There was no way out. I would go on and on, now up, now down, never ceasing, never changing. The mechanism was perfect. I had achieved perpetual motion: immortality.'"

S: It's a bit ironic isn't it. Anyway carry on.

"Wei Lang (Hui Neng), the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch'an or Dhyana School in China, had given the same idea profounder and more succinct expression centuries earlier. 'The idea of a self (Atma) or that of a being is Mount Meru.'"

S: Mount Meru stands of course at the centre of the universe according to traditional Indian cosmology.

"A depraved mind is the ocean. Klesa (defilement) is the billow. Wickedness is the evil dragon. Falsehood is the devil. The wearisome sense objects are the aquatic animals. Greed and hatred are the hells. Ignorance and infatuation are the brutes."

S: All this refers to the well known fact that even though the [52] Wheel of Life exists outside it exists inside too, and different segments of the Wheel of Life represent different phases of one's own - I won't say development - but one's own going round and round within the wheel of oneself. That one can feel as it were that one is now a human being or now a hungry ghost, when you're in a really neurotic state of craving here. You can't get that bar of chocolate. Or when you're among the gods when you're sort of painting or out in the country and it's very pleasant and happy and carefree. Or when you're being quarrelsome and combative and fierce and aggressive, well you're just living amongst the asuras...

[End of side one side two]

... and so on and so forth. So it's all within you as well as without. No need to emphasize the point too much. Anyway on we go.

"The universe referred to here, and depicted in the Wheel of Life, is of the kind known as an impure Buddha-field. As previously described (see p. 38), a sambhogakaya Buddha exercises jurisdiction over and is responsible for the spiritual progress of the inhabitants of one world system, which is therefore known as His Buddha-field. Such fields (ksetras) of influence are of two kinds, pure and impure. An impure Buddha-field, like the one to which our own earth belongs, is inhabited by beings of all the six classes of existence. A pure Buddha-field contains only two of them, namely gods and men, and the conditions under which they live are infinitely more favourable to the attainment of Enlightenment than those of an impure Buddha-field. Some pure Buddha-fields come into existence as a result of the collective karma of divine and human beings of more than average spirituality; others are willed into existence by a particular Bodhisattva who, out of compassion for sentient beings, vows to establish for their benefit a Pure Land whereof, after his Enlightenment, he will himself be the presiding Buddha. Both kinds of pure Buddha-field arise in dependence on a consciousness that, whether individual or collective, is not merely healthy but spiritually pure, for which reason they are not regarded as included in the three great planes of existence, the kamaloka, the rupaloka and the arupaloka, but as it were standing apart from and outside them all. As the Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra declares: 'If one wishes to reach the Pure Land, he must purify his mind. In accord with the purity of his mind, so will the Buddha-field be pure.' Just as the impure mind, whether healthy or unhealthy creates impure Buddha-fields which are pure."

S: This also applies within our own world, connected with this whole thing of speech and sambhogakaya, that you tend to draw out from the world about you all the more positive harmonious elements if you yourself are more positive and harmonious. And to sort of organize them around yourself. In this way you create or you set out in a very small way a sort of, if not Buddha-field, at least a very healthy positive field of influence, and in the same way you create a little hell in which you may even try to draw people. I have known this. I knew for instance - I remember very well - in India one woman who lived in Kalimpong where I also lived and sometimes when she was talking to me it really seemed as though we weren't living in the same town. She related such awful and horrifying incidents and described such awful people that she seemed absolutely surrounded with - I never met these people! Maybe one or two once or twice but the way she spoke or seemed to experience, there were hundreds of them all around and she reacted accordingly, and the way she spoke sort of tried to draw you into [53] this world also and make you an inhabitant of it. Some people do definitely do this sort of thing. One has to be quite careful sometimes not to be drawn into other people's worlds and make inhabitants of their worlds, sort of brought under their jurisdiction in this sort of way. If it's a positive world and a healthy influence that's another matter. Even our own movement is a sort of world. It's a sort of field. It may not be completely pure but at least relatively positive and healthy. Anyway let's go on and finish.

"In the words of the Avatamsaka Sutra:

'All the Buddha-fields rise from one's own mind and have infinite forms;
Sometimes pure, sometimes defiled, they are in various cycles of enjoyment and suffering.'

Nevertheless it should not be thought that the six spheres of existence depicted in the Wheel of Life, and the various Pure Lands described in the Scriptures, are no more than figurative expression of what in essence are purely subjective mental states. The 'objective' world we

perceive, with all its seas and mountains, trees, houses and human beings, is in reality a state of mind. Contrariwise, what is in reality a state of mind can appear as an objectively existing world which those who inhabit it or, more precisely, those who have been or who are in the mental state correlative to it, can actually experience and perceive."

S: Perhaps we need not go into that, this whole question of subjective and objective idealism and so forth. Just one comment before we close, because that is the end of the chapter, and that is with regard to the difference or rather the parallelism as between the pure abodes of the Theravada and the pure land or lands of the Mahayana. You notice here that I've spoken of the pure land or lands being as it were sort of willed into existence, created not just by the positive healthy volitions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but by, as it were, their transcendental volitions. In other words by their sort of nirvanic volitions. And this is why the pure lands are not included within the Wheel of Life. So one could look at it in this way, and in this way therefore there is a definite difference between the pure lands, traditionally conceived, and the pure abodes of the Theravada. But obviously one would be careful how literally one takes all this. If it is transcendental it does occupy a place and therefore it can, as it were, coincide with, or be present within, as it were, an impure land or an impure world.

So one can say that the person in the pure abode has been reborn there and the whole sort of Wheel of Life, the whole system of worlds and planes of which that pure abode is a part is an impure world. But in his own heart and mind, his own transcendental consciousness he dwells in the pure land, and to that extent the pure land overlaps with the impure land. So one has to be quite careful how literally one takes these things, how logically one draws one's conclusions.

Vangisa: (unclear) ... indistinguishable literally from any other ... meditation... of course the pure land just where we are. The dirty old earth right here and now.

S: But you have to go back or rather away before you can come back. There's no meaning in saying well this world itself is the pure land until you've experienced the pure land. Otherwise it's just words. You're just sort of decorating this dirty old world with these fine words.

Vangisa: I credited you with the experience.

[54]

S: You are very kind! [Laughter] We were thinking of sending Doctor Suzuki back to the monastery weren't we!

Devaraja: I was thinking that maybe dwelling in the pure land is really a poetic way of describing the arising of the Bodhichitta and its functioning in the conditioned world.

S: Well that too, but it seems to pertain to something even further on than the Bodhichitta, and no doubt the Bodhichitta arises more easily within it.

Anyway I think quite firmly we're going to stop there I'm afraid, because we are about an hour and a quarter I think over programme, so let's just try and get a little bit quicker on things now.

[End of tape three]

[Tape four]

Chapter 13: The Stages of the Path

S: Yes, so I think we should go into the first few rather thoroughly. But as we get to the sublime heights we shall recognize our limitations, and go through them, I won't say rapidly, but perhaps do not very much more than just listen to them and try to absorb or receive rather than exercise our minds about things which are as yet beyond the range of our actual experience, and concentrate the discussion more on the earlier stages where there's something of definite practical interest for us.

So the twelve positive Nidanas neatly strung out; have you seen this before? Copies are available I think down in London.

Voices: (indistinct)

S: We should be reprinting it; it is a very useful thing indeed.

Vajradaka: I've got a copy that Gotami did to be printed.

S: Hmm.

S: All right, what we'll do: we can pass that round during the interval. I think we'll have to have an interval.

___: These cassettes are an hour each side if you want a guide

S: OK, right. The light seems a bit dim, but I suppose that's the way it is. Just my failing sight. All right, let's go round then reading about the stages of the Path, bearing in mind what I said. Would you like to start? Chapter 13, in the hardback edition page 108. Chapter 13.

[55]

"This subdivision of the Dharma, being the central one and pragmatically the most valuable, ought to be the clearest and simplest. In fact, however, it is often the most complex, not to say complicated. Such a state of affairs has come about due principally to two causes. Firstly, formulations of the Path as consisting of a specific set of moral and spiritual qualities or a particular sequence of steps and stages are so numerous, so rich in variety, and withal so often seemingly divergent, that what the Path is in principle, apart from all such formulations, is as much lost sight of as the original central trunk of the banyan tree amid the vast proliferation of supporting stems. Secondly, each school of Buddhism has tended to interpret the Path not only in terms of the common doctrinal tradition, but also in accordance with its own distinctive tenets. In this account we shall be concerned with what the Path is in principle and with the formulation which seems to exhibit that principle with the greatest distinctness."

S: Is that clear? It's very important to consider what the Path is in principle. There are many sort of lists and formulations: the seven of this, the eight of that, the twelve, the twenty-four ...and these are quite important formulations; but very often there are so many of these formulations that what the Path really is in principle is practically lost sight of, and again, there are many schools of Buddhism and very often they tend to interpret the Path itself not so much in terms of the general, the common, Buddhist tradition but in terms of their own

particular, distinctive tenets which differentiate them from the main body of Buddhism. So in this account we're concerned with what the Path is in principle, and with the particular formulation which seems to exhibit that principle of the Path with the greatest distinctness. In fact, in most books on Buddhism, I think almost all, what the Path is in principle is not stated at all. You're simply given a list of steps or list of stages, but why there should be those steps and stages and how they work and how they succeed one another and what in fact is happening, what the principle of the Path is, this is not stated at all.

Vajrayogini: (How) do you see it (in the shortest way?)

S: Hmm? Well that's what we're going to see now. Carry on then.

"Man, as we have seen, is by nature indefinable. Human life represents a transformation of energy in dependence on which any other transformation of energy, mundane or transcendental, can arise. This is not to say that it is possible for any one such transformation to arise in immediate dependence on any other. As when a seed produces a flower, or when rough ore is smelted into gold and the refined metal wrought into an ornament, a number of intermediate steps connect the beginning with the end of the process. In the case of conditioned sentient existence the transformation takes place through the operation of the laws in accordance with which individualized consciousness determines being, that is to say, through karma and karma vipaka, while the intermediate steps are the twelve nidanas depicted in the outermost circle of the Wheel of Life. In the case of the higher evolution from a mundane to a transcendental consciousness the laws governing the process are represented by the technical terms marga and phala, 'Path' and 'Fruit', the intermediate steps being set forth in the negative and positive counterparts of the twelve nidanas."

S: Sometimes we speak in terms of the cycle or the circle and the Spiral. The spiral corresponds to the Path. And just as within the circle, within the Wheel of Life, you've got action process and [56] fruition process, or result process, so within the Spiral you've got path and fruit, 'marga' and 'phala'; the 'marga' representing here the active phase and the fruit representing the resultant, if you like the passive or receptive phase. Anyway let's go on.

"These two sets of terms, that is to say karma and karma-vipaka, on the one hand, and marga and phala on the other, correspond respectively to the first two and the second two of the four Noble Truths."

S: Hmm. Do you see that? That's clear is it? Clear to everybody?

Aryamitra: It explains it a bit further on.

S: All right let's go on then.

"In the formula of the Truths, however, the sequence is not deductive from cause to effect, but inductive from effect to cause."

S: That is, the effect is 'dukkha'. What was the cause of dukkha? Craving. So this is inductive as it is called in logic; you go from the particular phenomenon to the general law, the rule or the cause of that phenomenon, or as I've said, from effect to cause. From the less general to the more general. OK.

"Thus karma corresponds to the second Noble Truth, the Cause of Suffering (dukkha-samudaya), in this case craving (trsnā), and karma-vipaka to the first Noble Truth, namely Suffering (dukkha); similarly, marga corresponds to the fourth Noble Truth, the Way (marga) leading to the Cessation of Suffering, i.e. to Nirvana. More philosophically speaking, karma and karma-vipaka, the first two Noble Truths, and the arising of the twelve nidanas from ignorance to old age, disease and death, represent a process of reaction in a cyclical order between two opposites, such as pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, healthy and unhealthy mental states, as a result of which what is popularly termed 'the world' or samsara comes into existence."

S: Now we come on to, in a way, the most important bit.

"Marga and phala, the second two Noble Truths, and the non-arising of the twelve nidanas from ignorance to birth, old age, disease and death, represent not merely the counter-process of cessation, through which 'the world' or samsara passes out of existence, disappears, or is annihilated, but also a process of reaction in a progressive order between two things of the same genus, the succeeding factor augmenting the effect of the preceding one, through or by means of which the gross, turbulent and mutually conflicting energies inherent in the samsara are progressively refined, transmuted and transformed into the state of harmonious and beneficent activity popularly termed Nirvana."

S: This paragraph summarizes a couple of chapters in The Survey. And with the next paragraph we come on to the statement of the principle of the Path based upon this summary.

"This process of reaction in a progressive order constitutes the basic principle of the Path taught by the Buddha..."

S: There we are: this is it: "This process of reaction in a progressive order constitutes the basic principle of the Path taught by the Buddha." This is the essence, the heart of the whole matter. Yeah? This is the creative mind; the Path is the creative [57] mind; the creative mind is the Path. And the creative mind is that which does not react between opposites, going backwards and forwards, but goes up like this, if you like in a sort of zig-zag or spiral motion. Really the word 'reaction' is not appropriate here, we should try and reserve it for the reaction between opposites, but there just isn't another English word; there is 'response' but you can't use it quite in the same sort of way; it's more like a sort of dialectical movement. A sort of snake-like, spiral, progressive movement. For instance, the example that I often give: in the reactive process you feel happy; but after a while the happiness passes away and you start feeling miserable; so you feel miserable for a while, then that passes away and you're happy. So: happy, miserable, happy, miserable - that's the reactive process between opposites. But, all right, suppose you get from that state of happiness not back on to the Round, the Circle, but you begin to go up the Spiral from happiness to greater happiness; from greater happiness to joy; from joy to rapture; rapture to bliss; bliss to ecstasy. That's progressive, yeah?, and this is creative; more and more of the same order, as it were.

So this process of reaction in a progressive order constitutes the basic principle of the Path taught by the Buddha. Following the Path means becoming more and more creative at ever higher and higher levels; less and less reactive; more Spiral, less cyclical; this is what the Path means: it's the cyclical principle, the creative principle in this sense. This is the principle of the Path, leaving aside all specific formulations and ways of putting it. Following the Path

means becoming more and more - what shall I say? - progressive, even, can be misunderstood; creative can be misunderstood; it's in this specific sense of these terms: that's the principle of the Path; a sort of psychological cum spiritual Spiral principle. It's perhaps best to think of it quite concretely, not to say pictorially, as going up the Spiral; yourself being the Spiral, or your own positiveness and creativity is the Spiral. That's what the Path is all about basically, as distinct from the various formulations.

"as distinct from the various formulations wherein, for pedagogical reasons the principle is given concrete expression. As the embodiment of this 'spiral' principle, moreover, and not because it represents a 'golden mediocrity' of the Aristotlean type or a half-hearted spirit of compromise, the Path receives its primary designation as the Middle Path or Way (madhyama-marga). In the Nidana-vagga of the Samyutta-Nikaya the number of intermediate steps which connect the samsaric beginning with the Nirvanic 'end' of the process whereby mundane is transformed into transcendental mind appear as a series of positive counterparts to the negative process of the cessation of the twelve nidanas."

S: So, being more and more positive and progressive in this sense doesn't mean just a negative giving up of being reactive; it's a positive process on its own account. And very often in Buddhism, especially presentations of the Theravada, they speak of the Wheel of Life in terms of the twelve nidanas, the twelve links, beginning with ignorance and the samskaras, and then speak of the spiritual life in terms of the undoing of those twelve links, simply, but not in terms of the development of what I call the twelve positive nidanas, even though those twelve positive nidanas are given in the scriptures. But they're completely neglected by modern Theravada Buddhists. They never refer to them, never speak about them, but they are there in the scriptures. So we've dug them out, as it were, and started making use of them, putting them to work, as it were.

___: Where does the Middle Way come in, the Middle Path?

[58]

S: Because you're going like this ... yeah? Aristotle's middle way is more like here's one extreme and there's the other, and you just adopt a middle point at the same level, as it were. Then there's your half-hearted spiritual compromise: that's not following the Middle Way. But the Middle way means tacking, like a ship tacks; because you've got to bear in mind the two pulls: the gravitational pull of the conditioned here, the gravitational pull or attraction of the Unconditioned there, and it isn't easy to go straight up there like that is it? So, there's one pull here and one there. You may go obliquely, you sort of come out and go obliquely that way, crossing over the middle line. Then this is how you go, as it were.

___: This is the middle way in action, rather than...

S: Yes, I mean, the Spiral Principle is a Middle Way, yeah?, you're going between opposites, but you're going up at a higher level, a higher plane all the time. I mean you could go like that. That would of course be a Middle Way, going straight up the middle line itself, the shortest distance between two points, but you usually can't do that, you have to tack because of these other forces and influences. That's the way you go.

Lokamitra: In the 'Crossing the Stream' you talk about the Middle Way. It quite helped me to read that article because it shows that it's not just a dead compromise but that it's something

that transcends above the level of the mundane.

S: Yeah, right.

___: I was just wondering why you, at this point, you specifically designate it as the Middle Path.

S: Well, "as the embodiment of the 'spiral' principle, and not because it represents a 'golden mediocrity' of the Aristotelean type or a half-hearted spiritual compromise, the Path receives its primary designation as the Middle Way". The Spiral is the principle of the Middle Way, because it goes from, as it were, side to side, but in that way rises to a higher and higher level. That is how it follows the Middle Way, not in the sort of direct line up the middle, but going like this, so that in effect it is keeping the middle line in the middle even though it's weaving around it. This is what the Spiral does. So the Spiral principle is the same as the principle of the Middle Way. When you go from here to there on the Spiral, you don't quite go straight across there, you go up a bit, as it were the other side. And then from there you come back there, like that.

Devaraja: Maybe what you mean is that the Middle Way between one extreme, is that what you're saying? What are the extremes that would be avoidable?

S: Well, you can say here the extremes are the samsara and the Nirvana themselves, you could say that. But maybe that's going off a bit of a tangent.

Aryamitra: Can you not see it so much in concrete extremes but rather pulls in directions...

S: Yes, right.

Aryamitra: ...so it's not as if you go from Nirvana to samsara all the time...

S: That's why you're tacking...

Aryamitra: but it's a pull in a different direction.

[59]

S: Yes. I think the comparison ... when I say tacking I mean as a sailing boat tacks; I don't quite know how it does it, but I know it goes in a zig-zag motion, so that it isn't going head on against the wind, isn't it so? Something like that? So, when you tack like this going up the Spiral you're not going head on against the sort of counter pull of the conditioned; you're taking it into consideration and working your way round it a bit. In this way sort of tacking, not a frontal attack on it but going a bit obliquely, like that.

Lokamitra: Could you say using situations of daily life, or whatever, as aids, or as making use of them...

S: As stepping stones.

Lokamitra: Yeah, as stepping stones.

S: But instead of kicking them out of the way - they are in your way, sure - but instead of kicking them out of the way, you just tread on them and over them. It is a bit like that.

Devaraja: I was reading about this Explorer satellite and they wanted to take photographs of Jupiter, but they wanted to go on past Jupiter to take photographs of Saturn, so they calculated it in such a way - the trajectory of the satellite - that when it came within Jupiter's gravitational sphere of influence it would just come sufficiently far enough in to be able to use that influence as a kind of a sling shot effect almost to throw it on further to Saturn.

___: Very clever

S: A good illustration of something or other. (Laughter)

Devaraja: Is that what you mean by using situations?

S: It is really, yes, yes, because if you're not careful you just get sucked in: into that planet which you want to pass. Yes, it is very much like that. But your calculation has to be remarkably accurate!

Vangisa: You said a few minutes ago about this formula being in the Pali scriptures () modern Theravada. In fact, you have expounded on these topics a number of times in the past few years when you first came back here and probably before to an extent that one certainly doesn't come across in anybody else's teaching. And in fact, it seems to me this is relevant - that plan we've got there, that spiral, leading us, in fact, to the Mandala, is, in fact, a very good outline of the basic framework of your teaching.

S: It is completely. This is very true.

Vangisa: That diagram, in fact, could be taken as the quintessence...

S: I think you're absolutely right there, yes. There is a lecture which I gave some time ago, I think it was either at Oxford or at Cambridge, this is while I was still at Hampstead, I think, where I've gone into all this in terms of the Four Noble Truths, and bringing in the Circle and the Spiral and the Mandala at the top. This is one that I'm thinking of writing up for the Friends to publish as a pamphlet. Because it is all there as you say. I sometimes said: if you want to get the whole of Buddhism in a diagram - a circle there, a connecting spiral and another circle up there: that's the whole thing.

So, even if you don't remember anything about Buddhism, if you [60] want to give a sort of off the cuff lecture, just see in front of your eyes these two circles linked by a spiral and just describe that. That's the essence of the whole thing: get off the circle, move up the spiral, emerge into the circle at the top. Or if you can't think of that, remember Jack and the beanstalk. (laughter) It's as simple as that, really. Go up the spiral of creativity, climb up - up and up the spiral of creativity, from the Round, which is mundane, which is the Wheel of Life, the cycle of opposites, up into the Mandala of all the Buddhas. Yeah? This is all that we're trying to do - it's all in those few words. So if you want to know what is the principle of the Path in just a few words: the Spiral, the Spiral of creativity. That's all it is. Leaving aside all the formulations and explanations and commentaries, it's all just in those few words. Or diagrammatically, these two circles link with the spiral. That's all. But the complete picture

has been lost sight of for centuries in some parts of the Buddhist world. That's all we need to know really.

Lokamitra: Is it still used in some places?

S: In another form. For instance, in a way, you've got it in Tantric Buddhism in Tibet especially, in the Refuge Tree.

___: Could you say more about that?

S: Well, what do the different deities represent? They all embody stages of the Path, i.e. different aspects of the Spiral. It's a bit obscured by the richness of detail. I would like very much - I've been trying to get people on to this for years, but haven't yet been able to - I'd like to see very much a really beautiful picture to illustrate this. The wheel of life is not enough, frankly, it's only a third of the whole picture. You want to show the Wheel down there, and then the Spiral, and then the Mandala at the top. We've got them in that diagram, but it's only a black and white diagram. I'd like to see it all in colour, you know?, almost sort of psychedelically done. Lots of lovely transparent colours merging into one another, the whole thing moving up with the five Buddhas there and the wheel of life down there, and people moving up.

Vajrayogini: You could make it from steel, or something like that.

S: I'd like to see it as a painting in colour.

Vajrayogini: I see it like a structure.

S: Three dimensional, huh? Well, you can build one, architecturally.

Vajrayogini: Yes. I'd like it.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: Perhaps you could suggest or compile a list of illustrations that would suitably illustrate the spiral Path, because we have all the material for the other parts, in fact, the Wheel I've been trying to work on for about two years includes that Spiral Path.

S: I think it would be really good to do it three dimensionally, showing the Spiral Path emerging from the Round and making its way up into the centre of the Mandala and then spreading out, like a great thousand-petalled lotus when it gets there - advanced publicity, yeah?, because my memoirs is going to be called 'The Thousand Petalled Lotus', that's what they've decided at last.

[61]

Vajrayogini: Make it in a lake, the Wheel in the middle, then the water going zzzit!

S: You'd have to have a sort of tower, a round tower, with the Wheel down below with little compartments, yeah, you can have an asura room representing conflict, and you can have a rest room, you know - the devas - with lots of sofas and mattresses and music, you know,

record-player and all the rest...

___: Honey on toast

S: () (laughter) etc., etc. You could have even your hell: this where we interview people about their problems. (laughter) And the dining-room could be for the hungry ghosts, etc.

Vajrayogini: Where do we put the Devil?

S: We don't have a Devil in Buddhism.

Vajrayogini: Oh, you told me!

S: Ah, no that's Mara, that's a bit different.

Vajrayogini: You said it's a poor thing of the Christians, that they put out the Devil, for the Devil belongs also to human beings. It's in my lectures.

S: Ah, but that's not the real Devil. He's only been made into the Devil, he isn't really a Devil - that one. He was made into a Devil, but he's just a normal healthy, happy human being. (laughter) The pagan. Yeah? And then, of course you should have a Spiral staircase going up with beautiful pictures all the way up, so you emerge through a hole in the ceiling which brings you out into the topmost floor where you find yourself surrounded by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. And there you are.

Devaraja: It's a bit I think it's called the (kumbum), (kumbum) type of stupas.

S: Of course, you do get that, you know in Borobodur, this is basically the structure, in a way, though it's not the Wheel of Life, it's the four Elements at the bottom and winding up past the lives of the Buddha - the human level - then where the Bodhisattvas are, then where the Buddhas are.

___: And the Adibuddha...

S: And the Adibuddha at the top. So at least let's do it three-dimensionally even if we can't build it. At least let us have a really beautiful painting. Even a fresco if possible, a mural if possible, of the two realms: the Wheel of Life at the bottom and the mandala of the five Buddhas at the top, linked by this Spiral Path

___: Have it in our new London Centre.

S: Right, you could have illustrations of the Wheel of Life downstairs, and then illustrations of the Spiral up the stairway and then the five Buddhas in your meditation room. OK, let's go on. (Laughter) All right, next paragraph.

"In the canonical passage referred to the twelve factors constituting what may be termed the positive and progressive aspect of the pratitya-samutpada are enumerated three times, once in descending and twice in ascending order. According to the latter mode of enumeration there is causal association of saddha with dukkha, pamojja with saddha, piti with [62] pamojja,

passaddhi with piti, sukha with passaddhi, samadhi with sukha,..."(laughter)

S: OK, we'll come to the English later on!

"yathabhutananadassana with samadhi, nibbida with yathabhutananadassana, viraga with nibbida, vimutti with viraga and khayana with vimutti."

S: So now we're studying these twelve progressive links of the Spiral, which collectively link the Wheel of Life with the Mandala of all the Buddhas, and each succeeding one arises in dependence upon the one preceding. No skipping is permitted, no skipping is possible. We went into this you may remember, some of you, in the talk on 'The Path of Regular Steps and the Path of Irregular Steps'. The path of irregular steps is when you try to skip; but in the end you find out you can't skip. So you stop skipping and you come back to the path of regular steps, where you just put one foot in front of the other and just keep on doing that. Skipping is sort of jumping over, or trying to jump over. So, we start off with dukkha. In causal association with dukkha arises saddha. All right, so dukkha is the first. All right, let's go into this. Let's carry on.

"Dukkha (Skt. duhkha) or suffering. This is not only the first member of the Nirvanic but according to our present text the last of the samsaric series, here replacing the more usual jaramarana or old age and death. As the second of the two nidanas which make up the result-process of the future life it corresponds to vedana or feeling, the last of the five nidanas constituting the result-process of the present life. It also corresponds to the first Noble Truth or, more generally, to 'the world' as presented to the senses and the mind. Upon the attitude which we take up towards it depends our future fate. If we react with craving (trsnā), the first nidana of the action-process of the present life, then we become once again caught up in the process of reaction in a cyclic order between opposites, and the Wheel of Life continues to revolve. If we refuse to react in this manner and respond instead with a healthy mental attitude we are carried out of the samsara into the process of reaction in a progressive order between two counterparts or complements, at the 'end' of which lies Nirvana. Vedana in general and dukkha in particular thus represent the point of intersection of the two different orders of reaction. It is the point of choice and decision, a choice, moreover, which confronts us not on two or three momentous occasions only but every instant of our lives."

S: In other words we're confronted by the world, we experience the world. And especially in this case, we experience it, sometimes, painfully, or as painful. But what is our reaction? What is our reaction to the world, what is our reaction to our feelings, what is our reaction to painful experiences? So we can react to the world with craving, that's the straightforward reaction according to the twelve negative links. Or, we can react to the world with a more positive attitude, and especially react to suffering with a more positive attitude: an attitude of faith as we shall see in a few minutes.

___: Can I interject? This process starts, as it were, with awareness... you either...

S: Well yes and no. One can be jolted into awareness by this, but obviously awareness accompanies it from a quite early stage. It's not necessarily that you are aware and then you look and see, but it may be that what is happening forces you to be more aware, especially when it's suffering. Well, why am I suffering, [63] what's happening? You become more aware in that way, and then direct the awareness to the actual process and your reaction to it.

So obviously awareness is intertwined with it.

___: What I was going to ask was: where does awareness come from; how do you get this sort of inspiration to start on the spiral. Is it something that's like a gift, like, perhaps, a lower form of Bodhichitta?

S: Well, how does one? Presumably everyone has had some experience of this, so how did you? No need to theorize, presumably everyone has his or her own experience. Y'know, how did you?

Lokamitra: One way is just going round and round and getting fed up with it...

S: Was that your way?

Lokamitra: Er, one of them, yeah I'm sure.

S: There were other ways too?

Lokamitra: Well, I don't know, that's what comes to mind immediately. You see yourself going round and round and you sort of want to stop it.

S: Yeah, you get so fed up with the whole darn process "it's just so stupid, it's not getting me anywhere." Huh? This is one way, surely. Any others anyone can suggest?

Vajradaka: What happened to me at first was that I didn't see at all that life was suffering or that it was painful, I didn't experience it as that, but just ... I'd done everything and there was, in a sense, nothing else to do; you know, I'd (flown planes) and done all the kind of things, so there was just sort of to get high, really, in a kind of a mental way after all the physical things had been tried. So there was only the development of the mind left, when all the other things have been done.

S: Anybody else got any experience?

Devaraja: I think there's two things, and I think that what you're talking about is really the first real step on a real spiritual path; I think what you're talking about is a kind of... though it led you to practising a spiritual path, is really quite a sort of... well it's just another sort of buzz, high, sort of thing, it's not really the first step on a specifically spiritual path, though it may have led you to that, but I think that that first realization comes with a sort of dissatisfaction of the kind that Lokamitra was talking about.

Devaraja: That may have led you to that but I think at first realization comes with a sort of dissatisfaction of the kind that Lokamitra was talking about.

Vajradaka: I mean, there were the two very noticeable stages for me; there was that first stage that I just mentioned, and then practising meditation hard for five months, and then stopping for a year, and then feeling the pain of sort of falling from that peak of mindfulness and awareness - the happiness, and then experiencing that as being painful.

Devaraja: Well personally I'd say that that was (). Because I think that a lot of people, and

certainly this applies to myself as well, - meditation was just something else to try. A lot of people seemed to be doing it, people seemed to say it was really something special. But I wouldn't say that I first started getting interested in a spiritual... I mean that's meditation as a kind of [64] a...

Aryamitra: structurized way. But surely, I mean you can have say, insight and spiritual experiences before tackling meditation and you can come to conclusions, but say, without something like Buddhism or meditation or some sort of structured way, it's like you can be searching before then, long before, maybe, you come across Buddhism...

Devaraja: Well, that maybe is a spiritual thing, but my point is that if you come to Buddhism say in search of another high, then it's not really a spiritual path that you've entered on to, it's still...

S: Even though you experience the high from it.

Devaraja: Yeah, right.

S: But if you lose the high, and start wondering why and feeling it and thinking about it, then you may well start on the spiritual path proper.

Lokamitra: In a way that looking for a high is just another aspect of what I was saying because there's nothing else that can give you that, so you're...

Devaraja: Well depending on if you were extremely dissatisfied with your state of consciousness and that's your reason for looking for some kind of high, then I'd agree, but if it's just searching for a high, like it's a new kind of drug to try...

S: You might have a list of highs and you just might happen to put meditation first on the list, yeah? (laughter)

Aryamitra: I don't think that's what you were saying, though.

Vajradaka: Not in the way that Devaraja...

Devaraja: Well, I'm making it quite extreme to illustrate my point. When you said that you fell, and started suffering a bit as a result of your fall, then you decided to go back to meditation, then I would say you'd done it from a spiritual viewpoint, i.e. that there was an element of dissatisfaction which stimulated you. You see what I mean?

S: Any other experience?

Vajrayogini: Yeah, The most important thing was to become aware that I (used) a lot of energy in reacting to another person and not to (look at if) it's my problem, (but) problem of the other one. To stop reacting like this.

S: But anyone have the experience of positive attraction to the Ideal?

Aryamitra: Yeah, I think through reading. I was about sixteen.

___: In a way, I wanted to help individuals and nearly always failed. And I saw fairly clearly at that time, anyway, that I had to (seek) for assistance. I wanted to be a Bodhisattva. But what I was really getting at was, you seem to go round and round the Wheel, but at some stage a new factor seems to enter and you go up on the Spiral. What's the new factor?

S: Well, that's why I said: "you say".

___: Does it come from yourself, or does it come from...?

S: But I'm not happy about the language, as it were. Does one [65] have to think in terms of it coming from anywhere? The Buddhist formulation is: well, in dependence on certain conditions such and such factor arises. Does it come from anywhere? Not really. It's not really appropriate to speak like that. Does it matter? In dependence on A, B arises - this is what Buddhism usually says, isn't it? You can say...

[End of side one side two]

...well look, in dependence upon dukkha arises saddha. So where does the saddha come from? It doesn't come from anywhere. In dependence upon the experience of suffering arises saddha, faith.

___: But not every time, round the Wheel.

(Gap on tape)

Devaraja: You've pulled this question up before about where does awareness come from, and the only thing I can think of is

___: Yeah, I'm deeply mystified by it.

Devaraja: Yeah. Awareness is not kind of some ... something separate. A dog doesn't have to be given awareness, if you keep on thumping it enough it will soon know that it's suffering ... it's not something that comes from outside, you just experience... the dissatisfaction is of being hit over the head as you move in the direction...

S: I think it's an artificial problem because, for instance, this really did arise in the course of Indian philosophy in connection with this theory of causation, a problem that Buddhism doesn't share. For instance, in Indian philosophy there were two schools of thought about the relationship between cause and effect. All right, suppose, to take the example they often give: you've got a pot. Where does the pot come from? In other words: what is the cause of the pot? The cause of the pot is the clay. It's just a bit of clay in a new shape. So the cause of the pot is the clay. The pot has come from the clay. So therefore one school of thought says: cause and effect are really identical, the so called effect is only the cause under a new guise, in a new form. Another school says: well, no. They give another example: that of milk, which is transformed into curds, or yoghurt as we say now, and milk is a liquid, the curds is a solid. So a solid is caused by a liquid. So cause and effect, they say, are quite different. That's another school of thought. One are called Satkalyavadins the other Asatkalyavadins, but Buddhism doesn't follow either; it doesn't say cause and effect are identical; it doesn't say cause and effect are different. It says: in dependence upon the clay arises the pot; in dependence upon

the milk arises the curds; in dependence upon the dukkha arises the faith. and it doesn't see any need to have any theory of causation, or to ask: where does it come from?

___: I'm still mystified, but I'll be content.

S: But also, there's another point I was going to add, and that is: when we say the experience of dukkha - in dependence upon the experience of dukkha there arises the attitude of faith. And you say: why do you sometimes get the experience of dukkha and no faith, and other times you get the experience of dukkha with faith? But those experiences are not the same; you can label them in a general way as both being experiences of dukkha, but they're not the same experience. There is a degree of intensity. There's also the fact that it's the second time, or the tenth time, or the hundredth time - and that makes all the difference. And then arises the experience of faith. So you can't really say: well why did the faith arise in consequence of that experience of [66] dukkha and not the previous one? They were not the same experiences, they were different.

Lokamitra: In something you've written, or one of your talks, you mention the levels of awareness as practised - first of all, a long time after you realize, maybe, you've done something wrong, and then in future as you go round and round you realize immediately after, and then as it's happening and then maybe before, as practice continues. Is that what you were...

Aryamitra: On the awareness of them...

Lokamitra: Yeah, so it's something that grows from just ... practice.

S: I think the basic problem is one of language...

___: It's not a thing.

S: It's not a thing. "Where does it sort of come from?" - that's really inappropriate, strictly speaking, if you take it very literally.

Vangisa: I mean, it's a function, not a thing.

S: It's a bit like asking: where does time come from? Perhaps we'd better leave it there; it is quite a vast philosophical question in a way.

Vangisa: Another thing, before that you were asking if anyone if anybody felt attracted to the Ideal. It seems to me, actually, that one must be even if one doesn't know it at the time, and that the immediate cause, or maybe a series of immediate causes, that actually get you started doing something are relatively accidental, but it is, in fact, a case of blundering around in search of the Ideal, perhaps not even realizing, perhaps making strong efforts to avoid it, perhaps trying to protect yourself from it, but it is the urge towards the Ideal that in fact brings you up with the proximate cause of any kind of spiritual, practical realization. I think it must be present.

Devaraja: But, surely, the Ideal aspect corresponds to the second part, that's sraddha. If you haven't got an Ideal you haven't anything to have faith in. But what must stimulate you

initially to, as it were, transfer your ideal from, say, a mundane, samsaric existence is suffering which is a realization...

S: No, what I'm thinking of is an instance like this: for instance, that of Ananda in the Surangama sutra, where the Buddha asks him: "what set you off?" He said: "I saw you, I saw the Buddha." And he gives a beautiful archetypal description, he's very attracted by the Buddha; there's no question of his having previously experienced pain and suffering. He was attracted by the figure and personality, by the Ideal represented by the Buddha. But that's what I was thinking of in terms of attractive ideals. So it's almost as though if you're lucky enough to be confronted by the Ideal in a sufficiently vivid and concrete form, even if it's only read about in a book, and if you are not too attached to mundane existence, even though you've had no definite experience of pain and suffering, you can be drawn to the Ideal and start off on the spiritual life.

Vangisa: The first thing I came across blundering around as I said, I came across certain books connected with Buddhism, about Buddhism, Conze's Buddhist scriptures, and when I started this I was very ill at the time, I was feeling very, very low and very - a state of complete exhaustion, and yet - although I didn't know what it was - there was a kind of a recognition: for the first time here was a definite statement of something I seemed to [67] recognize. And the second thing then was - although I didn't recognize it at the time - was coming in contact with you. Obviously it was the first one that led to the second one. But there was a very strong inner...

[End of tape 4 due to break in recording on cassette]

[Tape 5 (re-recorded from original reel in 1993)]

... in dreams more often than in waking life, but there was something going on.

S: I have some time ago mentioned the case which I read about in a book of a man who was started off on the spiritual life, the spiritual path, in consequence of a spiritual experience he had in a dream, and it was a spiritual experience. So one can be started off in all sorts of ways. The dukkha here represents not necessarily an actual experience of physical or mental suffering - though it can be that of course - so much as the fact that ordinary worldly life just doesn't satisfy. There can be various degrees of that. You can go through something really traumatic and then that gives rise to faith in your heart, faith in something higher, or it can be a mild dissatisfaction. Or it can be just an absence of interest in mundane things. Just looking for something better, without having experienced anything painful in a traumatic sense. But I think very many people do have really painful experiences. That plays its part and guided them into the spiritual life very often.

Anyway let's go into that a bit now

"Theoretically, of course, a total annihilation of craving, with a consequent instantaneous realization of Nirvana, is possible at any time. In practice it is impossible. Whenever such cases seem to occur they will be found, on examination, to be to be the result of prolonged preparation. Nor might it be advisable to attempt a really instantaneous total destruction of craving even if this could be achieved. As with a sudden slamming on of the brakes when the train is going at full speed such an achievement is likely to result in a derailment."

S: If you just try and sort of stop, stop yourself, check yourself suddenly, violently, the chances are that you'll just be sort of unhinged by that. Sometimes people attempt very sort of forcible methods, not always with very positive results. There are some courses you can go on, meditation courses, where you are deprived of sleep. You are made to meditate 22 hours out of the 24, and this is kept up and food is reduced and you are exhorted, and certainly things start happening. A few people might even have a breakthrough but more often people just break down, and it's entirely negative. So this is what I'm talking about here.

___: Spiritual progress is a slow growth, very slow movement?

S: I'm not so much talking about the actual growth, but the method by means of which you try and bring it about. There are gentle methods and forcible methods, and some methods can be so forcible and violent as it were, and so much speeded up that they become counterproductive. Instead of helping you grow they just sort of, not only hold you back, they do you serious damage. Growth seems to go almost in fits and starts. It isn't always even. I think as far as I notice people it's usually their growth goes like this as far as I've seen [Transcriber's note: Bhante's is presumably demonstrating physically here]. It's rather like that in most cases. It isn't just like that. Hardly ever. Occasionally of course it's like this. During the week meditation [68] evening or retreat [Laughter] - go back to the (kids?) [Laughter] then gradually work your way up. You are a little bit higher up than you were before, and then on you go. That's more often how it is. We really ought to have videotape didn't we. [Laughter] All right, on we go.

"What is needed is a smooth and gradual application of brakes. However quickly, or however slowly, they may be applied, the mechanical process of application consists of a certain number of stages. In the present series the first of these stages is represented by the second nidana. In causal association with dukkha arises

(ii) Saddha (Skt. sraddha) or faith. Though the Indian term is by no means equivalent to 'belief' in the Christian sense of accepting as literally true statements about God, the Fall of Man, the Virgin Birth etc. for which there is no evidence, we have nevertheless rendered it by 'faith' in order to emphasize its definitely emotional character. Saddha is, in fact, the healthy counterpart of tanha (Skt. trsna) thirst or craving."

S: Yes, it's important to realize this. It's the healthy counterpart, and of course on a higher level. Here's dukkha or there's your experience of life in general, and here is the craving. So you can say that the sraddha is up there. So instead of going over to the craving in a reactive way, you go up and across to the sraddha in a cyclical way. The sraddha being the sort of positive counterpart of the craving. They're both emotions, and you can see, you can feel, the difference between them.

___: Tanha, is that craving more the other way?

S: Trsna is the Sanskrit form and tanha is the Pali form.

___: No, tanha is craving for this way and sraddha goes the other way.

S: You can say that. You can say that both are desires. You can say if you like, though again there's a sort of difference of flavour, that tanha is desire directed towards conditioned things, and sraddha or faith is desire or aspiration directed towards unconditioned things,

transcendental things, that is Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

"It develops when, as the result of our experience of the painful, unsatisfactory and frustrating nature of samsaric existence, we begin to 'place the heart' (the literal meaning of the verb with which saddha is connected) not so much on the conditioned as on the Unconditioned. At first this is no more than a vague intermittent stirring of the emotions, hesitant and confused. But as it grows stronger, and as its object comes more clearly into focus, it develops into saddha proper, that is to say into faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, the first being primary, the other two secondary."

S: Again one's experience of dukkha and the unsatisfactoriness of existence, may take a somewhat more as it were intellectual form. You may not exactly experience existence as suffering or go through anything that's really traumatic, but you may just sort of see through it, and it will seem all rather empty and meaningless, and therefore you start looking for something higher, more meaningful. It may take that sort of form with some people, not as sort of actual painful experience, but more a sort of seeing through or recognizing the limitations of ordinary life.

Aryamitra: I have the feeling that most people experience all [69] these in different degrees.

S: At different times.

Aryamitra: Yes, and it may be a different one which spurs one on each time.

"Taken in this more definite sense saddha may be defined as the heartfelt acknowledgement of the fact that the historical personality Gautama is the Buddha or Enlightened One, grounded, firstly on the intuitive response that arises out of the depth of our heart by reason of the affinity existing between His actual and our potential Buddhahood, and secondly on the sensible evidence and rational proofs of His Enlightenment afforded us by the records of His life and Teachings."

S: This is explained at greater length in The Survey, by the way under the heading of faith. This is more or less a summary of the material there with a few additions. This is why parts of this are rather condensed, rather cryptic. So taken in this more definite sense saddha may be defined as the heartfelt acknowledgement of the fact that the historical personality Gautama is the Buddha or Enlightened One. That is when we read about the Buddha we really feel that he had something more, something greater. We really do feel it as a sort of experience, something that we can't comprehend or can't understand, but we get some sort of intuition of it, grounded firstly on the intuitive response that arises out of the depth of our heart by reason of the affinity existing between His actual and our potential Buddhahood. It's possible for us to recognize or to feel, however vaguely, that the Buddha is Enlightened, or at least that there is something higher there, because within ourselves we possess the same capacity. This is why there's a verse by an old German mystic which says - I think he bases himself on Neoplatonic tradition, that the eye could not behold the sun unless there was something of the sun in the eye. I think Plotinus originally said something of this sort.

So you can perceive, you can experience, only that for which you've some affinity, however latent, however undeveloped. So when we're sort of moved or stirred by the Buddha and we feel yes there is something there above and beyond anything that we have ever dreamed of

even, it's because there is some latent spark of Buddhahood within us, which is touched when we come into contact with the actual Enlightenment of the Buddha, however vaguely we may apprehend it. And then it's grounded secondarily on the sensible evidence and rational proofs of his Enlightenment afforded us by the records of His life and Teachings. You read about the life, what the Buddha did, the teaching, we are really impressed by the depth, the consistency, the helpfulness of that, and we feel that this really must have come out of some higher state of consciousness, some more Enlightened state of consciousness. This couldn't have been put together by someone who was just a student of books - not that there were any books in those days anyway. Or someone who just heard about it - he is speaking out of his own higher experience. He is leading a higher sort of life. We feel this when we read about the life, when we read the teaching or the records of the teaching.

So in this way faith in the Buddha arises. It's not belief. It's a response of something in us which is undeveloped and partial to something which in the Buddha is fully developed and complete. We feel a sort of affinity with the Buddha. So that's faith in the Buddha. Then.

"When by following the Dharma we experience for ourselves the successive stages of the Path this faith, without losing its [70] emotional character, becomes consolidated into confidence. At the stage with which we are now concerned saddha expresses itself as generosity (dana) and ethical behaviour (sila), which as we shall see later, are the first two paramitas."

S: This is quite important "At the stage with which we are now concerned saddha expresses itself as generosity (dana) and ethical behaviour (sila)". Where there's saddha, where there's faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, there will be generosity. Because your heart is filled with faith which is an emotion you will feel something as it were outward going. You will want to give, you will feel grateful due to the faith and you'll want to give and that giving is called dana. So where there is faith there is giving, and also you will feel like trying to observe the precepts. You will feel like making a firm ethical foundation for your whole life and your spiritual practice. You will want to start following the path of regular steps. Faith primarily finds its expression in Going for Refuge, and you set your foot on the first steps of the path, which is giving and observing the ethical precepts.

"Through the practice of these virtues the mind is purged of these feelings of guilt, repentance and remorse, and thus a healthy mental attitude is created. In causal association with saddha arises

(iii) Pamojja"

S: So let's see how far we've come. This is quite important. First of all you're dissatisfied with the world. You either have a painful experience of it or you see through it. You're dissatisfied. It isn't very meaningful to you. You start searching around for something higher, and you come in contact with something higher, especially you come in contact with the figure and the teaching of the Buddha, and then faith arises. There's a very strong emotional response, and as a result of that emotional response you feel a bit carried away, a bit carried out of yourself, you feel very affectionate, you feel very generous, very giving, and you give more than before. Your natural greed and possessiveness is loosened, and you start thinking very seriously about following the path. Seriously about not harming others, about not taking things that don't belong to you, not speaking the truth, improving your communication with others. You think very seriously about these things and you start putting them into practice.

So as a result of this, this faith that you've developed, this new ideal that you've discovered, the generosity that you're practising and the firmer basis that you've given to your whole life, you just come to experience a mood of elation and joy and satisfaction, and in this way, in dependence upon saddha arises Pamojja, pramodya or satisfaction and delight. So you can see how the whole thing goes. How it is progressive, it is spiral, it is creative. So let's see what we have to say about Pamojja.

Lokamitra: Is faith then sort of conversion in its lowest sense, if you take Stream Entry as conversion in its highest sense.

S: Yes indeed, and Going for Refuge is conversion, I won't say in its lowest sense but its basic sense, its primary sense. I've given five lectures on this - 'The Meaning of Conversion in Buddhism' which are on the very badly reproduced tapes taken at Anjali's. I've got the notes of those lectures, and there's one on Going for Refuge, one on Stream Entry, one on Turning About and so on. Five on the meaning of conversion in Buddhism. Maybe you ought to resuscitate them sometime. But anyway let's go on to Pamojja.

"(iii) Pamojja (Skt. pramodya) or satisfaction and delight. Negatively this is the feeling experienced on becoming aware that one has nothing with which to reproach oneself as to [71] morals."

S: Sometimes some Buddhists systematically survey the five precepts, or ten precepts in our case, every day. 'Have I harmed any living being? - No, I've harmed no one today. I've injured no living thing. Have I appropriated or misappropriated anything? - No, not even indirectly, not even a match. Have I indulged in any kind of sexual misconduct or maybe any kind of sexual activity at all? - No. Have I communicated honestly and kindly and usefully and in a harmonious way with all the people with whom I've come into contact? - Yes. Have I meditated and, at least for the greater part of the day, kept my mind free from experiences of craving and anger and mental confusion? - Yes. I haven't really seriously fallen into any of these things in the whole course of the day.' , So if you reflect in this way, not in an egoistic way of course but just very calmly and quietly and objectively, how will you feel? You'll feel very serene and confident and that you've nothing to reproach yourself with as regards morals.

"As such it is equivalent to the possession of an easy conscience. Positively it is the feeling of cheerfulness and content that arises in a man's mind out of his awareness that he is following the path of virtue."

S: He may not be happy in the bubbly sort of sense. He even may be undergoing quite difficult experiences, quite painful experiences, but deep within himself he will know that he's following the right path and he'll be cheerful within himself, and content. Even though he's having a quite difficult and tough time.

"In Buddhism great importance is attached to this state. A mind that is disturbed by the recollection of a breach of moral precepts is incapable of concentration, so that the way to further progress is barred."

S: If you're really worrying over something that you've done, maybe something you don't need to worry about so much, but you reproach yourself and you can't get it out of your own mind. You keep thinking about it - well this is something you must get out of the way and resolve

before you can really get into meditation.

"Meditation masters such as Chih-I, the founder of the Chinese Tien-t'ai school, therefore recommend that before embarking on the practice of dhyana one who has been guilty of any such lapse should undergo various observances, including confession, repentance, ritual worship of the Buddha, and the ceremonial recitation of sutras, for a certain number of days, weeks, or months, or until such time as his mind is freed from the burden of guilt and again feels fresh, clear and light."

S: Buddhism attaches great importance to getting rid of any feelings of guilt. They are quite sort of corroding and quite negative as regards one's spiritual life and practice. There's nothing positive in them. Of course if you recognize that you've done something wrong that's good, and you resolve not to do it again, that's good, but constantly to be feeling guilty and constantly to be feeling remorseful - this does no good at all. You should forget all about it, after having recognized it as something you shouldn't have done, and resolving not to do it again. After that put it away. If you can't you must really work on it and this is why the meditation master mentions various observances, confession: confession is very important here. Maybe confessing just to yourself that you've done it, not deceiving oneself, or at least telling somebody else, or confessing [72] mentally to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. That's why we have the confession as part of the Sevenfold Puja, and really feeling repentant. Not remorse, but repentance. Resolving not to do it again. And ritual worship of the Buddha. Doing the Sevenfold Puja over and over again and reading the sutras for a certain number of days, weeks or months, until such time as his mind is freed from the burden of guilt and again feels fresh, clear and light. But you must get rid of that feeling of guilt. Otherwise at least for the time being, progress in meditation is delayed, is obstructed.

Abhaya: What do you think about say things that happened a long time ago that maybe you suddenly remember, maybe you lied to someone or you stole something, and you haven't seen that person for some time but it is possible to see them, would you think it's necessary...

S: I think it would be quite good if it's something relatively serious. If it was something childish and especially if it was something that happened when you were very small, I'd say put it out of your mind for that's just nonsense. This happened when I was very very young, when I was a child. I shouldn't be bothering about it any more. But if it was something that happened when you were relatively older and also if it was something of a more serious nature, especially if it affected that person adversely, it would be better, especially if it is troubling you, to make a clean breast of it, either personally or by means of a letter, and get it out of the way in that manner. But obviously one must be a bit careful how one does this sort of thing, and what effect also it's going to have on that other person. If you feel it might do more harm than good just confess it mentally to yourself or in the course of the Sevenfold Puja, as it were confess it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and leave it there. If confessing it to the person concerned is perhaps going to either affect them adversely or even is going to stir up a bit of trouble and confusion for all concerned.

If for instance when you were ten you stole say a penny from your mother's purse, well I don't think you need to go on your knees at the age of thirty or whatever it is and repent of it. It was such a childish thing. What you must really get over perhaps is the habit of taking childish offences and naughtinesses as seriously as that. That's what you must really get over. That's the real sin you're committing in still bothering about it so many years later, if that is in fact

what one is doing, or making something trivial into something of importance. But if in the course of your adult life you've done something of that sort seriously, which has affected others adversely and if your sort of telling them now is not going to make things worse, well do so by all means. Otherwise confess as it were to yourself and to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and leave it there, and resolve not to do it again, obviously.

Vangisa: Would it be true to say that in not only Christianity but other religious forms as well the idea of repentance there is in a sense the opposite. It's perhaps a deliberate stirring up of feelings of guilt.

S: It's a wallowing in it sometimes. It's a form of self pity. This is quite unhealthy according to Buddhism. It's very ego centred.

Vangisa: Some people devote their whole lives to it.

S: I'm afraid so. Well let's make sure that we don't then. Certainly repent, certainly feel very sorry and regretful for the unskilful things that you've done. But having done that and having recognized them as unskilful resolve not to do them again. The best thing you can do is to forget all about it.

[73]

Lokamitra: It's in a way as if those who spend all their lives doing it and that sort of religion that encourages it stops at faith. It doesn't go any further.

S: Maybe it doesn't even get as far as faith in some cases. If you had more faith you'd also have faith in the possibility of salvation as it were and so on and so forth.

Vangisa: Maybe the idea of sin () is a factor. They get lost in the idea of sin, which is dukkha I suppose in a sense, and don't get any further.

S: Anyway let's not talk about sin. It's very unBuddhistic!

"Whether induced in the former or in the latter manner, pamojja represents a blending (modana) of the various elements in the emotive aspects of concentration, because the absence or resolution of the conflicts which arise whenever a man's behaviour fails to accord with his own ethical ideals inevitably promotes a sense of unity, harmony and integration."

S: This is very important. The word pamojja represents a blending (modana) of the various elements in the emotive aspects of concentration, because the absence or resolution of the conflicts which arise whenever a man's behaviour fails to accord with his own ethical ideals inevitably promotes a sense of unity, harmony and integration. When you feel that you're living up to your own ideals, that you are actually following the path in which you believe. There's no backsliding, there's no conflict, you've nothing to reproach yourself about seriously. You feel very much at one with yourself, very united with yourself, harmonious, and this is a very important stage indeed. There's no conflict between as it were a sort of lower self and a higher self. They've been blended, they've been brought together.

Vajradaka: It seems that meditation has a built in anti-criminal device in a sense or awareness sense, in that when you start becoming aware then you become aware of the conscience or the

conscience becomes aware and it becomes more sensitive, so that it's more difficult to do things in which your conscience is pricked, because there is awareness in your conscience, and thereby just through the process of having awareness it's more difficult to do things which are unethical.

S: Not even that. It operates perhaps even more subtly. It becomes more difficult to do not only things which are less ethical but which are a bit as it were coarse. There's nothing sort of wrong with them. They're not sort of bad, but they're not quite refined enough, you don't feel like doing those things for that reason. And because you don't do them your whole nature does become more harmonized. If you were to do them you'd be doing a sort of violence to yourself and disturbing that harmony.

Devaraja: You saying that almost in terms of a moralistic, ethical response, but it's more of a sort of almost aesthetic appreciation.

S: Well it's both. It is sort of moral but it does sort of shade off into the aesthetic almost. You can't reduce morals to aesthetics. There are certain things you might feel very much like doing but you know you shouldn't so you don't, though you still have an affinity for those things.

Devaraja: I mean aesthetics in quite a high sense of appreciation of...

S: But if your ethical sense becomes very developed you don't have to apply rules. The ethical sense itself just feels this isn't [74] quite right, it's inharmonious, it's a bit crude as it were. You almost don't need to think in terms of right and wrong. You have a sort of inborn or indwelling sensitivity to things.

___: Perhaps it doesn't even need to be entirely conscious.

S: But not without awareness.

Vangisa: It's kind of a realization of the irrelevancy of self interest.

S: Yes. Your orientation is different. You're not self oriented. You are oriented to an ideal, and your living up to it at least to some extent. So these early stages, as I said at the beginning are quite important, quite relevant. Anyway let's go on.

"As this develops and grows stronger, in causal association with pamojja arises (iv) Piti (Skt. priti), or interest, enthusiasm, joy, rapture, ecstasy."

S: Yes in causal association with this absence or resolution of conflicts, which arise whenever man's behaviour fails to accord to with his own ethical ideas, and in causal association with a sense of unity, harmony and integration which comes about when you live up to your own ideals, and in accordance or in causal association with all that arises piti, interest, enthusiasm, joy, rapture, ecstasy. It covers all these things.

"This nidana, the development of which marks the transition from the kamaloka to the rupaloka or in other words to a level of consciousness higher than that of the 'normal' waking state,"

S: In other words here you enter upon meditative states, dhyana states, or cosmologically speaking go from kamaloka to rupaloka.

"arises naturally and spontaneously in the course of meditation practice as methodical concentration on a given object becomes more and more intense. Just as in the case of the previous nidana the absence of any conflict between one's ethical ideals and one's actions produces a feeling of satisfaction and delight, so piti represents the much greater sense of relief which comes about as a result of the liberation of the emotional energies which had been locked up in the deep seated conflicts of the unconscious mind."

S: We use up so much energy just in conflict. One part of our energy is just counteracting another and we're stultifying ourselves and we've got no energy. In every human being is an absolute sort of mass of energy you could say, but unfortunately much of the energy is internalised and this bit is against that bit, this bit is against that bit, and they are all counteracting one another, cancelling one another out, so the result is we don't have much energy to go out with. So this means probably most human beings don't use more than five to ten percent of their energy I would say, from my personal experience. Members of the Order and the Friends generally who are doing rather well may be using twenty to thirty percent at the most, but there's a lot more there untapped, and untapped because much of it is locked up in conflict.

So as one becomes more and more integrated, more and more harmonious because one is living up to one's spiritual ideals more and more, conflicts are resolved and all the energy which was locked up in those conflicts, not always conscious, is liberated, so up comes all the energy sort of surging and sparkling up, just like a great fountain unsealed. So therefore in dependence upon the [75] pamojja arises the priti. So priti is not just joy in the ordinary sense, but a great gush of energy, which comes up with great delight and rapture and ecstasy and rejoicing and so on and so forth. This is what is meant here. [Laughter]

Lokamitra: Just about the meditation. Later on when you talk about samadhi you say that that's talking about the dhyanas there and you say they are not attained until this state I think, until the state of samadhi is reached, and yet here the rupaloka refers to the states of dhyana.

S: I'm not quite sure what you're after. There are two sets of dhyanas. There are rupa dhyanas and arupa dhyanas.

Lokamitra: I understood from lectures and things that the dhyana states didn't arise until the sixth stage of samadhi or seventh stage of samadhi. The seventh positive nidana which is samadhi or the sixth whatever it is.

S: Ah! Well it begins here. It starts here. Samadhi represents something more than that.

"Guenther therefore quite rightly speaks of it as 'a driving and even overwhelming emotion.'"

S: A driving. It's one which carries you along, gives you motive force, energy, and even overwhelming. It's something which is so powerful that in a way you can't resist it. Maybe you want to but you can't.

"As, by a sort of psychological chain-reaction, greater and greater quantities of energy are

released, priti becomes more and more transporting."

S: Transporting meaning carrying you out of yourself.

"Tradition therefore distinguishes a number of different degrees of piti. In the words of the Atthasalini, 'Rapture is of five kinds:'"

S: Rapture meaning priti.

"the lesser thrill, momentary rapture, flooding rapture, all-pervading rapture and transporting rapture. Of these, the lesser thrill is only able to raise the hairs of the body;"

S: When the hairs of your body stand on end, as when you're listening to very sort of moving music and the hairs of the body stand on end. This is just a thrill. It's just the lowest kind of priti.

"the momentary rapture is like the production of lightning moment by moment;"

S: You get flashes of priti. It comes in sort of spasms.

"like waves breaking on the seashore, the flooding rapture descends on the body and breaks;"

S: A great wave sort of breaking upon you and overwhelming you and sort of leaving you gasping.

"[when all-pervading rapture arises, the whole body is completely surcharged, blown like a full bladder or like a mountain cavern pouring forth a mighty flood of water;26]"

S: Here you actually feel filled with it, permeated by it, swollen up with it.

[76]

" the transporting rapture is strong, and lifts the body up to the extent of launching it in the air'.27"

S: This is said to be the explanation of levitation. You'll lift up your feet with ecstasy, lifted up off your feet with ecstasy. It can be so powerful it counteracts the force of physical gravitation itself, and of course Buddhism traditionally takes this quite literally. We won't go into that now and I'm not going to tell any stories about levitation or answer any questions as to whether I've actually seen it!

"From these descriptions it is evident that far from being only mental, piti is accompanied by a variety of physical innervations."

S: This is one of its great characteristics. It's psycho-physical. Priti is experienced in the body as well as in the mind, as when you get the hairs of the body standing on end. So this is one of the distinguishing marks of priti. It's experienced with the whole being, physically as well as mentally.

"It is this which distinguishes it from sukha, the next nidana but one. Hence before sukha can

arise, in causal association with piti arises

(v) Passaddhi (Sanskrit prasadhi), or calmness, repose, tranquillity, serenity. When the energies which in the process of liberation were experienced as piti have been, as it were, exhausted, the accompanying physical innervations subside and in the ensuing mood of relaxation the attention is first disengaged and then wholly withdrawn from the body and its concerns."

S: You have to go through the priti stage first. There's no real calm, no real peace, without passing through the priti stage. You must be very careful not to try to achieve a premature calm with your energies merely repressed, and this is quite important. I think everybody can understand that. You've got perhaps to let the energies out first. This is why I was saying the other day that I notice sometimes at Order meetings and other gatherings of Friends, when I've gone down to London, what happens - there's a regular as it were three stages we go through. Or I notice everybody going through. First of all when I meet people, when they all assemble, everyone seems a bit dull and bored and tired. That's the first stage. So we talk and discuss things and then people start getting a bit argumentative, even a bit aggressive and expressing things and then laughing a bit and a bit cheerful and they start waking up a bit, a bit lively. Then quite a lot comes out in that way. A lot is expressed. And then, if we carry on long enough everybody comes to a very calm, harmonious and relaxed state, and feel really as it were together, but you have to go through one and two before you can get to three. Sometimes you may mistake one for three, but it isn't at all. You have got to go through that stage of two to get to three. I think everybody knows what I am talking about. I think everybody has seen this.

So lethargy, dullness, inactivity is not calm, is not peace. If necessary you have sometimes got to stir things up, even disturb things, break up that false peace, and let out energies. In this case the joyful positive creative energies before you can experience the true peace and the true calm.

"Consequently there also takes place a subsidence of feeling, in the sense of pleasurable sensation, and a subsidence of the perception and motivation derived therefrom. Passaddhi is therefore spoken of as twofold: that of the mind (citta) and that of the body (kaya) - here not the physical body but the mental factors of feeling (vedana), perception (sanna) and motivation (sankhara) collectively. It would be a [77] mistake, though, to regard passaddhi as a merely passive state. Not only does it tranquillise consciousness and the mental factors but also, by easing strain and tension, bring about in them a condition of functional lightness, plasticity, adaptability, readiness and directness. Passaddhi is thus a state of extreme refinement and delicacy of feeling,"

S: You can see what's been happening. Priti is relatively coarse. That doesn't mean it's to be despised by any means. It is quite a good and positive and creative state, but along with the upsurging energies you've got all these what I've called physical innervations which are comparatively coarse. So after the energies have been more or less exhausted and things have come out into the open a stage of calm supervenes. You still feel joyful but there isn't this sort of urge to express it outwardly. So the external expression just dies away and you're left with the very calm internal feeling of joy. There's no external manifestation. You are much more calm and more tranquil, but it's not just a passive state, it's very active, very powerful, dynamic as it were, but no external expressions. You're not laughing and crying as it were any more as you might have been before.

So therefore because there is no external manifestation, you can as it were begin to forget about the body and the purely internal feeling very calmly but strongly starts building up more and more, and this builds up into the sixth nidana which is pure bliss.

"in causal association with which therefore arises

(vi) Sukha or bliss. Though the word has a very wide range of meaning, including that of pleasurable bodily sensation, it stands in this context for the apparently causeless feeling of intense happiness which wells up from the depths of his being when the physical innervations associated with piti having subsided, the meditator is no longer aware of the physical body. When discussing vedana or feeling we saw that the term covers not only sensation, or hedonic feeling, but also emotion which can be not only hedonic but ethical and spiritual. In the terms of this sukha may be defined as non-hedonic spiritual happiness. The author of the Atthasalini, according to whom piti belongs to the sankhara-khandha and sukha to the vedana-khandha,"

[End of side one side two]

S: Which means of course that priti is as it were active, and sukha is as it were not passive but it's more resultant. It's more like a state of being than a state of consciousness or whim. In other words it's more consolidated.

"endeavours to exhibit the true meaning of the present nidana by contrasting it with piti by means of an apt similitude 'A man who, travelling along the path through a great desert and, overcome by the heat, is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the way, would ask, "Where is water?" The other would say "Beyond the wood is dense forest with a natural lake. Go there and you will get some." He hearing these words would be glad and delighted. Going onwards, he would see men with wet clothes and hair, hear the sound of wildfowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels by the edge of the natural lake, he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily etc., growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water, he would be all the more glad and delighted, would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibres and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandalaka, ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and in [78] the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently lay himself down and say: "O bliss! O bliss!" Thus should this illustration be applied:- The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest, till he saw the water is like piti having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath and drink he laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, "O bliss! O bliss!" etc., is the sense of sukha growing strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object. 28"

S: So priti is in a way more anticipatory, prospective, whereas sukha is sort of deeply immersed in the enjoyment of the object itself.

"As the comparison suggests, sukha in this context is not something which comes and goes in a moment, or which touches one superficially. On the contrary it is an experience of so enthralling and overwhelming a character that the meditator is occupied and absorbed, even immersed in it, at times for days on end, to the exclusion of all other interests."

S: In the case of priti you can have a flash, you can have a momentary priti, but sukha is something much more profound and involving the whole being over much longer periods of time. It's much more thorough, much more thorough going. It represents a much more consolidated state that goes on for a much longer time. Though of course you can regress from this experience. That mustn't be forgotten.

Abhaya: Are we to take it that all these stages occur because they mention meditating here and there. Is it always like during meditation that this happens?

S: Not necessarily. You can be walking in the country on fine morning and sort of causeless bliss will spring up and you experience that. Certainly meditation helps and even though, if you meditate, even though the experience doesn't occur necessarily at the time of meditation, though it may well do so, the fact that you are in the habit of meditating may help it or will help it to occur at other times. It depends upon the whole sort of complex of circumstances when it actually occurs.

Sometimes people find that it takes them unawares when they're not meditating just because they're not as it were theoretically preoccupied with the possibility. The mind is more open, more receptive and they just find themselves in that state, whereas when they're meditating they'd be so preoccupied with the thought of 'well, when am I going to start feeling ecstasy' that that anticipation keeps it at bay as it were. This is why sometimes we find that people who feel in quite a bad mood and think they're not going to have a good meditation but do it anyway, have a good meditation very often. They're not expecting anything. They're just doing the meditation. Sometimes to their surprise they find it's going very well and they thought it was going to go really badly.

Suvratta: Could I clear up a point. Are we now talking of the path in terms essentially of meditation experience or of sort of permanent (). Being a stage on the path implies that this sort of rapture is a permanent state of mind, when you get to that point on the path. Is that what is meant?

S: Yes, yes. Certainly in the slightly diluted form of a sort of constant cheerfulness, at least that. A general sense of well-being, freedom from internal conflicts, and a sort of general calmness and tranquillity, positive, optimistic outlook and so on. At least that.

[79]

Suvratta: These seem quite like the dhyanas that you sort of run up and down ...

S: Well you don't really run up and down the dhyanas as easily as that. I think if you reach this stage you will be able to dwell in the dhyanas almost every time that you sat and meditated. Your normal state would be one of cheerfulness and positivity and when you sat and meditated that would be heightened into a dhyana type experience, without very much difficulty.

Aryamitra: I think what Suvratta's saying is the answer to what I found also. Is it a state - your whole being has reached this state. In fact it's not something you're going to regress from, that you have actually transformed into this...

S: You can still regress, but you regress as it were as a whole. If you keep up your regular

practice and are careful about environment there's no need why you should regress. But if there are sort of big changes and you get away from your regular practice and you move to another less favourable environment and you contact the wrong sort of people doing the wrong sort of things, then you can definitely regress from this stage. But it may take a rather longer time than just a few days, before you lose it altogether. Some people find this when they're on retreat and then come back from retreat. Something of the experience lasts for quite a few days.

Lokamitra: It is something you can go through again and again.

S: You can yes, though it isn't quite so momentary or fragile as the priti experience. It's rather more solid than that, but you still have to safeguard it and not take it for granted that it is going to continue. You still have to as it were set up the right sort of conditions and preserve those conditions.

Aryamitra: I was thinking in terms of other techniques, specifically designed to release energy and get to these stages, and yet they seem temporary things.

S: Well I think also the question of motivation comes up. Sometimes people almost abuse themselves and they want to liberate energy just for the sake of the high which they experience when energy is liberated, not because they really want to grow, and I think this is quite harmful. They want the end product rather than the whole process.

Aryamitra: And this interferes with the...

S: It makes the experience itself a more superficial thing and something which is therefore more easily lost.

Aryamitra: Because I experienced similar things for myself in yoga.

S: And basically this sort of state of mind must be based upon one's total outlook and one's total way of life, not just a technique that you engage in for the weekend. While you're engaging in the technique for that weekend you may have a quite positive and high experience, but you lose it almost immediately. There isn't any solid foundation in your whole character, your whole outlook, your whole philosophy of life.

Lokamitra: I see the first few of these positive nidanas as a spiral in themselves in a way, in that you come across them again and again, and each time faith is made stronger.

S: Yes, right, indeed. Not that you've left faith behind - you are carrying it with you and refining it and strengthening it all the time.

[80]

Lokamitra: And then from there you go on to ...

S: To branch off a bit, just to go back to what we've just been saying, I referred earlier on to that article about the psychologist who had a breakdown and he was referring to encounter groups. He had some experience of them, taking them and also being in them, and he made a very interesting comment. He said that he thought there was a danger in them, at least for

some people, inasmuch as they tried to have communication on the cheap. He said that you meet someone and have communication with them, but you are as it were avoiding building up a whole framework of relationship and working on it over a long period of time and letting the communication arise naturally within that, and accepting all the responsibilities and commitments that friendship involves and real communication involves. You are avoiding all that, you are just trying, as it were on the cheap he said, if you're not careful, to sort of go along and have a communication that involves no responsibilities towards that person. So you're just using that person and he even goes so far as to say it's almost a sort of form of prostitution. And there is certainly some truth in this I think.

So it's much the same sort of thing isn't it. I think there is a very strong tendency among people to try and do this sort of thing. For instance a real relationship, a real friendship, takes a long time to build up. It can develop quite quickly in great spurts, but on the whole time is also required and experience of the other person over a long period of time - their reliability, their sense of responsibility, their commitment to you, and this takes time to build up.

I think we have to be quite careful therefore how to use things like the communication exercises. Use them within a context in a responsible way. Not just to give people a sort of high and you forget all about the person with whom you experience the high, with whom you communicate. Maybe sometimes it's all right to use them in that way but it shouldn't become a sort of general pattern.

(the following passages are very unclear due to tape distortion)

But there is a tendency to snatch at the experience. For instance there's a well known passage in Malory's Morte D'Arthur where Malory is talking about how they used to love in the old days and he used to say they could be faithful to each other, that is the lover and his beloved for seven years, and there was no - I think he calls it licorice lust between them. But he said modern lovers, no sooner have they met then the (), that is the male, at once tries to seduce the beloved and whisk her into bed. He can't wait () to build up the relationship, and this is looking at it from that point of view. There's a lot of this sort of thing generally. You haven't got patience to build things up or let them grow. You want the end produce all at once.

Aryamitra: Why do you think this has developed if you think it has?

S: Well it certainly seems very common among quite a lot of people that we come in contact with, who want to grab at the end result without waiting for the whole process ()

___: ()

S: No the end result has been aborted.

___: ()

[81]

___: Emphasis on the goal rather than on the path.

S: Yes or emphasis on the goal in the wrong sort of way.

___: The goal as separate from the path.

S: The goal as separate from the path, the goal as mentally separate.

___:

Vangisa:

S: Ah yes. Even if you talk about achieving a peaceful state of mind. There will be no concern about (

) they're so impatient to get to the goal they can't bothered to meditate or try to rush through the meditation quickly so that they get there (

)... It's a lack of faith ...

... but it could be better if there was more of a context and a framework and they had a responsibility towards that person with whom you had the communication. Not just thinking in terms of the high you got out of it for yourself.

___: ...whether I felt that communication exercises were better with someone whom one had never met or someone who one had been meeting over a long period of time.

S: Better meaning a bigger high?

___: ... very often communication exercises were with someone who one only meets once. You can have a big high but that doesn't mean to say it the best of communications. That the communication over a long period of time, it doesn't have that great big oomph but over a period of time.

S: In this case a communication contributes something to a social relationship. It's just not a communication in a vacuum

(distortion ends - about four minutes of discussion was confused by this)

Lokamitra: Communication exercises, when you have them with someone you don't know. I found this and I know others have found it. You go into a room and you've sort of got nothing to say. You can't communicate with them because you're sort of... whereas with someone who you have known for some time, you can extend that much more, but then sort of gently come back a bit, but you've got nothing to base that on if it's someone completely new.

S: Did people hear about Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri's experiment in Helsinki recently? Finns are rather difficult and uncommunicative people and the Centre there has been running quite successfully for a while and people come in for meditation. The trouble is they don't want anything to do with one another, so it is very difficult to form a group. They all want to come individually and separately. There are some who like to come and see Vajrabodhi but don't even want to meet Bodhisri and vice-versa. So Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri have been patiently coping with this for months and months but they're getting more and more people coming along who want less and less to do with one another. So they're getting a bit desperate. So Vajrabodhi apparently just before the class the other week had a quick consultation with Bodhisri and they were so desperate that they decided right no meditation tonight, we'll do communication [82] exercises (distortion returns and persists!) They said they knew that if

they knew they would do them before they wouldn't come. So as soon as they seated themselves Vajrabodhi shut the door [Laughter] and said 'we're going to do communication exercises' and they did, and he said the results were absolutely extraordinary. There was so much energy liberated and people were so happy and so on and so forth and he said he really feels that Finns need communication exercises more than meditation. This is not his own natural tendency - he's very much more into meditation, but this is what he said. But that's quite interesting. They've all been coming along, some of them for months and months but wanting less and less to do with one another and it was becoming very very difficult to have a group. There was only a collection of not individuals, not in the positive sense, but people didn't want any communication with one another. () This was only last week.

All right let's go on. Before we do go on though (discussion about the programme and how much more text to study not transcribed) I think it might be a good idea if we just conclude ... perhaps we need to go rather rapidly through. (discussion continues). I think we'll conclude with seven regretfully. That will be enough but reading through rather rapidly which means another half an hour. OK then.

"Non-Buddhist mystics who reach this stage, especially those belonging to schools which, like those of the Vedanta, define Reality in terms of bliss (ananda), are prone to imagine that such an attainment is sufficient evidence of their having realized God or Brahman or whatever for them constitutes the ultimate goal of life."

S: You see the logic? If you reach Reality then you are in a blissful state. Therefore if you are in a blissful state you've reached Reality, you are there. I've seen in India a lot of people look at it in this way. Some people of a natural cheerful optimistic temperament and who do meditate and feel good and they're convinced that they've realized the truth, because the truth and absolute reality is bliss and they're convinced that they're in a blissful state. They feel happy and cheerful and optimistic most of time. They're a bit outward going and gregarious and they think it's divine bliss, and that they're realized (souls). You see quite a bit of this in India, not so much over here for obvious reasons, but it is something to be guarded against, and in a general way the identification of any stage of the path with the goal.

"To the Buddhist, however, the experience of meditative bliss is only a milestone on the way."

S: I say only but don't let's underestimate it.

"and even while most deeply immersed in it he is careful to cultivate an attitude of detachment towards it and to avoid the mistake of settling down in it as though it was a permanent and final achievement. The Scriptures more than once represent the Buddha as saying with reference to His own early practice of the dhyanas, 'Yet the happiness which in that way arose in me, could not obsess my mind 29'."

S: In other words could not captivate him, my mind was not captivated. I didn't () I remained a bit detached even though I was experiencing that great bliss.

"At the same time neither the Buddha nor his followers have ever tended to underestimate the role of happiness in the spiritual life. In a passage of striking force and beauty Lama Anagarika Govinda writes: 'Out of the 121 classes of [83] consciousness which are discussed

in [Theravada] Buddhist psychology, sixty-three are accompanied by joy and only three are painful, while the remaining fifty-five classes are indifferent. A stronger refutation of pessimism than this statement is hardly possible. How deluded is man, that he mainly dwells in those three painful states of consciousness, though there are overwhelmingly more possibilities of happiness!"

S: In other words there are dozens and dozens of happy states of mind possible but only three, according the Abhidharma, which are miserable and painful, but most people insist on dwelling in those three. They would rather dwell there than in those higher, happy states. I really experience this myself sometimes. People resent you trying to make them happy, and trying to get them out of their negative state. As though you're doing them a sort of injury and they try to find reasons for remaining negative and remaining miserable, and try and bring you down to that state too. It's really extraordinary why they do this but they do!

Vajradaka: They say you're not a realist.

S: Or you're not sympathetic, you don't understand. [Laughter]

Lokamitra: Or your happiness makes them even more angry.

S: Right. No doubt in some cases people may be cheerful and happy in a slightly aggressive way. We understand that too. [Laughter] That's not what I'm talking about. If you're quite calm and objectively happy and cheerful, they don't like it. You ought not to be for some reason or other.

Vangisa: The calmness itself can upset them.

S: If you don't get excited and worked up.

Aryamitra: It makes one feel one's own situation that much more if you've got the contrasting factor.

S: Could be that too. But you try very often to bring that other person down to your level or involve them in your negative situation. OK on we go.

"But what a perspective this knowledge opens to those who strive earnestly, what an incentive even to the weak! The more man progresses, the more radiant and joyful will be his consciousness. Happiness, indeed, may be called a characteristic of progress."

S: But not agreeable sensations. You may be going through quite difficult and painful times in terms of sensations, but within there will be in a sort of subtle paradoxical fashion, a sort of deep happiness and content, and you accept what you are going through. It isn't necessarily a bubbly effervescent sort of happiness.

___: It comes back to faith really then.

S: Yes, right.

"In the course of its development it becomes more and more sublime until it grows into the

serenity which radiates in the face of the Enlightened One with that subtle smile in which wisdom, compassion, and all-embracing love are mingled.'³⁰ What the Buddhist tradition in all its branches is concerned to emphasize is that however natural, healthy and intense the experience of meditative bliss may be, the meditator must be careful not to allow it to overpower his mindfulness in [84] such a way that the path to further progress is barred. The immediate nature of that progress is indicated by a number of scriptural aphorisms, such as 'The mind of the happy one becomes concentrated'.³¹ Thus in causal association with sukha arises

(vii) Samadhi or 'concentration'. Like that of several other terms in the series, the meaning of samadhi tends to vary according to context. At its simplest it is mere one-pointedness of mind, or concentrated attention on a single object. Such one-pointedness may be associated with a morally healthy or unhealthy, or with a neutral, consciousness. The minds of the fornicator and the murderer are certainly concentrated on their respective objects; but being concentrated through lust in the one case and hatred in the other their concentration is said to be unhealthy. Samadhi is therefore properly not one-pointedness of mind in general but healthy one-pointedness (kausalyaekagrata-citta, Pali kusala-ekaggata-citta)

In connection with the systematic cultivation of this nidana through the practice of definite spiritual exercises three degrees of depth and intensity of samadhi are distinguished: preparatory concentration, when the mind is fixed on the gross external object pertaining to the particular practice adopted, say on the process of respiration, an image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, or the sound of a mantra audibly repeated; intermediate concentration, when the mind is fixed on a subtle and frequently luminous counterpart which arises when the gross object has been attended to for a sufficient length of time; and full concentration, which is attained when the mind is absorbed in the subtle counterpart to such an extent that it becomes as it were one with it and no longer experiences it as something objective and external. Full concentration corresponds to dhyana (Pali jhana). This in turn consists of eight degrees, four belonging to the 'form' (rupa) and four to the 'formless' (arupa) plane, each degree more refined than the one preceding."

S: I think we'll skip a couple of paragraphs there which go into quite a few details, which aren't really necessary now, and go on to the paragraph beginning "In the Mahasaccaka Sutta..."

"In the Mahasaccaka Sutta, one of the great autobiographical discourses of Pali Canon, the Buddha describes to the Jain ascetic Saccaka, whom He addresses by his clan name, the course of fearful asceticism to which He had subjected Himself prior to the attainment of Enlightenment. After relating how the attempt had failed He continued: 'This Aggivessana, occurred to me: "I know that while my father the Sakyan, was ploughing and I was sitting in the cool shade of the rose-apple tree, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, entering on the first meditation, which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful, and while abiding therein, I thought: 'Now, could this be a way to awakening?' Then following on my mindfulness, Aggivessana, there was the consciousness: This is itself the Way to awakening.'"³²

S: I think I'd better sort of take over sort of verbally from here and summarize a bit and make it clear why I've cited this incident. Earlier on the Buddha represents himself as traversing even higher dhyanas when he was under his teachers in his very early days, but he didn't

manage to achieve the goal, but on this occasion which is just before his Enlightenment, when he's failed so far to achieve the goal, despite practising under those teachers, despite achieving higher states of consciousness - dhyanas - on this occasion he found the way just recollecting an [85] early experience of his when he was a boy which had occurred spontaneously and he followed that up. Now what is the significance of this incident. This is what I'm talking about here in connection with the nature of samadhi and the nature of real practice, and I pointed out, in effect, that in those early days, when he was studying under those two early teachers, he hadn't succeeded because he was trying to force, that he had taken the practice as a sort of exercise and by sheer will power you were going to get there by doing the exercises. He did get quite a long way, but it was as it were only with part of himself. He pushed himself forward, he wasn't really ready for that, as I described someone doing in connection with the path of irregular steps in the lecture, but he sort of sunk back.

What he had to do was to grow naturally, and this is what happens when he did finally gain Enlightenment. He sat at the foot of the Bodhi Tree and he just recollected that incident which happened when he was a boy. Spontaneous bliss, and thought, 'Is this the Way?' When he asked himself as it were, 'Is this the Way?' he didn't refer to the stage but more to the manner and the method, of letting things sort of grow naturally, encouraging them and coaxing them, not forcing them by sheer effort of will, and therefore he found that that was the real way. Allowing the previous stage to develop, and then on the basis of that the next. Not trying to push things ahead more rapidly than nature.

So therefore I've quoted, I've referred to this incident to show that the gaining of a higher meditative experience isn't by means of a very forcible application of a technique, backed up by an egoistic will, but it's a process of natural growth and development. Not that effort isn't needed but it's a wise, gentle, smooth, regular effort. Not a sort of violent thrust of the will trying to get there forcibly. So this is a very important question in connection with meditation, because people often think of it in terms of technique - more efficacious technique. We can have an intensive weekend and do forty hours - you'll get there forty times as quickly! Not at all! Certainly sometimes you need an intensive practice, but even your intensive practice has been mindful and (). It mustn't have the sort of (distortion returns!) () thrust of the will in a very narrow negative sense. It will be a movement forwards of the whole being, or at least the greater part of the being following not too far behind the more advanced part.

So that's what I'm getting at here in connection with samadhi, and this is of course brought out quite clearly by the very nature of this whole process as exemplified by the nidanas. That when one is fully developed the next arises almost spontaneously on the basis of it. If you go through all these previous nidanas faithfully and fully, you will find yourself in higher states of consciousness almost without knowing it, almost without effort, so that as soon as you actually sit to meditate you are in such a sort of positive frame of mind already (distortion ends) that the sitting to meditate, the concentration say on the breath, will just put the finishing touch and there you are away in samadhi. But it's no use being in a totally different state all during the day and all the week, turbulent, confused, craving, fearful, angry state, and then sit and think that by forcibly applying a technique and forcibly practising a method, you're going to get there. You may, but even if you do you're just straining yourself, you're creating so much tension. You're being so different on that occasion from what you were all during the day and all during the week. It's much better to go very smoothly and slowly and to look after your mental state all during the day and nurse it as it were, then when you sit to meditate just get a little better in a natural smooth way.

Aryamitra: It sounds really marvellous but if you've working all day it's very difficult.

[86]

S: Right, yes, sure.

Lokamitra: Total integration of the energies that you have to have to reach the seventh stage then, doesn't imply the negation of this sort of rather negative egotistic will?

S: Yes it does. Perhaps I've not expressed myself clearly enough. What I mean is it's a sort of mental will. you're trying to put your energy behind something that is only conceived of mentally in a quite superficial way.

Devaraja: ... really not connected with motivation and with what one's goal really is, whereas with the second approach - the gradual natural approach - it's more of a contentment with making a sort of better human being, rather than sort of attaining some treasure chest in the sky.

S: Yes, grabbing at the transcendental.

Lokamitra: I'm saying that from what I've understood before, that one can't attain these higher states until one is integrated and therefore the Buddha couldn't have attained these states of no-thingness and neither no-thingness ...

S: Yes and no. You can touch them, as I said in the lecture, you can't dwell in them. You can certainly by straining touch them, have an experience just for a little while, but you come down very rapidly and there's a strong reaction, but you can't sort of dwell in them and make yourself at home in them (distortion!)

Lokamitra: So that one wouldn't really be experiencing them properly. One would experience them very briefly.

Aryamitra: Do you think that can be justifiable in a sense to experience that? ... say the Buddha goes through all this but...

S: But the Buddha was on his own without a real teacher, without an Enlightened teacher. Afterwards he established a tradition for his followers which is mainly based on the path of regular steps. There wasn't anything for the Buddha to have faith in in the sense that others now can have faith in the Buddha.

[End of re-recorded section of Tape 5 Tape 6]

Aryamitra: Have you perhaps personal experience of anybody who has started right on regular steps and not gone chasing with egotistical will to...

S: Oh yes, it does happen, or has happened I'm sure, among ordinary Buddhists in Buddhist countries, especially who see the monks and who don't know anything about the theory or the philosophy and who just want to, say, be a monk; and they just go and live in the monastery and they start sweeping it every day, and they wear the robes and they observe the precepts, and maybe after several years they take up meditation, and maybe they don't read any books

about it or study any scriptures or particularly want to - that all may come very much later. So there are some - even now, at least very recently - who have gone forward in this way. But usually people who are sort of intellectually uncurious and maybe living away from the big city with just the local monastery near at hand, just in this way. Of course they can get rather dull and stagnant too: that's the opposite danger, you can see that as well: they just become pious souls, or maybe not much more than that.

[87]

Lokamitra: But meditation itself implies a certain amount of irregularity in that it's going to take you to higher states, and these are going to come back and it's going to feed back on your normal everyday life.

S: Well, it's regular irregularity, say when you sit at the same time every day; there is a definite pattern. But when I spoke of the path of irregular steps it wasn't anything of that kind; I've deliberately painted it in rather glaring colours - a rather extreme form. (Pause)

All right, so let's go ...page 120 from the hardback: "for this reason...", that paragraph at the bottom of the page.

"For this reason the practice of samadhi can never be reduced to the practice of a certain series of concentration-exercises or to a special technique, much less still to a matter of professional expertise."

S: You can't have a meditation 'expert' in that sort of sense.

"It was their awareness of this danger which prompted the Soto branch of the Zen School to insist that one does not sit to meditate: one sits to sit. Not all schools of meditation, not even all Buddhist schools, have succeeded in steering so clear of the danger. Hindu Yoga is exclusively a system of techniques; however efficacious as a means of physical and mental hygiene it therefore possesses by itself no spiritual value."

S: One finds this to a very great extent in India, where there are many people who - believe it or not - spend their lives doing yogic exercises but no real interest in spiritual life at all. You find some in the West like that, maybe not so many even as in India. But this is the danger.

"The so-called New Burmese Method of Satipatthana, with its system of grades, examinations, certificates and titles, even apart from the other objections that have been urged against it would seem open, in the case of some at least of its exponents, to similar criticism."

S: I visited the house of an Indian Buddhist friend of mine in (Ajmir?) some years ago where I found that on his wall he had a framed certificate from a meditation master in Burma certifying, over the meditation master's signature, that he had attained the degree of Stream Entrant. And he was quite pleased, and quite chuffed by this and showed me the certificate framed on the wall... (laughter)...believe it or not.

Aryamitra: We could sell those to get new people along to the centre!

S: This was quite a well-known meditation master. That's a bit extreme.

___: Do you think he was right?

S: No, not from my knowledge or that young man, who was a rather bumptious young man.

Vangisa: He must have been rather. If somebody hangs a certificate like that on the wall.

S: Yeah, right. There was the other Chinese businessman who came to Kalimpong for a rather advanced Tantric initiation, and I talked to him about it, asked him why he wanted it, so he said, well, he'd got an office back in, I think it was, Hong Kong, a [88] rather big, ornate office, apparently, and he'd got a great big desk, and he said that if he got the initiation then he will get the sort of tree of the initiation showing that he'd got it from such-and-such a teacher; he'd got it from his, and he'd got it from his ... it would go right back to the Buddha. He said if I got that, sort of, written up properly it would look really nice on the wall above my head as I sit behind my desk. (laughter) He felt rather pleased about this, that he'd have it framed and that it would be hanging on the wall behind his desk; here was he sitting below, no doubt interviewing his customers and so on, and he was the latest in the line right from the Buddha. He told me this himself, quite naively, quite pleased. Anyway, let's go on. Don't forget we're laughing at ourselves. Most people do this to some extent. All right, next paragraph.

"Yet one need not go to the extreme of denying that techniques have any place at all in the practice of meditation..."

S: Yes, don't go to the other extreme ... what is the other extreme? - what I call quietism. "Thus..."

"...thus avoiding the Scylla of technism only at the cost of falling a prey to the Charybdis of quietism."

S: "Hmm, 'quietism'. That is: on the one hand you say, well, 'techniques are everything.' That's one extreme. The other: 'techniques aren't of any use. Well they are: to get yourself concentrated at least to begin with; you can't dispense with them altogether. So follow the Middle Path here too.

"As the whole progressive sequence of causally associated factors leading up to samadhi, the present factor, itself serves to illustrate, the following of the spiritual path is from stage to stage less a matter of egoistically willed achievement as of a growth, in and through awareness, of the total psyche. As Tagore says, 'No hurried path of success, forcibly cut by the greed of result, can be the true path'. Energetic recourse to techniques of concentration by one who had not cultivated the preceding nidanas could result in complete frustration or produce, if apparently successful, either a morbid state of hypnotic fixation or a violent reaction from those parts of the psyche which had not co-operated in the attempt. In the opposite case, however, that of one who had cultivated the preceding nidanas, even the moderate practice of a concentration-technique would be sufficient to induce even profound samadhi-experience. It might even be enough for him to see a beautiful flower, or to look at something bright and shining. For him who had cultivated the five previous nidanas to perfection, the samadhi-experience would arise as soon as he seated himself and was mindful; he would not need to 'meditate'. This seems to have been the case, practically, of the Buddha."

S: That is when he sat beneath the Bodhi tree and gained Enlightenment. He'd as it were, practised those previous nidanas subsequent to his initial rather disastrous attempt from his early teachers, so that when he did sit and recollected that early spontaneous experience the rest almost naturally followed. All right, last paragraph.

"Diseased or injured seed will produce only a deformed and stunted plant. Unless the preceding factor has been cultivated, if not to perfection at least to an advanced degree, the factor which arises next in causal association with it will be only a caricature of what it ought to be."

S: This is what I was mainly saying when I spoke about the path [89] of irregular steps and the path of regular steps, and why we should pass from the one to the other.

"Though true of every factor, this is particularly true of samadhi. Samadhi is the last of the laukika (Pali lokiya) or mundane, factors; the one immediately succeeding it will be the first of the lokuttara or transcendental factors which, as regress from them is impossible, constitute the Path to Enlightenment proper. Scriptural aphorism indicates this supremely important, indeed crucial, transition, in such words as 'The concentrated mind sees things as they really are'. But if the samadhi is not true samadhi, but a mere forcible fixation of attention disrupting one part of the psyche from the rest there will arise in causal association with it nothing but delusions; one may imagine one has realized what one has not: in the case of a Buddhist, he may mistake purely intellectual reminiscence of the Dharma for actual penetration of its import. In any case, instead of safely traversing the point where Wheel and Spiral intersect one will, unknowingly, become more deeply and inextricably involved in the Samsara than ever. Only in causal association with true samadhi arises (viii) Yathabhutanadassana (Skt -jnanadarsana) 'Knowledge and Vision of Things As They Are' or 'According to Reality'" (laughter)

S: "'Knowledge and Vision of Things As They Are' or 'According to Reality'." I'm afraid we have to leave it there. If we can get even as far as that - Reality - we'll be doing pretty well!

[end of session]

Chapter 15: The Assembly of the Elect

S: All right, chapter fifteen. In the hardback it's on page 149. The Assembly of the Elect. We've studied the Round, with karma, the Wheel of Life. We've gone at least half way up the Spiral and we're making a little jump now to the assembly of the elect, that is, the spiritual community. We have to finish on time today, I'm afraid. We have to bear in mind that we will be stopping at twelve. So we've got just under three hours. So we'll go through the chapter, or as much of it as we possibly can and discuss only matters which seem quite important and relevant. Try to avoid going off on sidetracks however interesting. All right, let's start.

"Without a centre, a radius and a circumference a circle cannot exist. Of the circle of Buddhism the Buddha is the radiant centre, the Dharma, as the shortest distance from potential to actual enlightenment, the radius, and the Sangha the perfect unbroken circumference. Each of these terms is multi-dimensional, possessing sphere within sphere of spiritual significance which no one rendition can exhaust. The Buddha is, simultaneously, a unique historical figure, the supreme object of the religious consciousness, and Reality

Itself;..."

S: In other words, the three Kayas, the three so-called 'bodies' of the Buddha.

"...His Dharma is the sum total of conceptual formulations of the Teaching as well as the spiritual principle which both transcends all formulations and, running at the same time through every one of them, communicates to them vitality and meaning. Even so does the Sangha, literally 'assembly', meet not at one level of existence only but at several. The term stands, according to context, for a spiritual elite, an [90] ecclesiastical corporation, and the whole community of the faithful, monk and lay, as well as covering various intermediate shades of significance. Of the three principal meanings, that of the spiritual elite is the primary one; all the rest are secondary. Whether one is in spiritual relation with the Buddha, through the Dharma, and therefore whether one is truly a segment of the circumference of the circle, is determined not by the assumption of external differentiae, nor by verbal professions, but by whether one actually practises the Dharma or not.

In a well-known episode the Buddha declares that he who walked step by step behind the Master, holding fast to the hem of His robe, but who did not follow His instructions, was far from Him. But one who, on the contrary, though living a thousand miles away, yet realized the import of the Teaching, dwelt in His very presence. The true criterion of the relation between the Buddha and His followers is not physical, not spatio-temporal, but spiritual. Whether now or in what we call, from the historical point of view, His 'own' times, or whether in the future even, we are nearest to Him when we most perfectly follow His example. The Sangha is primarily the community of those who, by virtue of their immediate or remote approximation to Enlightenment, stand in spiritual relation to the Buddha and dwell spiritually in His presence."

S: This is the sort of key sentence as it were of these few paragraphs. "The Sangha is primarily the community of those who, by virtue of their immediate or even remote approximation to Enlightenment, stand in spiritual relation to the Buddha and dwell spiritually in His presence." And of course it is a spiritual relationship, a spiritual connection, and one is approximating, though very remotely, to Enlightenment as soon as you really get established on the Path, on the Spiral principle.

"It is the community of those who, through their relationship with Him, are also all spiritually related to one another."

S: This is also quite important: that you're related to one another because you have this common relationship to the spiritual Ideal, and you are, as it were related through that. Usually we find that if there isn't a sort of principle of relationship between people, the relationship itself falls a bit flat. It's as though people need, or require, something higher than themselves through which they can relate. Not that they bring it in verbally or conceptually too much, but if it is just the personal relationship in a very ordinary, sort of humanistic sense, it tends after a while to become rather devoid of significance. But if you're both trying to relate to something which is above you both and bigger than you both, then by virtue of that common effort you can relate better between yourselves. So in this way we say that the Sangha is the community of those who, through their relationship with Him, their relationship with the Buddha - and the Dharma - are also spiritually related to one another. In that way they become the Sangha. So you can't really have the Sangha without the Buddha and the

Dharma and this is why we find sometimes people come along to the movement and they like the feeling of spiritual community, but they feel somehow that they don't really belong - they want to, but they feel that there's some sort of gap, as it were. They want to enjoy the experience of Sangha but without committing themselves to the path to Enlightenment, and they find that you just can't do that. And sometimes there's even been a sort of odd position of people really liking the atmosphere of the centre, but thinking it rather a pity that we had to bring Buddhism into it (laughter) - not realizing that it's due to the Buddhism that the atmosphere of the centre is created, such as it is, yeah? So you can't really have the [91] benefits, as it were, without the commitment too. So again it's an example of, sort of trying to have things on the cheap. You can't experience Sangha without the commitment to Enlightenment, because that commitment, that common commitment, is what provides the link between you and the other committed people. So this is quite important. And once you do make your commitment you, automatically as it were, come into spiritual relationship with other people who have made that commitment even though you might not have met them, might not have seen them, they might be still unknown to you, but you are in spiritual relationship with them. Okay.

"The Sangha is the Buddha's spiritual family."

S: This sums it up in a very few words, doesn't it. The Sangha is the Buddha's spiritual family.

"In the Nikayas He is indeed represented as telling his disciples: 'Ye are mine own true sons, born of my mouth; heirs of the Dhamma, not heirs of worldly things.' Centuries later the same theme finds beautiful expression as a trinity consisting of the Buddha as Father, the Dharma as Mother, and the Sangha as Son."

S: You find this trinity represented in Nepal. It seems to be a distinctive development there.

Devaraja: Can you (unclear)

S: I don't know.

Devaraja: I mean how is it represented? Just a sort of a verbal thing or is a pictorial...

S: It's iconographic. The Buddha as far as I recollect is the usual Sakyamuni, the Dharma is represented by the Perfection of Wisdom, the mother of all the Buddhas, and the Sangha represented as a Bodhisattva.

It's usually like this then - The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha.

___: Any particular Bodhisattva?

S: I don't recollect.

Vangisa: Actually this family relationship is fairly obvious. From every point of view the brother-sister relationship of the Sangha, but those are probably to some extent you don't even notice it happening at times, but I had quite a strong feeling during one of the meditation classes feeling sort of a literally a terrific strong thing, but more in a paternal relationship. A protective attitude towards children. A feeling of definite love towards individuals as one

feels towards a child only a different spiritual thing rather than a possessive thing. There was a very strong sense of a definite family relationship. One can feel it the other way around of course, but in I suppose a more abstract way towards one's predecessors in the line of transmission.

S: I do feel that in the Movement generally there seems to be more and more of sort of brotherly feeling. This is becoming quite marked and I noticed it certainly last time I was at Aryatara, more so than I'd ever observed it or experienced it there before. It also seems, on occasions I've noticed it here and there within the Movement, to be now something much more natural, and people are, as it were not conscious of it. Not that they're unaware but they're not making any effort to be friendly or brotherly. It's happening quite naturally but this is how it is in a very sort of smooth and easily flowing manner. Quite unselfconsciously, which doesn't exclude a bit of - well it's not [92] exactly negativity, that's the wrong term here, but nothing is being sort of sat upon or kept back. That even if what otherwise might have been slightly sharp things are said, it's all within the context of that brotherliness and is taken as such. This seems to be the way things are going at present, much more so than before. So it also means it obviously springs out of people's deepening commitment. In a spiritual context if you want to get closer to someone you mustn't start trying to get close to them, you must try and get closer to the ideal. That will bring you automatically closer to them if they are also trying to get close to the ideal. If you try to relate to them and get closer to them as it were forgetting about the ideal, you will find it's not happening.

___: I find this with working with other Order members, especially if you're working for the Movement together.

S: I think again though this is something that some people find it a bit difficult to understand - how you can get close to people by working with them, or get to know them better by working with them. There seems to be a little resistance with some people to the very idea of such a thing. As if to say if you work with someone it somehow gets in the way as a sort of obstruction, but really it isn't like that at all.

___: It's a vehicle.

Aryamitra: It's almost like one relaxes with the other person and shares their space if you like.

S: It's not personal in the sort of narrower sense. What I've just said reminds me a bit of what another friend said some time ago. 'People are so busy relating they don't relate'. Anyway that's a bit of a sidetrack. Let's go on.

"As the spiritual elite the Sangha is known as the arya-sangha or 'Assembly of the Elect', the word arya here connoting an aristocracy not of race but of transcendental attainment."

S: Arya literally means simply 'noble', but it's come to mean in Buddhism spiritual and even transcendental.

"As an ecclesiastical corporation it is known as the bhiksu-sangha or 'Assembly of Monks', and as the whole community of the faithful as the maha-sangha or 'Great Assembly' and the caturvarga or 'Four Classes'."

S: The Caturvarga are the upasakas, upasikas, bhikshus and bhikshunis.

"Like many other doctrinal categories, the term arya-sangha underwent a certain narrowing at the hands of the Hinayanists and had to be reinterpreted by the Mahayanists who, while not rejecting the earlier formulations, did their best to incorporate them within the broader framework of their own ampler version of the Buddha's Teaching."

S: Yes, broadly speaking the Hinayanists have tended to interpret the Sangha exclusively in terms of the monastic order and even monasticism itself tended to interpret in a rather narrow and formalistic sense. So the Mahayana tended later on to restore the more spiritual conception of the spiritual community.

"Though precise demarcation is impossible, the earlier and the later interpretations are best dealt with separately."

S: In this chapter we're dealing more with the earlier [93] interpretations.

"Intelligent sentient beings are either aryas or anaryas. In the Scriptures the latter are generally referred to as prthagjanas (Pali puthujjanas) or average men. As they outnumber the aryas by many millions to one the term bahujana or 'many-folk' may also be applied to them. An average man is one who, dominated by the delusion of 'I' and 'mine' identifies himself with, or imagines he possesses, form, feeling, conception, volition and consciousness. He is the fool (bala) described in the Dhammapada verse 62: "'Sons are mine, wealth is mine", thus the fool torments [himself]. Indeed, he does not belong to himself. Whence sons? Whence wealth?"

S: Indeed he does not belong to himself. Whence sons? Whence wealth? In my translation of the Dhammapada I render 'bala' as spiritually immature person because it also means child as well as fool. So it's not just the foolish person in the ordinary sense, but the spiritually immature person.

"Not knowing the True Dharma, he develops attachments to things which should be avoided, thereby creating and strengthening the biases towards thirst for sensuous experience, prolonged mundane existence, and spiritual ignorance. Hence he continues to revolve with the Wheel of Life, occupying now one and now another of its segments."

S: Perhaps at this stage I should make it clear what technically the aryanas are according to early Buddhism. There are mainly four kinds - this is the usual classification: The Stream Entrants - those who have entered the Stream leading to Nirvana and cannot fall back into the Wheel of Life even though they still have some further progress to achieve; and then the Once Returners, those who are going to come back only once more; the Non Returners, those who don't come back at all and are reborn in the Pure Abodes and attain Nirvana directly from there; and the Arhant, one who has in this life itself attained Nirvana. This is the early Buddhist classification which may go back to the Buddha himself.

So these four and various subdivisions are collectively known as the Aryas, those who are on the transcendental path or who attains the goal, and everybody else is referred to as Anarya. So it's the aryanas in this sense as well as in the more developed Mahayana sense who make up what is called the Spiritual Community proper, the Aryasangha, or as we've translated it here, the community of the Elect. They haven't been elected by anybody. They elect by virtue of

their own higher spiritual attainment. So in its highest sense, in its truest sense, the Sangha is made up of those who actually have attained, or who are well on the way to attainment, who are on the various stages of the higher transcendental path, who are at least Stream Entrants, who cannot fall back, and who are definitely heading in the direction of Nirvana or who have actually attained it. This is the sangha in the highest and truest sense, and a purely spiritual community, not limited by space, not limited by time. So it's important to remember this, because we'll be going into a few matters of detail.

"Not only most men, but most gods too, are prthagjanas. For this reason the Buddhist expects no spiritual help or guidance from them. In Tibet they are known as the Gods of the Round."

S: Those forms whether Buddhas or Bodhisattvas or other figures, who represent or symbolize different stages of the [94] transcendental path, they are usually referred to as Deities of the Path, and in Tibetan Buddhism the Gods of the Round are sharply distinguished from the Deities of the Path. Sometimes it's a bit confusing because a Deity of the Path may sometimes take the form of the God of the Round and you have to be sure whether you're really dealing with a god or with a deity in disguise as it were. Anyway we'll leave that to the specialists in Tibetan Buddhism.

"The exceptions are those who, either during the Buddha's earthly lifetime or later, had an opportunity of hearing the Teaching and developing transcendental insight. These together with the Bodhisattvas, whom they resemble in certain respects, make up the Deities of the Path, and from them inspiration and spiritual guidance can be received."

S: In Tibetan Buddhism often both classes are referred to simply as gods (Lha), but actually one must distinguish between the Deities of the Path who are spiritual figures, and the Gods of the Round who merely occupy a higher position within the mundane system itself.

"Aryas are in the first place of two kinds:"

S: This is the earliest distinction which seems to have been made in Buddhism.

"arhants and srotapannas (Pali sotapannas). An Arhant is literally a 'Worthy One', the term being (according to the P.T.S. Dictionary) 'before Buddhism used as honorific title of high officials like the English "His Worship"; at the rise of Buddhism applied popularly to all ascetics'.

S: In other words before the time of Buddhism 'arhant' merely was a very polite term of address for officials and government people like 'His Worship', the worshipful. But during the time of the Buddha it was applied politely to all wandering monks and ascetics. But then in Buddhism itself it gradually achieved a more specialized meaning as someone who had actually spiritually attained, and then last of all someone who had actually attained Nirvana. But when you are reading Buddhist literature, Buddhist texts, especially Pali ones, if you come across expressions like 'the Arhants', you have to be very careful exactly in what sense it is being used. Sometimes it does actually refer to someone highly developed spiritually, and sometimes it's no more than a polite expression for monks and ascetics.

___: What about the Sanskrit Sutras such as the beginning of the Saddharmapundarika?

S: There of course the meaning of Arhant has become debased and it means those who have achieved what the Mahayana considers as a purely individualistic sort of Nirvana which is, one could say, not the true original Nirvana at all. So there Arhant has a different meaning again, as I said a debased sort of meaning.

Devaraja; Which is the Sanskrit and which is the Pali?

S: They're equal in this case.

Devaraja: Arahant and Arhat are interchangeable.

[Spellchecker's note: For consistency the Sanskrit long-stem form "arhant" is used throughout these transcriptions. The short-stem Sanskrit form is arhat, and the equivalent Pali forms are arahant and arahat. All four forms sound very similiar since the "ar" is always pronounced as in "arrow", never as in "hard".]

S: Yes. There's also Rahat in Pali but that isn't very often used.

"It is interpreted scholastically as meaning one who, by virtue of his supreme attainment, is worthy of the respectful offerings of the whole world. There are several stock [95] descriptions of such beings. In the Pali Scriptures they are frequently represented as declaring, upon attainment: 'Destroyed is (re-)birth; lived is the Higher Life; done is what had to be done; after this present life there is [for me] no beyond.' The Large Prajnaparamita Sutra, probably following Sarvastivadin sources exclaims of a gathering of them: 'Their outflows dried up, undefiled, fully controlled, quite freed in their hearts, well freed and wise, thoroughbreds, great Serpents...'"

S: That's nagas. That's rather interesting. You get a slightly mythological description. More like dragons. Strange mysterious beings. You can't sort of fully understand. It's rather different from the other rather sort of psychological and rational descriptions. They appear to other people like sort of mysterious mythological entities, like dragons or serpents, because there's something mysterious about them, something that can't quite be fathomed. They are living in a different sort of element, a different sort of world.

"their work done, their task accomplished, with the fetters that bout them to becoming extinguished, their hearts well freed by right understanding. in perfect control of their whole minds.' In later Hinayana, as well as earlier Mahayana literature, the Arhant is represented as having gained Nirvana for himself alone; in the latter he therefore stands for spiritual individualism.

A srotapanna or 'Stream-Entrant' occupies a position mid-way between the average man and the Arhant, at the point of intersection between the vicious circle of mundane existence and the spirals of the Transcendental Path. Having died to the grosser aspects of worldly life he is now reborn into the spiritual family of the Buddha."

S: That is spiritual in the highest sense, in the sense of transcendental.

"He is no longer liable to be reborn in the three lowest spheres of sentient existence, that is to say the world of animals, of revenants, or of tormented spirits. Hence-forward, he is incapable

of relapse; though further progress may be delayed, the attainment of Nirvana within not more than seven human or heavenly births is assured. At its own much higher level Entering the Stream corresponds to the psychological phenomenon of religious conversion. It marks not only the beginning of the end of mundane existence, but a transvaluation of values more radical than any envisaged by Nietzsche. Consequently the texts are loud in its praises. Says the Dhammapada verse 178: 'Better is the fruit of Entering the Stream than sole sovereignty over the earth, than going to heaven, than rule supreme over the entire universe.' This decisive and far-reaching re-orientation, this spiritual revolution, takes place upon the initial flashing forth of transcendental insight into the true nature of existence, upon the first overwhelming glimpse of Nirvana. Thus it coincides with the eighth positive nidana, that of Knowledge and Vision of Things As They Are,"

S: That's as far as we got yesterday you remember.

"as well as an Axial Vision (samyak-drsti), the first step of the transcendental - as distinct from the mundane-Eightfold Path. For this reason the Path of Stream-Entry (srotapatti-marga) is also known as the Path of Seeing (dasana-marga)."

S: So it becomes quite clear from this that what one should be sort of immediately aiming at is Stream Entry. In other words to [96] get to the point in one's spiritual life where even though one still feels some pull from the samsara, the Wheel of Life, it is not really strong enough to pull you right back into it. There's a sort of midway point as I've explained in one or two lectures, where the pull of the unconditioned, of the higher evolution, starts becoming stronger than the pull of the conditioned or the lower evolution, and once you've passed that point, which is of course the Point of No Return, then you Enter the Stream, and progress after that is not automatic but is certainly assured. But you really have to struggle to get up to that point. Until you've reached that point you can be pulled back and sucked into the whirlpool at any time. Even meditation in the ordinary sense is not enough. There must be actually insight and understanding in the higher spiritual sense too. It's only then that you begin to pass that point and you begin to feel a stronger pull from the higher evolution than you do from the lower evolution.

Vajradaka: Would you say that being open for that kind of insight is one of the main ways of allowing that insight to come, just being open to the possibility of it, as well as practising one's sort of ethical and meditation proper?

S: Well you have also to develop it.

Vajradaka: What, in the sense of refining one's intellect.

S: Refining one's intellect. Not only that, it's not only being receptive and open to it, but - what shall I say? - as it were looking for it, but not looking for it as it were in any particular direction or any particular way. It's more like a sort of active holding yourself open to, not a passive holding yourself open to, and that probably sounds contradictory.

It also involves exertion. Not intellectual exertion in the ordinary way but contemplation with one's meditative consciousness, sort of as it were searching for reality, trying to see the truth, trying to understand in that higher sense; not a thinking about but of actually seeing.

___: It's something like using your will not to will.

S: You could say that, but it goes even beyond will because it is seeing, it's a vision, though of course an intellectual vision as it were. So when this takes place or begins to take place, insight, the higher spiritual insight, starts developing. When that becomes sufficiently strong to start breaking the fetters which we shall be coming on to, then you enter the stream and from that moment onwards the pull of the higher evolution is stronger than the pull of the lower evolution. You can't slip back after that. You become irreversible. It's like there's a tremendous struggle to get to the bank of the river, to get through all the jungles, but eventually you manage, but once you plunge into the stream then the force of the current carries you. It's only a matter of time after that. But until you actually get to the bank and jump into the river, the dangers are that you will be sidetracked indefinitely and never find the stream.

[End of side one side two]

So even though you're doing very well in meditation etc., etc., and seem to be making good progress, if you haven't actually developed that insight and entered the stream you can fall back at any time. Not literally any sort of period of five minutes but you can never be sure that you will not in fact fall back if circumstances changes or your own attitude changes and so on. But after you've entered the stream in that sense you can't change, you can't slip back, you can never be sucked in again. You will still have to struggle quite a bit but you won't ever slip [97] back. So this is why Stream Entry is a very important experience, a real turning point. And once you start giving more weight to the things of the higher evolution and less weight to the things of the lower evolution, well obviously your whole life is going to change, hence the radical transvaluation. You will see things in a quite different light, you will start living for the sake of the higher evolution rather than for the sake of the lower evolution, and things that mattered quite a bit before won't matter very much afterwards and vice-versa.

"But tremendous though the impact of this experience is, for it represents the first triumphant irruption of the transcendental order into a particular psycho-physical continuum, and shaking though it does the individuality almost to its foundations, the irruption is not a taking of complete possession, the shaking is not a demolition of the entire superstructure. To accomplish this is the work of the stage intermediate between that of the Stream-Entrant and the Arhant which, on account of the extreme difficulty with which it is traversed, is divided, as will be seen below, into various sub-stages. It is known as the Path of Practice or Path of Development."

S: Also I sometimes call it Path of Transformation.

"(bhavana-marga). What is developed is of course the whole individuality. not merely in its sublimest heights, as in the Path of Seeing, but also in its murkiest depths. The term is perhaps best translated as Path of Transformation. Since bhavana is widely used in the sense of meditation there is the implication that the transformation is to be effected principally by this means. It coincides with the last four positive nidanas and with the transcendental Eightfold Path from Axial Emotion (samyak-samkalpa), the second member, to Axial Absorption (samyak-samadhi). the eighth, the latter here representing not merely 'right concentration', as in the mundane Eightfold Path, but the state of purity and pellucidity consequent upon the complete saturation of the entire psychic contents with the light of

transcendental realization."

S: So here we come back to the quite familiar distinction between the Path of Seeing and the Path of Transformation, and this is really very important. In the Path of Seeing you get your first real glimpse of the truth. You really see where it's at as it were, and where you are at, and what you've got to do, and you really sort of set your sights on the higher evolution, and you really orient yourself in that direction. You've no further doubts. You don't really feel the pull of the lower evolution so strongly after all. You know what you have to do, you know what you have to accomplish.

So having seen all that you've got to work on it. So the Path of Transformation represents the progressive transformation of your whole being in the light of that initial vision or initial insight. You work over your whole being, or work upon your whole being on every level and in all its aspects until it's thoroughly and completely transformed in accordance with that initial vision, and then that is what we call the Perfect Samadhi, or Nirvana or Enlightenment. So this is what one gets thoroughly and clearly into view, and when you have the real insight and therefore the path of seeing, it's only then that the real process of transformation starts. Before that it's just sort of tinkering about with things and making an improvement here and improvement there, but no real radical transformation. So therefore what you've got to do first is to work up to that point where the clear insight occurs, where one does get a definite glimpse of things as they really are, and then work upon one's whole nature until [98] everything is brought into line with that and there is no inconsistency in one's being. One's whole being is organically in harmony with one's own highest insight.

"The bhavana-marga is subdivided into the stages of sakrdagamin (Pali sakadagamin), or 'Once-Returner', the anagamin or 'Non-Returner' and the Arhant. By including the Stream Entrant, and combining this subdivision with other principles of classification - such as temperament, the number of fetters destroyed and the number of rebirths remaining to be undergone - the Hinayana arrived at a total of seven, or eight, or nine arya-pudgalas (Pali ariya-puggalas) or Holy Persons who, from different points of view, collectively make up the arya-sangha or Assembly of the Elect.

The seven Holy Persons are:

(i) and (ii). The Sraddhanusarin or 'Faith-Follower' and the dharmamanusarin or 'Doctrine-Follower'. This distinction calls attention to the vital role temperament plays in the religious life. According to some authorities differences of temperament exist even in the Buddhas, Who respectively exhibit a predominance of knowledge, or love, or activity. This would seem to indicate that such differences are innate, hence not to be ignored by any truly practical scheme of spiritual self-culture. The Faith-Follower, as the name itself indicates, is one of predominantly devotional temperament. Emotions of love, worship, admiration and surrender are apt to well up in him uncontrollably, and he is highly susceptible to suggestions of religious exaltation in the surrounding atmosphere. In the spiritual life of such a person the Guru occupies an absolutely central place. Scriptures and studies count for nothing. Drawn only by the grace of the Guru, and solely out of faith in him, a person of this type takes up the systematic practice of mindfulness, or any other spiritual exercise, without developing at the same time. or even caring to develop, an intellectual appreciation of the Doctrine."

S: I have drawn here a rather as it were extreme example of the Faith-follower. You very rarely find them in this sort of chemically pure form, usually a little mixed, but sometimes

you do.

Lokamitra: On an old seminar Devamitra asked you a question in which you said something like there are no faith-followers or doctrine followers, it's a false distinction. Maybe you didn't say it quite like that.

S: We'll go into that. This is relating it all to the Five Spiritual Faculties. Yes, let's finish the para and the next one and then we'll go into that.

"Provided the Guru in whom he has taken refuge is himself enlightened, a Faith-Follower will make good progress; otherwise he may become emotionally unbalanced, or a fanatic, or even a religious hysteric.

The Doctrine-Follower typifies the predominantly intellectual approach. He takes up the practice of the whole body of spiritual exercises after an extensive and painstaking course of scriptural study. Relying on the Guru much less than the Faith-Follower does, or even not at all, he abides by the Buddha's dying injunction that His disciples should be 'islands unto themselves; refuges unto themselves', and makes his own understanding of the sacred tradition his guide to the attainment of Nirvana. Though in no danger of emotional extravagance, the Doctrine-Follower, unless upheld by an exceptionally strong desire for Enlightenment, [99] may sink into sterile scholasticism or even scepticism; misled by his learning, he may also be tempted to deviate from the norm of doctrinal orthodoxy. A Doctrine-Follower who succeeds in avoiding the pitfalls peculiar to his type. however, is capable of making to the elucidation and development of the Doctrine contributions of profound and far-reaching significance."

S: First of all the first question that arises is do you recognize the types? Do you think that they actually exist or is it just something that we find in the Buddhist tradition?

___: They definitely exist but whether they change I don't know.

S: Leave that aside for the time being, but do we actually encounter at least these two types among the people that say come into the Movement and that we have contact with? - Faith-followers and the Doctrine-followers? Even though they may not be so chemically pure as I've described them here. you definitely agree with that? [Murmurs of agreement]. So it seems to be a sort of fact that we have to start with. That there are differences of approach at least to begin with.

Now this brings us to something that Lokamitra brought up which is really the teaching of the Five Spiritual Faculties. The faculties must be balanced. That faith must be balanced with wisdom and meditation must be balanced with energetic action and so on. So how does that connect, how does that tie in, and the answer seems to be that whatever one's initial approach may be and though for quite a while one may follow that, as one progresses in the spiritual life the tendency should be of balance to be achieved.

Lokamitra: In 'Crossing the Stream' I can't remember how you explained it but you talk about Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani, and you say that if one is inclined towards the emotional, towards faith, then one chooses Avalokiteshvara, and through taking this practice one develops wisdom and spiritual power but I can't remember how...

S: Ah, I don't think I went into it in detail but after all these are all Bodhisattvas, so they've presumably transcended distinctions of that sort. They are Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakaya. There's no question of one specializing in compassion literally but is rather weak on wisdom, and say that is Avalokiteshvara; and Manjushri being really good where wisdom is concerned but being a bit weak as regards compassion - that is inconceivable. But it's as though in the case of Avalokiteshvara the compassion aspect is brought to the forefront. In the case of Manjushri the wisdom aspect is brought to the forefront. We can see them only as it were from the front, but the other aspects are there. We are not concerned with those. And traditionally Avalokiteshvara represents the compassion aspect more prominently, Manjushri the wisdom aspect and so on.

So you start off really taking Avalokiteshvara in a one sided sort of way. You don't really experience him as a Bodhisattva, but as an embodiment of compassion, sort of leaving aside wisdom. But as you progress and as you become more compassionate, you begin to see well you can't really separate compassion from wisdom. You can't have a Bodhisattva who's just compassionate. There must be wisdom there too, so you begin to see, as it were, wisdom in Avalokiteshvara, and the same with Manjushri as regards compassion. It's only due to tradition that one embodies a particular aspect predominantly, but if you take say Avalokiteshvara or Manjushri as an actual Bodhisattva how can they possibly be one sided? But you could also say that all the [100] Bodhisattvas collectively make up one Bodhisattva of many facets or one Buddha of many facets, but each facet is at the same time an individual Bodhisattva or individual Buddha.

Vangisa: The Heart Sutra is expounded by Avalokiteshvara.

S: Right, yes.

Lokamitra: You explained that you (equate) them with thought, will and emotion and through concentrating on one which appealed to you or which maybe you're more of that type, then you drew out the other two.

S: Yes, you realize that you can't really separate them. You think you can at first, you think you can preoccupy yourself with emotion in the true sense and leave aside intellect and understanding, but in the end you find that you can't do that. That to develop your emotion you have to really develop your thought too, and vice-versa. So if you really try and develop one sooner or later it brings in the others, so you start off by as it were worshipping Avalokiteshvara, as you think, but in the end you find you're worshipping Manjushri too.

Lokamitra: There's a wisdom aspect to Avalokiteshvara.

S: Right, yes, but it isn't just the Buddha of compassion. You may start off with him like that or even feeling like that. Fair enough, it's a start, but eventually you find that there must be the wisdom aspect for him to be a Bodhisattva at all.

Lokamitra: A skilful means.

S: Yes.

Vangisa: In fact our entire practice in the Movement is carefully designed to make sure that

you never do forget (there are other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?) In the Puja and of course the mantras at the end. As all nine mantras to a greater or lesser extent influence you or affect you, you are at least aware...

S: Of many different aspects.

Vangisa: Of many different aspects.

S: By all means sort of start off concentrating on one or the other - you can't do otherwise. You have to take you as you are to begin with and it does seem that some are definitely more devotional and others are definitely more as it were intellectual in approach. You can see this at least to a great extent. But as each person progresses he has to become less and less one-sided. Though at the same time it does seem that at least as regards mode of expression, even if not inner realization, an emphasis on this side or that side persists even up to Buddhahood itself. It's as though just as if you were born originally with a good physique, well as a Buddha you'll be a Buddha with a good physique or you may be a thin weedy Buddha, though still a Buddha! Or a big fat Buddha, though still a Buddha. In the same way you retain to some extent at least your sort of psychological physiognomy, your psychological physique, and you may be at least in manner though not in inner realization, be more sort of devotional or more sort of intellectual, as it were.

Lokamitra: An image which has occurred to me is that say one has Avalokiteshvara as a practice, that gradually as one develops it sort of moves to the centre of the mandala almost but it's still Avalokiteshvara.

S: The same with Tara. Green Tara is a Bodhisattva with a [101] particular position as it were in the mandala and she is the Bodhisattva connected with Amoghasiddhi, but when she moves to the centre and takes on the white colour which indicates centrality, she just becomes the embodiment of all the Buddhas and all the Bodhisattvas, and no more compassionate than she is anything else. She's everything equally.

So one has to develop one's own particular line surely. If you are devotionally inclined give full vent to your devotional feelings.

Aryamitra: That's the sort of driving force.

S: Right, but at the same time try to develop the complement too, and not be one-sided. But no doubt at least an apparent imbalance would in most cases be observable even after one's Enlightenment, because you are working through not only the physical body but even the sort of character type originally established, and even though you're not internally bound by that or conditioned by that, it is something that has been laid down, which is sort of set and through which now you have to function. It's as though you carry with you your original character structure, apart from actual sort of problems and difficulties of that sort, right up to the time of Enlightenment, and then are functioning through that. So even after your Enlightenment it's as though Vangisa is still recognizably Vangisa and Lokamitra is still recognizably Lokamitra, with all their endearing little peculiarities! [Laughter] There are no problems, there are no hang-ups, but they're not merged in one sort of impersonal figure so that you can no longer recognize them. They're not only physically still different but even psychologically, even though both are Enlightened. You see what I mean.

Vangisa: There's one point and that is before reaching the state of Enlightenment this difference is very discernible, not only with one's friends but with other people to whom one is trying to impart something. You get somebody of the same type as yourself it's all right, With the other type really all you've got to offer them is the same thing. Now I've got one very strong intellectual in my group and he may ask me a question and I may answer the question but his comprehension of the question leads him on to intellectual analysis and so on which leaves me standing. He's probably right [Vangisa Laughs] It's difficult to...

S: What do you do? You just remain silent and look very wise! [Laughter]

Vangisa: This is about all one can do.

S: Or cast up your eyes ecstatically! [Laughter]

Vangisa: I'm really speaking in general about this kind of communication, because in fact obviously you're communicating better with people in the same group, the same category as yourself, or are you?

S: More easily. I think if you can get through to someone of a different type you can have a very good communication indeed, perhaps all the better for the difference between you, but it's more difficult surely and sometimes you don't succeed at all. I was going to say that as it were after Enlightenment far from individuality being obliterated, you are more individual than ever. That Vangisa is more Vangisa than ever and Lokamitra more Lokamitra than ever. So in a way though both are Enlightened, they are more different as individuals than they were before. There's a sort of extraordinary paradox here. Because you've become, by virtue of your Enlightenment, more individual than ever but sort of transcendently so. So you don't become all [102] vague and featureless. I know this having observed different people that I've been in contact with who were believed to be Enlightened or very nearly so and they are just very very individual as, as it were, though converging in one sense, becoming more and more Enlightened, they seem to diverge and become more and more themselves at the same time. So one is absolutely distinct from another in a quite extraordinary way. They're not sort of merged in some sort of featureless identity or some sort of common denominator of an Enlightened type as it were, no, not at all. Just the opposite it seems. That's something to be quite clear about, but this is why perhaps it's said earlier on that according to our tradition and to the effect that even Buddhas are still recognizably of a particular type, and our Buddha, that is Gautama the Buddha is traditionally said to have been of the intellectual type, whereas the next Buddha, Maitreya, is going to be of the emotional or devotional type as his name indicates.

Vangisa: But on the other hand isn't he associated with Amitabha - Sakyamuni?

S: Yes. Associated with Avalokiteshvara too. Anyway let's go on.

"According to some sources not all sraddhanusarins and dharmanusarins are members of the arya-sangha, but only those who have attained to the Path of Stream-Entry (srotapanna-marga). The discrepancy is due to the fact that between the average man and the Stream-Entrant there is the 'lightning-like transitional stage' of the gotrabhu, literally 'one who has entered the lineage of [the aryas]'. A gotrabhu in this sense (there are higher senses) is sometimes reckoned as an arya, sometimes as an anarya. It seems agreed, though, that

whether aryas or not, all such gotrabhus are either Faith-Followers or Doctrine-Followers."

S: We won't go into that. That is a bit of detail that doesn't really concern us very much at the moment.

"Such differences of religious temperament are well known to all students of comparative religion. In Hinduism a distinction is made between the bhakta or devotee, who follows the Path of Devotion (bhakti-marga), and the jnanin or knower, who follows the Path of Knowledge (jnana-marga). A similar difference can be traced between the intellectual mysticism of Eckhart and the devotional mysticism of St. Teresa of Avila - to take no more extreme examples. In Theravada terminology the sraddhanusarin is said to follow the Way of Contemplative Insight (vipassana-dhura) and the dharmanusarin the Way of Study (ganthadhura). Drawing on the Tibetan tradition it may be said that Milarepa provides a good example of the first. Tsongkhapa of the second. Types in whom devotion and understanding are almost, if not quite, perfectly balanced do of course exist; but when present at the beginning difference of temperament may persist, as we shall see, up to the very farthest reaches of the Transcendental Path."

[(short) Break in recording]

S: ... schools of Tibetan Buddhism and though regarded as a manifestation of Manjushri as a Bodhisattva and as Enlightened, he was apparently very much a man of study and teaching and books and literature. That was very much his approach and that is reflected very much in the whole Gelugpa school approach. Whereas Milarepa had great faith in his teacher and () things and wanted to purify himself, practised meditation and asceticism and didn't study books as far [103] as we know at all, but sang songs after his Enlightenment. So within the context of Tibetan Buddhism, these two figures - Tsongkhapa and Milarepa - exemplify very well indeed the dharmanusarin - Tsongkhapa, and the sraddhanusarin - that is Milarepa.

"(iii) and (iv). The sraddhadhimukta (Pali saddhaivimutta) or 'Faith-Liberated One' and the drstiprapta (Pali ditthippatta) or 'Vision-Attained One'. These are respectively the designations of the Faith-Follower at all the remaining stages of the Transcendental Path and of the Doctrine-Follower at all of them save the last one."

S: These are rather technical distinctions. We won't go into those. Just note them and pass on. We come to something a bit more important now.

"(v). The kayasaksin (Pali Kayasakkhi) or 'Body-Witness'. This would seem to be the name of an independent type of Holy Person distinct from both the Faith-Follower and the Doctrine-Follower, though more closely allied to the latter, for according to the texts such a one receives the same designation at all stages of his career. It corresponds to what may be called the psychic type."

S: The psychically sensitive type that is. The person who picks up impressions on other levels as it were, on other planes, rather more easily than average people do.

"The Body-Witness is the yogin par excellence. All the sources, canonical and extra-canonical, Theravadin and Sarvastivadin, speak of him as practising a set of concentrations known as the eight vimoksas (Pali vimokkhas) or 'Releases' from

thought-constructions. As one has not met, nor even heard of, anyone with a personal experience of these states,"

S: That's rather odd. They seem to have dropped out of Buddhist tradition altogether. I could never find anybody who'd actually practised these vimokshas, whether among Theravadins or Tibetans or any other kind of Buddhists.

Devaraja: Can you give any indication as to what they are?

S: We do come to that.

"the elucidation of the cryptic formulas with which the Scriptures are content to describe them is a matter of some difficulty. Nalinaksha Dutt, following the Abhidharmakosa-vyakhya, says of the first four: 'In the first Release, a meditator introspects his own body, its colour and content as also those of others and realizes only that the colour and other characteristics of his own body is undesirable (asubha) and substanceless (sunna). He controls his visual perception and therefore he does not perceive the colour of his body and regards it as unattractive (amanojnam). In the second Release, the meditator thinks no longer of his own body but his attention is still diverted to other's body and its characteristics, internal and external, which he then tries to regard as undesirable (asubha) and substanceless (sunna). In the third Release, the meditator derives a feeling of satisfaction, which pervades his whole body on account of his success in removing his mental obsessions caused by his previous notions about his own and other's body.'"

S: By the way body is kaya. It's not just physical body, it's the psycho-physical complex.

[104]

"In the fourth Release, the meditator frees his mind from the notion of material objects (rupa) and their repercussive nature (patigha) and dismisses from his mind the sense of distinction, which exists among beings and objects, and regards the world as just infinite space free from all obstructions.' The remaining four vimokshas are identical with the four formless dhyanas (see p. 118). The Body-Witness is so designated because he not only experiences personally (kayika) ever higher levels of concentration, but with the detachment of a mere observer (saksin) realizes their true nature. Though perhaps extinct as an independent practice, the eight vimokshas would seem to have been incorporated into the Vajrayana tradition; the Thai 'Samma-Araham' method of meditation may also owe something to their influence."

S: That's a rather complicated subject. We can't go into that now. I do have some texts of the Samma-Araham. It seems to have died out recently but it was quite popular among some of my friends about fifteen, twenty years ago.

"According to the canonical definitions of these terms the Faith-Follower is one who, at the beginning of his spiritual career, being filled with resolution, considers the aggregates as impermanent (anitya); similarly, the Doctrine-Follower, filled with wisdom, considers them as insubstantial (anatma). The Body-Witness is one who, filled with tranquillity, considers them as painful (duhkha). By making the painfulness, rather than the impermanence, of conditioned things his object, a Faith-Follower who has attained the Path of Stream-Entry (srotapattamarga) may as it were change his type and become a Body-Witness.

(vi) and (vii). Prajnavimukta (Pali pannsvimutya) or 'Wisdom-Liberated One' and ubhayatobhagavimukta (Pali ubhatobhagavimutta) or 'Doubly-Liberated One'. Both these types are Arhants. The distinction between them is based not on any difference in the actual content of their realization but in the mode of its attainment. A Doctrine-Follower on becoming an Arhant is known as a Wisdom-Liberated One, while the Faith-Follower and the Body-Witness alike receive the designation of Doubly-Liberated One. Despite the misunderstandings at present current in some parts of the Buddhist world, the former does not attain Arhantship by means of wisdom (prajna) alone; for to the development of wisdom itself, in the sense of transcendental insight into the true nature of existence, concentration (samadhi) is accessory. In the spiritual life of the Doctrine-Follower, the one does not exclude, but only predominates over, the other. Speaking in terms of the eight dhyanas it is therefore said that such a one attains Nirvana by means of wisdom having experienced the four lower, but not the four higher, of these superconscious states. Similarly the predominantly devotional and contemplative career of the other types does not altogether exclude wisdom. Nirvana is simultaneously a state of perfect knowledge and absolute mental purity. What the distinction between the two types of Arhant on the whole means is that whereas one type perfects first wisdom and then concentration, the other proceeds in the reverse order. The traditional Theravadin distinction between cetovimutti, emancipation of mind, and pannavimutti, emancipation of wisdom, refers not so much to two mutually exclusive attainments as to this difference of procedure. Consequently the Buddha is time and again represented in the Scriptures as saying that 'a monk, after destroying the biases, himself realizes, in this life, through his higher attainments, emancipation of both mind and wisdom'."

[105]

S: What this whole discussion of the different kinds of aryas serves to make clear is there is a great richness of types, as it were. That they are all either Enlightened or approximately Enlightened. They've all become real individuals. They are all either on the path or have attained the goal, but there's quite a variety amongst them. There's quite a richness of individual types. They are not all sort of obliterated in a sort of featureless unity. This is what seems to come out quite strongly from this discussion. We need not be too over concerned with details, but just try to realize that. That there they all are, all these members of the arya sangha, the Assembly of the Elect, but they're still recognizably quite different and quite individual.

"Nevertheless the fact that perfect knowledge necessarily involves absolute mental purity, but not vice versa, is explicitly recognized at least by the Sarvastivadins. Consequently they recognize what is termed samayavimutti, temporary emancipation, that is to say the possibility, in the case of an Arhant who had been a Faith-Follower, of a fall from Arhantship if after perfecting concentration he did not make a special effort to perfect wisdom.⁴ Though the subject has been much debated,⁵ whether in the interval between perfecting concentration and perfecting wisdom one can properly be called an Arhant, or not - which is all the controversy really amounts to - would seem to be largely a matter of definition."

S: Here we see scholasticism beginning to creep in. We are concerned with rather later stages in the development of the Hinayana. So one need not linger too much over that. All right let's just see now how much further we've got to go. We are half way through, so I suggest we stop for a quick break and then go on.

[Break]

All right go on to the eight Holy Persons. We are getting just a wee bit scholastic here so let's not be bogged down by too much of detail but just try and appreciate the general principles involved.

"The eight Holy Persons are:

(i) and (ii). The Stream-Entrant counted twice over, as two persons, in respect of his attainment of the Path of Stream Entry (srotapatti-marga) and of the Fruit of that path (srotapatti-phala). By marga, according to the Abhidharma, is meant - both here and in the case of the remaining Holy Persons - the moment of entering upon one or another of the stages of the Transcendental Path, while by phala is meant those moments of consciousness which follow immediately after the moment of entry and which many, under certain conditions, go on repeating themselves an indefinite number of times. Thus the former represents the actual process of breaking through from the mundane into the transcendental, and the latter the continuing resultant state of having broken through. At what level the breakthrough takes place depends on how many of the dasa-samyojana or 'ten fetters' of mundane existence one is able to break."

S: You see this distinction of 'marga' and 'phala' on the transcendental path, as we saw yesterday, is analogous to the distinction between karma and karma-phala, or karma and karma vipaka on the Wheel of Life. Or analogous to the distinction between consciousness volition on the one hand and being on the other.

"In the case of the Stream-Entrant, besides being endowed [106] with unshakeable faith in the Three Jewels, perfect observance of the Five Precepts, and other spiritual qualities, he is required, in order to reach his own stage of the Transcendental Path, to break the first, second and third of them."

S: Those are the fetters

"These are sakkaya-drsti (Pali sakkaya-ditthi) or 'personality-view', vicikitsa (Pali vicikiccha) or doubt, and silavrata-paramarsa (Pali silabbata-paramasa) or 'dependence on morality and observances'. All of them represent various aspects not of greed or aversion but of spiritual blindness or ignorance. This is because the Path of Stream-Entry is also the Path of Seeing, the attainment of which depends less on the eradication of unhealthy emotions than on the removal of the intellectual obstacles to clear vision.

Together they embody the irreducible minimum of wrong ideology of which an average man must rid himself before he can become one of the Elect."

S: The unhealthy emotions are removed by the experience of the higher dhyana states where you experience very positive emotional states of love, joy, peace and so on. But the intellectual obstacles are removed only by clear vision or insight and that's what happens now. And this is why the three fetters which the Stream Entrant has to break, are of a predominantly intellectual character as it were. The different forms of micchaditthi you could say.

Aryamitra: So the actual experience of the positive emotions works as breaking negative aspects or is it just the negative ones aren't there when the positive ones are there.

S: No, the negative ones aren't there when the positive ones are there. And you can lapse from positive emotion to negative emotion just on the mundane level.

Aryamitra: Did that come from just seeing emotions as just aspects of the same energy or force - just emotional energy which can be sort of positive or negative?

S: Well yes it certainly includes that. If you see within your own experience that it's the same energy. That negative can become positive, positive can become negative, and not two distinct things. All right why not be positive, you can become positive? It's only a question of giving the energy the right sort of twist and you're positive instead of negative.

Lokamitra: You see it in terms of gross and refined.

S: Right yes. And sometimes you can see that extreme suffering is in fact quite near to, almost next door to, a state of extreme happiness or bliss. Sometimes it's as though there's a hair breadth between the two. The extreme suffering and the extreme enjoyment.

[End of tape six tape seven]

There's heightened energy there in both cases.

Devaraja: It's very interesting because Trungpa was talking about the sort of negative approach to these things as opposed to it's more that the negativity and the positivity is more concerned with the approach to, say states of suffering or states of negative emotion, and in that he was saying something to the [107] effect that if you can approach say your negative emotion positively and really comprehend it and experience and understand it, then it ceases to be something that is unpleasant and rather ...

S: That is true but you have at the same time to see that the negative is negative, at least as regard to the form the energy takes, and not use that sort of approach as a justification for continuing to indulge in the negativity as such. There is that danger.

Devaraja: Yes, he quite strongly made the point that one shouldn't do that.

Vangisa: An observance and acceptance sometimes tends to transform it.

S: It's more like recognition.

Vangisa: Recognition that it's a negative emotion and think why is this upsetting me that I'm experiencing it as negative emotion, so all right so it's upsetting me, so I experience it as negative emotion and that seems to transform it into something positive. You feel as a result of completely accepting either one of them, whichever it happens to be. I suppose you can't do that without the sufficient level of mindfulness necessary to control the...

S: And when you recognize your negative emotions, you also take responsibility for them. They are yours. They're not just sort of floating around.

Lokamitra: You still gain. I know I've gained a lot. If I'm in a bad state of mind or not good and I try and just accept it and quickly dispose of it, but it just doesn't work. And again one of

Trungpa's sayings - that things aren't better than they seem, they're worse!

S: Somebody else said that.

Lokamitra: I said it at the seminar too I think.

S: No, I've read it somewhere in a book. It's some classic source.

Lokamitra: I think he might have quoted it actually.

S: I'm just trying to think where that might have been.

Abhaya: Things have to get worse before they get better.

S: Not even that. Things aren't as bad as you think, they are worse. [Laughter]

Aryamitra: It's trying to emphasize that one must experience it.

Abhaya: [laughing] What a punch-line! [Laughter] [Pause]

S: All right, let's go on. So therefore the obstacles that one who wishes to be a Stream Entrant has to break through are as it were intellectual obstacles. His emotional positivity is there. He's all right on that level, but that is not enough to ensure Stream Entry. There's still deep rooted micchaditthis, wrong attitudes, convictions, a misunderstanding in various forms. That has to be overcome and broken through before he can become a Stream Entrant. There has to be insight arising dispelling those false views. What are those false views? That's what now we'll see.

Lokamitra: I thought the emotional ones came later. They were [108] four and five I thought, of the...

S: Ah that's permanent transformation, but at least he's got into a temporary positive emotional state which can be lost. So you quickly take advantage of that to develop the insight. Once the insight is developed, you can work on a permanent transformation of the emotions.

Abhaya: Does it mean that the insight comes before say achieving these dhyana state on the...

S: No, generally [voices speaking at once] ... it's as though when you've got a positive emotional state, you are sort of happy and undistracted, and then can put all your energies into the development of the insight. But that is only temporary, that state of emotional positivity, prior to the development of insight. But once insight has been achieved you can use that to work upon your emotions and get yourself into a permanently positive emotional state. Prior to insight emotional positiveness however great can be lost at any time. It can change sometimes in a matter of seconds. You can be really in a grand blissful wonderful happy state but it can be changed completely so quickly. But after insight has been developed, then you can start building up a permanent positive emotional state.

___: What's the distinction between insight and wisdom?

S: Wisdom generally is a more developed insight.

Aryamitra: How would you define insight in the way you are using it now?

S: Well seeing things as they really are, whether as regards oneself, one's situation and even ultimate things. Just not being deluded, not blinded. Seeing the situation completely objectively as it were, which is quite rare.

Vangisa: In your fourfold division of the objects of mindfulness - nature, self, others and of reality, I think is the way you put it, isn't it?

S: Right.

Vangisa: Is this insight?

S: Yes, that would be development of insight.

Lokamitra: The first of the fetters, the...

S: Sakayadrsti.

Lokamitra: That's the personality view. It seems more and more as I come across it to be an emotional thing or certainly not something that can be sort of, well I suppose, intellectual, but I suppose insight has to be solved by...

S: Well its roots are deep down in the unconscious, as it were. You have to really sort of penetrate to those depths and see what is really happening.

Lokamitra: It's again right resolution. One can see intellectually that maybe there's an example of the truth of that doctrine [obscured by others talking about where to find more cups for tea!]

S: Let's pause for a few minutes then. [Tea Break, although some discussion continues but is obscured often by cup and spoon noises]

S: [in response to discussion with Vangisa during tea break] Yes you need the tranquillity as a basis for the development of the [109] insight, otherwise you're too distracted. Even though the tranquillity is temporary, at least for the time being you've got the opportunity for developing the insight. Then once you develop the insight well that's permanent. You don't lose that even if the emotional state becomes a bit disturbed. With the insight you can gradually start work on the path of transformation and start permanently changing one's emotional state, until you achieve a state of permanent tranquillity along with the insight.

Devaraja: It's almost like a transition from a state of say emotional positivity to a state of emotional positivity stemming from insight. It's almost like a movement from an animal realm into a human realm.

Aryamitra; You mean in the sense of the first positivity is just a sort of a thing that arises ...

Vangisa: Euphoria.

Aryamitra: Arises and goes, rather than is directed or controlled.

Devaraja: Well it's euphoric. It's without understanding, it's without consciousness.

S: It's almost temperamental.

Devaraja: Yes!

S: Some people have it more than others just by virtue of their sort of inborn temperament.

Lokamitra: Often it's only just the other side but on the same horizontal.

S: Right, yes.

Lokamitra: It's not a higher level.

S: No. It's on the same band at least.

Devaraja: It's a bit like being controlled by one's emotions ...

[Break in tape for the proper tea break!]

S: ... instantly disqualify him from writing anything about it at all! [Laughter]

All right on to the holy persons again.

"Personality-view is of two kinds: one posits the survival, after death of a separate, immortal, unchanging soul or self (atma) eternally distinct from the body; the other, identifying the personality either with the body or the body plus the mind, maintains that at death it perishes. The first is a form of sasvatavada (Pali sassatavada) or eternalism, the second of ucchedavada or annihilationism."

S: Let's go a little into that. Here I've explained simply according to the traditional account, but we need to go really into it a bit more deeply than that. What does sakayadrsti really mean? It's really the view that you are you, and you can't be changed. In fact it's not the view that you can't be changed, it's the view that change is unthinkable. You can't really imagine yourself deep down as any different from what you really are. So you can't really imagine or believe in the possibility of change. This is what sakayadrsti really is. It's really taking yourself as you are now as something given, something absolute, something beyond which you can't get. That I am I, and I can't be changed [110] or even I don't want to be changed. In a way it's a lack of imagination. The inability to conceive oneself as any different from what one actually is, or the unwillingness even to try to do so. In other words the clinging on to yourself as you are now, and resisting the idea of change and development and transformation beyond what you are now, except in a very superficial and peripheral manner. The inability to envisage radical change in you. This is what sakayadrsti really is.

___: Is this at an intellectual level or ...

S: It's your whole basic attitude, intellectually formulated, but it's your whole basic attitude conscious and unconscious. It may reach the point of conscious formulation, it may not. It may even be made explicit in a whole sort of thought out philosophy of life, but the message is the same - I am not to be changed, I can't be changed, I am what I am, and that's the sort of given datum as it were.

Lokamitra: Is it from here that craving is usually taken as the first of the three - craving, hatred and delusion. To me it's always seemed that from this stems...

S: Well this is moha, craving and delusion are usually regarded as stemming from moha, bewilderment or confusion, and this is an aspect of that.

Aryamitra: Is there a religious cult of faith that is solely based on this view? I am what I am?

S: Well in a way any tradition which believes in an unchanging soul or self. The immortality of the soul, in a way. From a Buddhist point of view any change envisaged by such a tradition would be only superficial. Buddhism applies criticism to classical Christianity, at least say in theological form, as theologically formulated during the Middle Ages for instance.

Vangisa: Is there actually a theological statement or definition of the soul?

S: There is in Thomas Aquinas' writing based on Aristotle mainly more than on the Bible. Aristotle wrote a treatise on the soul which was very influential [drowned out by coughing] Christianity drew very largely on that. There's not much about the soul in the Bible.

Devaraja: This is a bit of tangent but I don't think there's a soul really prevalent in Judaism.

S: Well in a way they're ucchedavada because most of them held that with death that was the end. () so that would be ucchedavada, sort of cutting off. But anyway what I'm trying to make clear is that what sakayadrsti substantially is. It's not just a rejection of certain philosophical views about the self for purely theoretical reasons. Sakayadrsti represents that deep seated sort of feeling or conviction or even philosophy, to the effect that one is what one is and that's that, and you can't, and even won't, change. It's that resistance to change, any radical change of what you think of as yourself, and therefore the hanging on to yourself as you are now, resisting change, resisting transformation. That's the fetter of sakayadrsti. So it's obviously there all the time - you resist change and can't even imagine yourself being radically changed. So it refers back to the real conviction, I can change.

___: Is this in effect the same as micchadassana?

S: Yes. All right. On we go.

[111]

"The next fetter, only most approximately rendered as doubt and scepticism, represents not that honest doubt in which, so the poet assures us, 'there lives more faith than half the creeds', but rather a culpable state of uncertainty and indecision; a reluctance, even a refusal. finally to make up one's mind about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and commit oneself - in the Existentialist sense - wholeheartedly to the logical consequences of having taken refuge in them."

S: So it's not just doubt in a purely intellectual sense. It's the unwillingness or reluctance to make up one's mind, in case one has to commit oneself. It's deliberately keeping oneself in a state of wavering and indecision and dilettantism, because one is afraid of commitment. It's more like that. Well enough said. It seems pretty clear doesn't it. [Laughter]

"Dependence on morality and observances, the third fetter, is often mistranslated and misunderstood. Protestantizing English writers of the last century, with the great Ritualist controversy fresh in mind, understood it as belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies. Sila, however, means behaviour. especially ethical behaviour; vrata covers the sacrificial and other observances of the Vedic tradition as well as the more eccentric types of ascetic practice. What this fetter in fact consists of is the wrong belief that any external observance, whether one's own or another's on one's behalf, is in and by itself sufficient for, or even conducive to the attainment of salvation. Not by sila. or even by samadhi, can the Transcendental Path be gained, but only by prajna based upon sila and samadhi."

S: Or to put it perhaps more clearly and more straightforwardly, this fetter consists in the belief that it's enough if the change or the religiosity or the spiritual life is relatively external. And that doesn't just mean external practices and observances but even attitudes which don't go right deep down to the very centre of one's being. It's really more like that. In other words it's an absence of wholeheartedness. You don't sort of do things right from the very depths of your being, you do them on the periphery of your being without being really involved deep down and without doing them right from the heart as it were. This is what it really means. In other words you are just not wholehearted. You are satisfied with something relatively superficial and external. Your commitment doesn't reach right down to the depths of your being. You keep something in reserve. You go through the motions as it were, even go through the motions mentally, but deep down there's something in you that is not doing it, which is not participating.

Lokamitra; I've seen a connection now between the first three fetters which I hadn't really... I'd thought of them as entirely separate before but they seem now to flow on from one to the other.

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: In what sense?

Lokamitra: If you don't have a self view then you have no fear about committing yourself, nothing to hang on to to stop you committing yourself and then if you get rid of that doubt then you can give your whole being to something.

S: Yes, right. Otherwise the doubt is a state in which you can be doing the puja, have all sorts of wonderful devotional feelings and you're meditating, you're concentrated, you think all the right thoughts, you've got the right ideas, but in a way it's all a big act. That you're not deeply and genuinely doing it with the very sort [112] of innermost part of yourself, and that's really what this silavrata-paramarsa is all about.

Vajradaka: Presumably that's quite a deep thing, to overcome that.

S: Oh it is, sure. Well if you've overcome this and the other two then you're a Stream Entrant.

What about the positive counterparts? Try and think of positive counterparts for each of these three fetters, just in one or two words, what would they be?

___: Confidence.

S: Confidence. Which one would that be. But confidence of a rather special kind.

Lokamitra: Well commitment.

S: Commitment, commitment is nearer, yes, commitment. What about the first.

___: Wholeheartedness.

S: Wholeheartedness was the third yes. What about the first?

Vajradaka: View of the constant changing...

___: (interrupting)... Axial vision.

S: Yes, that's putting it technically. It is that.

Vajradaka: Flow and flux, sort of a constant moving.

S: Not just moving but progressive movement, up the spiral isn't it? Openness to that. Willingness to change, readiness to change. Have we got just one word for that?

Lokamitra: Mobility or freedom.

S: Mobility. Perpendicular mobility [Laughs] Self transcendence. We don't have a proper word though do we, but we can get close.

___: The Thesaurus doesn't really have that kind of thing.

S: Anyway you can see we're not just concerned with technicalities of Buddhist philosophy in the past, but with quite basic fundamental issues here and now. It's being oriented beyond one's present self, isn't it. The positive counterpart of the first fetter. A supra-egoistic orientation. [Laughter]

Lokamitra: Maybe the first one has to in a way have some negative implications because of the importance we attach, because everything is centred round the self.

S: Right. Well in a way it's individuation. More extensive than Jung. The higher individuation. Finding a new centre for one's whole being and reorganizing it around that. Anyway enough said. On we go.

"Ritual, in the sense of symbolical, or spiritually significant acts, far from being condemned in Buddhism in fact forms part of the heritage of all schools, not excluding even the Theravada. In the Vajrayana especially it plays an important part. Ceremonies of course are inseparable from organized religious life and though its estimate of their value may be a

comparatively low one Buddhism no more excludes them [113] on principle than does any other religion."

Vangisa: I think actually that in our own movement, our achievement of ritual is far more way out and more advanced in every way than what one normally finds in the tradition of this country. I don't think there is a religious service in England that corresponds to the deep basic feeling and communication and presentation of Puja for instance. I notice this very strongly because a few months ago I went into a church just to sit down for a while because it was raining and I thought I was going to be able to sit there for half an hour in peace and quiet. And after about ten minutes the priest came out and started saying mass, and it was the first time I'd seen such a ceremony for a long long time, and I was quite astonished at how utterly devoid of spiritual content or creative message or anything whatever. It wasn't even as good as a bad poetry reading!

Devaraja: I must say I think that varies from priest to priest because there's a vicar I know, C of E vicar who really does a knockout Holy Communion. [Laughter] There's really a lot of very high spiritual feeling circulating.

Vangisa: The point I'm making is not just that particular event but it did strike me that comparing what is actually going on, what's actually being done, no matter how it is presented, and referring to what I remember of what is its theological significance and so on, with what we are actually doing and trying to do and succeeding in doing to some extent with the puja there is a gulf.

S: Where do you think that difference lies then?

Vangisa: I think it lies in the fact that a conscious spiritual activity is an integral essential part of the puja. One is not relying on accident, miracle or any external boost. Like we are not concerned about theological things like transubstantiation or consubstantiation. What we actually are doing is experiencing a heightened, a very deepened, spiritual awareness between us in a group and communicating this experience. So that something is actually happening. There's a real transubstantiation going on, not just a theological ritual in this kind of sense.

S: Debased sense, yes.

Lokamitra: But it has a spiritual foundation which is...

S: Because it is orthodox Catholic teaching that a miracle does take place whenever mass is performed. I take it everyone is aware of that, that it is a miracle. The miracle of - I have to be very careful here because even theologians trip up don't they - that the miracle which took place at the time of the incarnation of Christ on Earth is repeated every time the mass is performed. The bread and the wine become the flesh and the blood - literally not symbolically - literally. So every time the mass is performed or celebrated that miracle is repeated on the altar, and it is repeated regardless of the worthiness of the priest. This is a quite important point. This was discussed during the Middle Ages and then decided officially that the unworthiness of the priest did not effect the efficacy of the sacrament. The miracle took place even though it was a very immoral priest. This again would tie up what you are saying, that there would be no possibility of that within the framework of our puja.

Vangisa: In fact what we are doing is a working activity. We are actually doing it. So in the sense of a miracle the miracle is really being performed because it is being worked at and the thing is progressive. A puja isn't in the life of anybody who was there an isolated thing, one individual puja. It is part of the [114] spiritual progress and linked to it all the way along.

S: It's because of this sort of miraculous element that the mass can become as it were just magical, in a sort of debased sense of the term. It's just something that you go through certain forms and it automatically happens regardless of your mental attitude. In that sense it becomes mechanical and magical. Whereas with the puja this couldn't possibly happen, it's just not a puja at all, and nothing happens if you don't put the energy and sincerity into it.

Vangisa: And mindfulness.

S: And mindfulness.

Vangisa: Which is an inherent part of it. It's not a puja if it's unmindful.

S: And of course it's when that sort of mechanical magical sort of almost interpretation or at least presentation of the sacrament and especially the mass was very current, that Luther and Protestantism raised it's protests. It was a protest against that, and the restoration or attempted restoration of more inwardness and sincerity of attitude. OK let's go on.

"(iii) and (iv). The sakrdagamin (Pali sakadagamin) or 'Once-Returner'. Whereas the Stream-Entrant is sure to attain Nirvana in not more than seven human and heavenly births, the second type of Holy Person, as his name reveals, will attain it after returning once more only to the world of men. Having broken already the first three fetters, he achieves the Path of Once-Return (sakrdagama-marga) by weakening the fourth and fifth. These are kama-raga or sensuous craving and vyapada or aversion. The fact that at this stage these fetters are merely weakened, not broken, reminds us that we have now left the Path of Seeing and arrived at the Path of Transformation. Guenther's remark on the importance of the distinction are worth quoting in this connection: 'It shows,' he says, 'that it is a fairly simple task to get rid of intellectual fetters.'"

S: Relatively speaking.

"It is easy to accept the findings of science, to use modern examples, to discard the "ghost-in-a-machine" theory of the relation between body and soul, to attend to a problem seriously instead of talking hazily about it and in order to conceal one's ignorance about it, resorting to sophistry and misapplied scepticism, to discard mere ritualism because in all honesty in most cases it has turned into a meaningless formalism; but it is a gigantic task to tame or to sublimate our deep-rooted emotions."

S: That is to say permanently. It temporarily happens quite easily but it can even more easily unhappen. So here one is concerned with radical permanent transformation or sublimation.

"I may believe anything about myself, whether it makes sense or not, but anything that attempts to encroach upon my precious ego will be met with in undisguised hostility. Emotions are not sublimated by recognizing the validity of a proposition or by seeing things by themselves. but only by paying the closest attention to that which is the nature of any

living process, by working hard on ourselves. Hence the emotions are refined by the path of practice"

S: Permanently refined that is.

[115]

"(bhavana-marga). When, therefore. the texts speak of three paths that have to be walked to the end, viz., the Second. Third and Fourth Path, they imply the difficulty of refining our emotional nature."

S: Again permanently refining and transforming, not just a temporary sort of euphoric state. All right on to five and six.

"(v) and (vi). The anagamin or Non-Returner. In his case sensuous craving and aversion are not merely weakened but wholly eradicated. Thus up to and including this stage of the Transcendental Path five fetters in all have been broken. These are the five lower fetters, so called because they bind one to repeated birth in the world of sensuous experience (kama-loka), the lowest of the three into which conditioned existence is stratified. Five fetters only now remain. These are known as the five higher fetters, as through them one is bound to continue existence in the world of pure form (rupa-loka) and the formless world (arupa-loka). Not having broken them the Non-Returner, though exempt from human birth, on death passes to the suddhavaśa (Pali suddhavaśa) or Pure Abodes, a group of celestial sub-planes located at the summit of the world of pure form. They are five in number: the worlds known respectively as the avrha (Pali aviha) or Not-Great(?), the atapa (Pali attapa) or Unscorched, the sudrsa (Pali sudassa) or Clearly-Visible, the sudarsana (Pali sudassi) or Clear-Visioned, and the akanistha (Pali akanittha), Greatest or Highest (?)."

S: The meaning of some of these terms isn't clear, doesn't seem to be known anywhere in the Buddhist world. That's why the query is put afterwards.

"From one or another of these sub-planes the Non-Returner, now a divine being, traverses the remaining stages of the Transcendental Path and attains Nirvana. According to whether this takes place within the first or second half of the celestial life term, with or without exertion, or after he has been in each of the Pure Abodes successively, five sub-types of Non-Returner are distinguished. By enumerating the anagamin as one of the eight Holy Persons and describing him as above, the Hinayana bears witness to the fact that the possibility of postmortem emancipation has been recognized in Buddhism from the earliest times. One has no reason to feel astonished, therefore, if later on similar ideas crop up, albeit within a modified doctrinal framework, in the Nyingmapa and the Jodo Shin Shu traditions."

S: The Jodo Shin Shu is the true Pure Land tradition. This is where the connection between the Pure Land and the Pure Abodes come in. This is what we were talking about yesterday. I think we won't linger over it today. Just pass on.

"(vii) and (viii), The arhant (also arhat) or Worthy One. As this type of Holy Person has been discussed already we now need concern ourselves only with the fetters he must break in order to achieve his exalted station. The five higher fetters are: rupa-raga and arupa-raga, or craving for existence in the world of pure form and in the formless world, mana or conceit, auddhatya (Pali uddhacca), restlessness, and avidya (Pali avijja) or lack of clear understanding of

Reality. From the point of view whence they appear as a duality - a duality that for the Hinayana is final - mundane and transcendental existence, Nirvana and Samsara, are sharply distinguished. The true, the ultimate goal of the spiritual life is not any state of conditioned existence, however sublime, but solely the Unconditioned. However subtle, however 'spiritualized' it may be, the craving for personal immortality, [116] for eternal life in heaven, leads not to emancipation but only to continued rebirth. Here, as invariably in the spiritual life, the good is the enemy of the best. That which for the average man would be an achievement the Elect regard as a failure. Broadly speaking, the first and second of the higher fetters stand for the danger of theism.

By the third fetter is signified not conceit in the ordinary worldly sense, but its spiritual counterpart. The average man is dominated by the awareness of 'I' and 'mine' in its grossest form. But subtler forms persist and linger on up to the very threshold of Enlightenment. The Stream-Entrant is subtly aware of himself as such;"

S: It's a sort of self consciousness in the rather negative sense.

This awareness vanishes upon his becoming a Once-Returner. At each stage of the Transcendental Path there is a conceit which can be eradicated only by the attainment of the next succeeding stage."

S: In a way a very subtle sakaya-drsti you could say.

"Mana is the subtlest conceit of all, that of the Non-Returner, which is destroyed only in the Arhant. According to the Mahayana, however, because he strives only for his own individual emancipation there is present in the Arhant himself a still more subtle self-awareness which he must overcome by having recourse to the highest stage of all, that of the Bodhisattva who aspires to Perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Auddhatya is far from being restlessness in the ordinary physical or mental sense; it is not even the much subtler psychic instability which may occur at the various levels of concentration. Rather it is the last, faintest tremor or vibration of consciousness between the most rarefied heights of the conditioned, on the one hand and the Unconditioned, on the other, before it achieves that state of immovable tranquillity, of transcendental axiality, whereof upeksa or ordinary meditative equanimity is a remote mundane analogue. Similarly avidya, the fifth of the higher fetters, is the last faintest shadow of non-understanding of Reality to disappear when in the fullness of its undimmed glory Nirvana dawns at last in one indistinguishable blaze of light." [gap in recording - probably very minimal!]

S: ... a while to come. So let's go on finally, to conclude the chapter to the nine Holy Persons.

"Finally, the nine Holy Persons are the seven Holy Persons plus: (viii). The pratyeka-buddha (Pali pacceka-buddha) or 'Solitary', 'Independent' or 'Private' Buddha. What type of spiritual ideal this personage was originally intended to stand for is still a mystery. Traditionally he occupies a position intermediate between the Arhant and the Perfect Buddha. Whereas an Arhant neither himself discovers the Path nor, after reaching the Goal, declares it to others, and the Perfect Buddha discovers, realizes and reveals it by His own efforts, the solitary Buddha though able to discover the Path independently fails to reveal and teach it to the world. If Wisdom and Compassion are really co-ordinate, a defect in the latter - and failure to preach argues such a defect - surely implies a corresponding defect in the former. Theravadin

sources indeed seem to suggest as much. The Puggala-Pannatti or 'Designation of Human Types', probably the first Abhidharma work to be compiled by this school, defining the Private Buddha says: 'Here a certain person who, in regard to doctrines he has not heard of before, himself [117] thoroughly understands the truths but attains neither the omniscience nor the mastery over the fruition thereof.' Even this, however, does not altogether suffice to explain the enigmatic silence of the Solitary Buddha. Leaving aside the case of the Arhants, whom the Buddha Himself exhorted to go about preaching the Dharma out of compassion (see above p. 17), even aryas of lesser attainments feel impelled to share the fruit of their experiences with others. For the Mahayana tradition the Pratyeka Buddha, like the Arhant, represents spiritual selfishness. This may not be the whole story."

[End of side one side two]

"Some Theosophists assert that his function in the spiritual world is not pedagogic but administrative. The entire subject awaits further investigation."

S: A very sort of mysterious field. I have expressed myself on it elsewhere so I won't say anything now.

"(ix). The samyak-sambuddha (Pali samma-sambuddha), the Fully or Perfectly Enlightened One. This foremost of all Holy Persons has already been systematically dealt with in Part 1. With the exception of Chapter 5, therefore, on the trikaya, a doctrine not accepted by the Hinayanists, though the germs of it are discernible in their canons, whatever was said there should be understood as being repeated here. The sole difference is that we are now concerned, not merely with the historical Sakyamuni, but with the Particular type of Holy Person which He alone has exemplified in historical times.

Of the sets of seven, eight or nine Holy Persons constituting the Arya Sangha the second came to be regarded by the Hinayana as the definitive one."

S: That is the list of eight Holy Persons.

"This is significant, for with its formalistic pattern of four main types, each subdivided according to Path and Fruit, its enumeration of the fetters broken at each stage, and the number of rebirths remaining, this was the most unimaginative, schematic and rigid of them all. References to the more complex and spiritually vital sets of seven and nine do, indeed, occur from time to time in scholastic literature, but they are rarely if ever met with in modern manuals and never made the basis of popular expositions of the subject. Such a whittling down of the Assembly of the Elect is symptomatic of the general movement, not merely of conservatism, but of contraction, rigidity and, eventually, of progressive spiritual petrification which set in within a century or two of the Buddha's Parinirvana. In particular it is symptomatic of the stunting of spiritual ideals which then took place.

According to the Hinayana one should aim not at Perfect Buddhahood but at Arhantship, or emancipation for oneself alone. In the light of such a development as this its marked preference for the set of eight Holy Persons becomes intelligible, for by diverting attention from the set of nine, ending with the Perfect Buddha, it is able virtually to exclude the latter from the Arya Sangha. thus implying that for the whole body of the faithful there is no higher goal than Arhantship. The exclusion of the Buddha automatically leads to the exclusion of the

Bodhisattva, who, according to the majority of Hinayana schools, is simply the Sakyamuni in His pre-Enlightenment days, and not, as maintained by the Mahayana, a universally valid ideal.

[118]

This lowering of spiritual standards was paralleled by movements of contraction in other fields. Though their own scriptures contained evidence to the contrary, the Hinayana schools tended more and more to regard the higher spiritual attainments as prerogatives of the monk. Thus the Arya Sangha became in effect a sub-division of the bhiksu-sangha or Monastic Order. For the laity it was sufficient to make offerings to the monks and on the strength of the merit thus accumulated to aspire to a happy heavenly birth. 'Keeping up the faith of the laity' in this sense is still a major preoccupation of the Sangha in Theravadin lands. Since the quantity of merit accruing from an offering depends on the virtue of the recipient, and since the appearance of virtue is more easily achieved than the reality, the growth of ethical formalism, and eventually of conscious or unconscious hypocrisy, is inevitably encouraged. Moreover, the absence of a more inspiring ideal soon affected the Hinayana monks themselves, and after the rise of the Mahayana such religious activity as there was among them increasingly tended to take the form of scholasticism in the sense of a purely formal elaboration of existing doctrinal patterns. The Sarvastivadins succeeded in counting 147,825 kinds of Faith-Followers and 29,565 kinds of Doctrine-Followers. The Uttarapathakas, alone even among the Hinayana schools, distinguished themselves by eliminating compassion from their conception of Buddhahood.⁹ Fortunately, long before these extreme developments took place the Mahayana had already outlined its own revived and greatly enlarged conception of the Buddha's spiritual family."

S: We can see from this chapter how in the early days, especially during the Buddha's own day, the conception of the Arya-Sangha, the Buddha's spiritual family was quite alive, retained its vitality for quite a long time, but gradually you can see scholasticism and formalism setting in and in the end things become rather rigid, but that rigidity is broken up by the Mahayana in its own sort of restatement of the Buddha's spiritual family in terms largely of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Vangisa: I take it in terms of this rigidity of the Hinayana which makes a very artificial type of distinction between bhikkhus and the rest is - I say artificial because although it needn't be in fact. There can in fact be a definite distinction, this is not apparently based on such a definite distinction - This presumably is brought into existence in the first place not by the bhikkhus but by the others.

S: The laity, so-called.

Vangisa: Yes, who wish to live a spiritual life by proxy.

S: Right, exactly! One finds this very much especially in the Theravada countries, even today, sometimes among Sinhalese Buddhists, really painful examples, and I've had often the experience of bhikkhu friends of mine, Sinhalese monks, really complaining to me about this privately and saying how difficult life is made for them by the lay people who rather ignorantly but with a lot of blind devotion want to live a sort of spiritual life by proxy. Almost sort of bullying the monks into doing the things that they think they ought to be doing, not doing the things that they think the monks ought not to be doing, and making life really quite

difficult for the monks who usually are quite sincere people and more intelligent than the laity. But this is a real difficulty for many monks in Theravada countries, especially Ceylon I think and maybe Thailand too. In Thailand for instance the police have got powers to arrest any monk that they think is misbehaving, and misbehaving includes even keeping on your library shelf a copy of a book on Marxist philosophy. So it [119] becomes a bit sinister then doesn't it. There was a very well known, a very famous Thai Abbot who was arrested simply because he was found in possession of a copy of the works of Mao-Tse-Tung and he was imprisoned for several years and released only fairly recently.

Devaraja: I remember reading a case of a monk who climbed into an enormous glass vase in the temple and sat there meditating and I think he must have been quite an eccentric monk, but anyway I think they broke the vase and hauled him off to prison.

___: Really?

S: Oh yes, in Thailand the Sangha is sort of established by law and it comes under the minister of education. They are kept on a very tight and short rein indeed and this is one of the reasons why the Thai vihara in London can't do very much. The monks are only very willing and interested sometimes to have more contact and be more in circulation.

Vangisa: It's a bit like the civil service.

S: But they are under the strict surveillance of the Thai Ambassador or the Cultural Attache actually, and they can't stir without asking permission. This is why the one Thai monk who did break a bit free did it rather neatly. He stayed very quietly at the Thai vihara, one year, two years, three years, four years, five, and then he applied quietly for British Nationality, got it, left the monastery, disrobed and set up on his own. [Laughter] That was (name of monk). It seemed rather sad that you have to do it in that sort of way. Give up your nationality to escape the sort of ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the government.

Lokamitra: I always used to wonder about (???? pringle?) working for the embassy. I don't know what significance there is still in that.

Vajradaka: I think quite a lot.

Lokamitra: But he certainly didn't come to England. He travelled alone across land.

S: So one must bear this in mind, that Thai Buddhism is very much established and under the control of the state. I talked about this with several of my Thai Bhikkhu friends who used to come and stay with me in Kalimpong and they didn't like this at all. For instance every district in Thailand - I think there are seventy odd districts - has got a district governor and parallel to the governor there's an abbot for the district who has jurisdiction over all the monks, including legal jurisdiction, and if one of the monks misbehaves according to the abbot, and misbehaviour can be quite a broad general term, he can call upon the district governor to have the monk arrested and imprisoned.

___: Really!

Lokamitra: So in fact in Thailand it's been established by the state, a sort of ecclesiastical

jurisdiction which is...

S: And sometimes monks are disrobed for very trivial things without any grounds in the Vinaya at all. According to the Vinaya a monk cannot be forcibly disrobed. He cannot be made to give up the robes against his wishes even though he may not be strictly observing the precepts. The lay authority here has no jurisdiction, only other monks have got jurisdiction. In Thailand the lay authorities disrobe monks or get them ordained etc., as they think best. It seems really bad. It is really bad.

[120]

Lokamitra: It seems especially bad in that Christianity has had a long history of this sort of thing but Buddhism doesn't seem to have had.

S: No. This is fairly recently in Thailand. The last hundred years. Also of course obviously the monks never go along with anything which is anti-Buddhist but sometimes they have to pay the penalty of being disrobed, and having to become lay Buddhists, because they won't go along with the government or support it. If for instance a monk is known to be unsympathetic to the government's political policy, sometimes he's disrobed and sent back into lay life, because monks have got so much influence with the laity, the government keeps a careful eye on them.

Vangisa: They could of course leave the country.

S: Some of course have come to India and prefer to stay in India and work as monks there because they've got more freedom. The Indian government doesn't interfere with them.

Vajradaka: On the train coming down I was thinking about us and all the possibilities of something like that happening in the kind of government that may arise in Britain and all the kind of steps that could be taken to...

S: The best way out of that is you don't officially exist.

Vajradaka: Right, which is ...

Vangisa: This is the way that Ch'an survived I think and became predominant in China. It was the only Buddhist sect to survive suppression because it didn't need monasteries, possessions, security...

S: They could get along without them. It was quite happy with them - they were quite nice to have - but it didn't depend upon them.

Vangisa: They didn't need acceptance or authorization in the government.

Lokamitra: When we're ready we'll go out to Thailand and...

S: Well yes some of my Thai bhikkhus friends were very interested in my ideas indeed, and quite a few of them used to come and stay with me in Kalimpong, went out on lecture tour with me.

Lokamitra: It seems ridiculous that a state can do this. I mean even now the Church of England is now asking for de-establishment. I don't know whether it's got it yet.

S: Disestablishment.

___: What's that?

Lokamitra: So that it's not a state religion.

S: Well it is appointing its own bishops for instance instead of the Prime Minister appointing them, or rather the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Lokamitra: But at the same time effectively the Church does appoint its own bishops.

S: Does it?

Lokamitra: It's just the association I think is the main thing.

[121]

S: Does it appoint them? No, there is an ecclesiastical patronage committee which is appointed by the Prime Minister. That committee presents the Prime Minister with a short list of three or four names and he selects the one he wants and he puts it up to the Queen and she says "OK", then it goes to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral where the bishop is based, they automatically approve it - they can be prosecuted if they don't - and then he's installed as bishop.

Devaraja: Sulochana was telling me that apparently the local vicar at Tittleshall or rector or whatever you call them, was always appointed by the Duke or the Earl of somewhere or other.

S: Well that is living in the gift of. Some big landowners have the right of presentation to a living. Well not only that. I'll tell you again. What is a living? A living is a benefit. That is to say you have the appointment plus all the appurtenances, that is the income and the salary. Now, who appoints the vicars? The parishioners don't. In the Church of England the parishioners do not appoint the vicar. So who appoints? Now right of patronage is vested in different bodies. The Queen has the right of presentation or the Crown has the right of presentation to a number of livings. I think the Crown has the right of presentation to more livings than any other authority. So that is the Queen's or that is the higher ecclesiastical () who appoints. Then quite a few of the universities, especially at Oxford and especially Christchurch, have right of presentation to livings. Then the Prime Minister has right of presentation to certain livings and then certain big landowners have got right of presentation. This is how it goes. Oh, and some bishops have got right of presentation to livings within their diocese.

Vangisa: There are even some people who have managed to take over the right to one parish for instance as a part of having bought the manor...

S: Oh yes it goes with that. Suppose for instance that the Duke of Bedford has got the right of presentation to thirty odd livings, if you bought up all his estates you'd take over that right too. For instance our friend Gerald York who is the reader for Allen & Unwin now has the

right of presentation to the Church on his estates in Gloucestershire, and he used to joke about it and say one day he was going to present a Buddhist to the living. He has the legal right to do that apparently.

Lokamitra: Maybe you should take him up on it!

S: I didn't want to be a vicar! [Laughter] It's bad enough Mr Humphreys telling me in the early days that I ought to consider myself as the Buddhist vicar of Hampstead and behave accordingly! He said this in all seriousness. During a friendly talk soon after my arrival in Hampstead and he said, 'you are just like the local vicar, that's how you should function - you're the Buddhist equivalent of the vicar of Hampstead'.

Devaraja: What was your reply?

S: Well I just didn't know what to say. I was getting my bearings. This is quite early. I think he drew the line there. I met the vicar of Hampstead. He was a jolly old soul with two nice young curates and he didn't do any preaching. His curates did all the work and he invited me to dinner one evening and brought out the port and all that, and his wife was there and his daughters in law and he was chortling away and saying 'I really like to see a nice looking woman with short skirts. I really like that!' [Laughter] That was the vicar of Hampstead. I don't know whether Toby Humphreys seriously meant that! [Laughter] He [122] was about sixty five, hardly able to move with a big belly. His two young curates doing all the work and a magnificent Georgian house and a quite sort of handsome stipend. You could see that he lived really well.

Vangisa: [Regarding] this kind of establishment and the situation in Thailand and that is the question of stipends or salaries.

S: Yes, every bhikkhu gets a stipend, a very small one.

Vangisa: When you have a celibate Sangha it's not so dangerous, but once you start paying somebody to support his wife and children as well, you've got him!

S: Right, yes.

Vangisa: And in fact a person who is likely to put himself into that situation has obviously got no strong commitment in the first place.

S: Well bachelors are notoriously unreliable. Sometimes in a negative sense and sometimes in a positive sense.

Lokamitra: In Thailand if the monks are paid and if they disapprove of the situation can't they refuse the...

S: I talked about that but I don't know why it is. Whether it's because of this very pacific tradition of Buddhism which is quite good, or because of the fact that in Thailand you've had for the last so many years, until quite recently, what is really a military dictatorship with extreme right wing tendencies and very ruthless, completely ruthless in dealing with its opponents. Whether it's because of that I don't know. Because they are genuinely in the

Sangha, among the monks, just afraid of upsetting the apple-cart, and realizing well, there is communist China just over the border. What have they done to Buddhism? Maybe it's best not to upset the apple-cart, not to disagree with the regime, to survive as best we can, to carry on with our practice and hope that things will change. I think this has tended more to be their attitude.

Devaraja: Things have changed though recently.

S: Things have changed very recently.

Devaraja: They've a sort of student based government now of quite - certainly very modern...

S: This is just a few months ago isn't it?

Devaraja: I think it's getting on for a year now.

S: I've not heard much news of very recent developments but there has been that change. There is no longer a military dictatorship. But the danger is American influence is getting stronger and stronger. American influence in the worst sense. It's certainly very strong in Bangkok by all accounts. Vajrabodhi wrote about Bangkok and Buddhism in Bangkok and was thoroughly disgusted by what he saw.

Vangisa: It would seem very much the seed, the germination of a whole new flower of Buddhism in the world.

S: Right yes. I do know that there are some bhikkhus in the East, especially friends of mine, who are very interested in what we are doing, who really see that there's some new form is now required to meet the new circumstances. One or two have been writing to me quite recently. Or two in fact especially. One from Ceylon and one from India. Both are Sinhalese. They are quite [123] well known, both of them. They are very interested in what is happening in the WBO. Not so much the FWBO but more the WBO. Just as Christmas Humphreys was. He began to see that we'd solved a quite important problem, solved it apparently or begun to solve it quite successfully, and he was very much impressed by this, and he certainly grasped the main point. No doubt about that. That sort of caused him to modify his whole attitude.

Vangisa: This is a very small point. It's interesting that there's been a shift in emphasis from the Friends to the Order over the past couple of years.

S: Well partly because we have an order really now in a much truer sense than we had before. Before we stressed more the Friends because we were recruiting Order members then and where else to recruit them?

Lokamitra: All those Friends then have now become Order members.

Vajradaka: We were going through the list and there'd be only about ten or so Friends who were around three or four years ago aren't with us. There are people who were regular.

S: A few people have slipped through our fingers like for instance Tom. He never got really involved.

Devaraja: But he slips through everybody's fingers - Arika, the Guru Maharaji!

[General chatter about Tom and other ex-Friends and where they went to - not of relevance!]

[Tape ends - end of seminar]

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