

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

Sangharakshita in Seminar

Chögyam Trungpa's Commentary on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo

*[The Tibetan Book of the Dead; The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo
translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa
Published by Shambhala, Berkeley, USA, 1975]*

[Second 'Transcriptions' Edition: May 2001]

Held At: Padmaloka, Norfolk.

Date: September 1979

Those present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Virabhadra, Subhuti, Buddhadasa, Sagaramati, Kuladeva, Anandajyoti, Devamitra, Tony Doubleday, Ranjit Singh, Tony Wharton, John Wakeman

[Numbers in square brackets refer to the page numbers of the first edition. These original page numbers are still used in the 'Unedited Seminar Index', available separately from Transcriptions]

Sangharakshita: In the course of these ten days we're going to be going through Trungpa's Commentary on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, because this elucidates in a quite vivid way the two main sets of symbols involved, that is to say the six spheres of sentient existence and also the five Buddha families. And it is mainly those that we shall be concerned with; that is to say the five or six spheres of conditioned existence, or sentient existence rather, and the five Buddha families, rather than with *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* as such. We are going to be trying to familiarise ourselves with these two groups of symbols, and in the case of the first set, especially, try to see what meaning they have for our ordinary lives and what light they throw upon it. So we are going to be doing what we usually do, that is to say going round the circle, each person reading a paragraph in turn and we then discuss that paragraph, or any ideas arising out of or associated with it.

I have counted up: in this commentary there are nineteen sections, we have ten days, so we should try to do one section before the coffee break and one section after. That keeps still a semi-period in hand which perhaps we can use at the very end just for clearing up miscellaneous loose ends.

So we will start off this morning with message of the book and then after the coffee break go on to the Bardo of the moment before death. So could we start reading that first paragraph?

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

There seems to be a fundamental problem when we refer to the subject of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The approach of comparing it with *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life. One could refer to this book as "The Tibetan Book of Birth". The book is not based on death as such, but on a completely different concept of death. It is a "Book of Space". Space contains birth and death; space creates the environment in which to behave, breathe and act, it is the fundamental environment which provides the inspiration for this book. [2]

S: Yes, there are one or two points which arise here. You know of course that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is, so to speak, at least implicitly, compared with the Egyptian Book of the Dead. You may remember that it was the original editor of the English translation of the Bardo Thödol, as it is actually called in Tibetan, which gave it this title of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the editor being Doctor Evans-Wentz, so clearly there was implied there a comparison with the Egyptian Book of the Dead. But Trungpa is saying that the approach of comparing it with the Egyptian Book of the Dead in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point. So what is that point, according to him, 'which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in **this** life'? Do you think this is altogether correct?

I take it that at some time or other you have all read *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, either in this translation or in the Evans-Wentz translation. The point is 'the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in **this** life'. Do you think that is the fundamental point of the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead?

Subhuti: Only by inference, it's not written into it, as it were.

S: On the face of it, it is a book of what happens to you after death. So why do you think Trungpa is saying that 'the approach of comparing it with the Egyptian Book of the Dead in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life'?

Anandajyoti: He is trying to get away from the implication that if it's just to do with what is happening after you're dead, it has got no relevance for this life.

S: Yes, but even if it does all literally happen after death - if it is in fact a book of death and the after-death experiences - in view of the nature of those experiences and the law of karma surely that is highly relevant so far as this life is concerned? So what do you think is really happening here? Do birth and death recur constantly in this life?

Sagaramati: Not in terms of experience.

S: They do in a broad sense, don't they? There are sort of minor births and minor deaths. What am I trying to get at actually? I am approaching some thing, some point - I was going to say of my own but really of the Buddhist tradition - or put it another way, what do you think Trungpa, actually, is trying to do here, or what is he doing?

Subhuti: He is trying to make it relevant to immediate experience.

S: That's fair enough, but I think there is a little more to it than that. [3]

Virabhadra: Perhaps death as it actually occurs is a sort of death *par excellence*, whereas perhaps we could look at the minor births and deaths we undergo, experiences, as being involved with the same principles.

S: Yes, we can certainly do that. But he is saying that that is the point, 'the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly **in this life**'. In other words his approach seems to exclude altogether any consideration of the content of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, so called, as referring to after-death experiences. So why do you think he does that, or what does that enable him to do? What issue, what Buddhist doctrine does that avoid? **Rebirth**. Do you see what I mean, do you see what I am getting at?

Subhuti: It's even an evasion.

S: It's an evasion. This I think is what is happening here. He is of course addressing an American audience, an American audience which perhaps does not believe in karma and rebirth. So in a sense he is evading the issue by saying that it doesn't apply, in fact, to one's experiences after death, it is not a book of the dead. The point of the book is 'the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly **in this life**'.

Now you find much the same sort of thing with regard to some interpretations of the *pratitya-samutpada*. The *pratitya samutpada* is usually explained as extending over three lifetimes - the previous life, the present life, the future life. It is also explained in the Buddhist texts themselves as referring to what goes on within this lifetime itself. So the one does not exclude the other. It is not as though the ancient Buddhist tradition was so limited or so unenlightened that it didn't realise that that teaching could be applied to just **this** life; it certainly did. So it wasn't a question of either/or, it was a question of this **and** that. The traditional interpretation of the *pratitya-samutpada* applies to the series of one's lives, past, present, future, it also applies within the context of this present life. The one does not exclude the other. But some modern interpreters, fighting shy of this whole issue of rebirth, say that it really applies only to this life. The same with regard to the six spheres of conditioned existence. People evade or shirk the issue of whether those realms as such in some sense actually exist, and they interpret it all psychologically as referring to mental states experienced, or experienceable, in the course of this one lifetime itself.

So Trungpa seems to be doing this sort of thing. It is not that the teachings of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* cannot be applied to birth and death recurring constantly in this life; certainly they can. But the fact that they can be so applied doesn't mean that the application of them, or the relevance of them, to what happens after physical death is excluded. So we get a situation in which when a traditional doctrine has several spheres of application, when certain of those applications conflict with what people nowadays usually believe, those applications are excluded and we are told that those applications which do not conflict with modern attitudes are what it is **really** all about. In this way, at least a diminution, or even a falsification or distortion of the teaching takes place. You are free to disagree [4] with the Buddhist teaching but you are not free to misrepresent it, or to evade or shirk the issue. So this statement of Trungpa's is not really valid here. 'The approach of comparing it with the Egyptian Book of the Dead in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life'. No. The fundamental point is both.

The tradition itself said that there were six bardos, I have gone into this in my lecture in the Aspects of Buddhist Psychology series. There is the bardo of **life** as well as the bardo of death; this is accepted by the tradition. But one should not, as I said before, exclude those applications of the teaching which are inconsistent with one's present-day attitudes. At least, in presenting the Buddhist teaching one should not try to exclude those applications.

'So one could refer to this book as the Tibetan Book of Birth'. Well, that is also true, certainly one could, but that does not exclude really it being *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The Tibetan title, the full Tibetan title, is the Book of the Liberation by Hearing on the After-death Plane, or in the Bardo. So, 'the book is not based on death as such, but on a completely different concept of death.' I think there is a bit of confusion here. 'The book is not based on death as such' - well, it isn't, no, it is based on death as an opportunity, an opportunity for the extension of one's experience. An opportunity for liberation. And that death, yes, certainly can also occur, within inverted commas so to speak, within the context of the present life. But the one does not **exclude** the other. So, 'it is a book of space as space contains birth and death'. Yes, here we are on more solid ground, yes, one could say it is a book of space, but space which opens up both after death, after physical death, **and**, from time to time, in the course of this present life when we face death-like existential experiences in which space opens up, and new possibilities of being emerge within that space.

'Space contains birth and death; space creates the environment in which to behave, breathe and act, it is the fundamental environment which provides the inspiration for this book.' That is quite good, yes, that is quite true. But the context is death in the literal sense as well as death as it were in the metaphorical or existential present life sense. Do you see this? So we must be very careful not to bend our interpretations of the Buddhist teachings. Sometimes it's quite easy to do this. One or two of you were present at Sukhavati when we went into the whole issue of karma and rebirth fairly thoroughly, when we had a study morning with the LBC team, and that was very useful. And I think it threw quite a bit of fresh light on the whole issue for a number of people. It wasn't an issue that we had to shirk, it could be faced up to in an intelligent sort of way.

Any point arising out of that paragraph? *[Pause]*

Sometimes in the course of this lifetime, yes, we come very near death. Sometimes it stares us in the face. We don't actually die but in a way there is a death-like experience. There is a sort of anticipation of death, and that experience enlarges our perspective, it opens things up for us, and as things are opened up we see, within that opening up, [5] possibilities, perspectives that we hadn't thought of before. But according to the Tibetan teaching this happens on a grand scale, so to speak, after death. Then things really **do** open up.

All right, go on then.

The pre-Buddhist Bön civilisation of Tibet contained very accurate indications of how to treat the psychic force left behind by a dead person, the footprints or temperature, so to speak, which is left behind when he is gone. It seems that both the Bön tradition and the Egyptian are based on that particular type of experience, how to relate with the footprints, rather than dealing with the person's consciousness. But the basic principle I am trying to put across now is that of the uncertainty of sanity and insanity, or confusion and enlightenment, and the possibilities of all sorts of visionary discoveries that happen on the way to sanity or insanity.

S: There are several statements that are made here. What Trungpa says about the pre-Buddhist Bön civilisation of Tibet may very well be true; that this civilisation 'contained very accurate indications of how to treat the psychic force left behind by a dead person, the footprints or temperature, so to speak, which is left behind when he is gone.' In other words how to deal with ghosts, this is what Trungpa is really trying to say but he is shirking it a bit, I think, dealing with these sophisticated Americans. All primitive peoples believe that dead people sometimes leave behind ghosts, whatever they are, and that these ghosts have to be dealt with by the tribal sorcerer or witch-doctor or priest at a later stage of religious development. So the Bön people seemed to have had methods of dealing with these 'footprints' or 'temperatures' *[Laughter]* that the dead person left behind. Well, it may well be something like that, but it seems - universal experience of humanity speaks in terms of ghosts and so on. But that is really what it is all about, so to speak.

As regards the Egyptian tradition also being based on that particular type of experience, how to relate with the footprints, rather than dealing with the person's consciousness, I think actually, as far as my knowledge goes, the Egyptian tradition was rather more complex than the Bön tradition. In any case, we don't really know very much about the Bön tradition as it existed before Buddhism and independently of Buddhism, there has been such an amalgamation later on. Evans-Wentz, I remember, in his introduction to the translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* has some quite questionable things to say about the Bön tradition having transmitted beliefs about the after-death life from the Neolithic period, I think that is totally unproven.

So Trungpa might well be quite correct in saying that the pre-Buddhist Bön civilisation did have various traditions with regard to the treatment of ghosts, as they are popularly called, but I doubt very much whether the corresponding Egyptian traditions can be regarded as being simply on that level. I think they were more

subtle, complex, and eventually philosophical. But anyway this is a bit in passing, what he basically is [6] coming to is this; 'But the basic principle I am trying to put across now is that of the uncertainty of sanity and insanity, or confusion and enlightenment, and the possibilities of all sorts of visionary discoveries that happen on the way to sanity or insanity.' What do you think he means by that? Are sanity and insanity, confusion and enlightenment uncertain? *[Pause]* I think what he is trying to say is that there are all sorts of possibilities; changes take place, changes within our experience, some of these are positive, some are negative, so to speak. Some may be delightful, others may be terrifying. They may be of a visionary nature but they all open up - even those which take place under very painful circumstances sometimes - they all open up fresh possibilities of experience, existence, even enlightenment. And that the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead is concerned with these sorts of possibilities, as I would say not simply within the context of the present life but also, taking the traditional teaching quite literally, especially after death.

Virabhadra: So you are saying that this should be one's attitude to all these varied sorts of experience, that one should be looking at them as ...

S: He could be taken as saying that. Because sometimes quite painful experiences, quite traumatic experiences provide one with an opening, so to speak, yes? So even those openings, perhaps, have a sort of visionary content on occasions. It isn't that you necessarily have the experience in a beautiful, paradisaical sort of way in the context of a lovely meditation. No, it may be something much more dramatic and traumatic than that. You may have a real penetrating insight, or even visionary experience within the context of a tremendous upheaval, psychological, spiritual upheaval, which affects you really very painfully. So he seems to be taking into consideration possibilities of that sort. This is why, perhaps, he speaks in terms of insanity and confusion, also. Sometimes you get a wonderful glimpse of sanity, of utter sanity, in the midst, almost, of insanity. You get a wonderful glimpse of clarity, even enlightenment, in the midst of confusion. It's as though the one really brings you up against the other.

People often have - well, sometimes have - this sort of experience within the context of their very tortured relationships. For instance, supposing you are just waiting for somebody to turn up, someone that you are very attached to, and supposing they promised to meet you at 2 o'clock, and they don't turn up and they still haven't turned up at three, four, five. You go through all sorts of torments, agonies, you feel like killing that person, committing suicide. *[Laughter]* You are never going to speak to them again. You go through all that and at the same time you see perhaps, quite clearly within the context of all those very painful experiences, your own utter dependence, your emotional dependence, the utter uselessness and utter foolishness and ridiculousness of it. You see it very, very clearly. In the midst of the insanity there is a real glimpse of sanity. You can sometimes have that sort of experience, in all sorts of ways and all sorts of contexts.

Just as when you are brought very close to death. Lots of people report that when you are brought right close to death and death becomes an actual possibility - it could happen within [7] this minute - you feel strangely calm and clear and you think, 'What does it really matter after all if I do die?' You just survey the whole of your life and you think, 'OK, let it go, never mind, now is the time to die.' And that's that, you have that sort of supra-death vision at that time when death seems immanent. It gives you a really wide perspective. Everything suddenly really opens up and opens out in the way that it hadn't ever done before, perhaps.

So I think Trungpa is trying to express, in a somewhat stumbling way, these sort of possibilities within our experience. That the insightful experience, the visionary experience, the experience of openness and even Enlightenment doesn't necessarily come within the context of your pleasant retreat, or your inspiring and uplifting meditation. It sometimes comes in the context of quite painful and traumatic life experiences.

So one should always be on the lookout for possibilities, always on the lookout for these sorts of openings. His expressions aren't altogether happy when he speaks of visionary discovery that happens **on the way** to sanity or insanity. Almost as though insanity can be a goal as much as sanity. I think this rather appeals to some Americans, those who go along to encounter groups and all that sort of thing, that insanity is just as much a goal as sanity. But the Buddhist tradition doesn't speak quite in those terms and perhaps it is safer, if perhaps not quite so apparently exciting, to think in the traditional way of insanity as something to get away from eventually, although you don't avoid it when it comes or avoid its possibilities. Insanity is something eventually to get away from, and sanity, the higher sanity, the spiritual sanity, even transcendental sanity is your ultimate goal. Not sanity or insanity!

Subhuti: I often get the impression that he's got his own particular use of the words sanity and insanity. He means something very particular of his own. I am not quite sure what it is.

S: We might discover that as we go on.

Devamitra: Actually, I'm quite surprised that he introduced the question of sanity and insanity in this particular paragraph. It seems somehow ... well I couldn't see why that was raised.

S: Well, he is possibly dealing with a quite mixed-up lot of people.

Sagaramati: Maybe he feels that death is a sort of threat to their sanity, maybe they regarded sanity as identified with the consciousness of this life.

Devamitra: What I did wonder was that it has a kind of sensational effect. I think it's that I'm interested in.

S: Yes, I think you are right, yes.

Devamitra: It makes it more interesting, I suppose.

S: Hmm, it is a bit of spiritual peppering, so to speak, to make the dish more palatable.

Devamitra: A bit like the *News of the World* of the Dharma publishing world. [8]

S: Anyway, let's carry on.

Bardo means gap; it is not only the interval of suspension after we die but also suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well. The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological make-up. There are all kinds of bardo experiences happening to us all the time, experiences of paranoia and uncertainty in everyday life; it is like not being sure of our ground, not knowing quite what we have asked for or what we are getting into. So this book is not only a message for those who are going to die and those who are already dead, but it is also a message for those who are already born; birth and death apply to everybody constantly, at this very moment.

S: Here he seems to backtrack a little, but anyway we will go into that in a minute. 'Bardo means gap;' perhaps it might be worth recalling that bardo is the Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit *antara-bhava*. *Antara-bhava* means the in-between existence. *Bar-do* literally means 'between two'. *Do* is two in Tibetan, *bar* is between - so between two, i.e. intermediate. And *antara-bhava - bhava* is this interesting Sanskrit Buddhist term which means not being in the static sense, but you might say becoming. It is becoming as a sort of abstract noun. The in-between becoming; because existence is a constant process according to Buddhism.

So, 'it is not only the interval of suspension after we die'. So here he does accept, apparently, the possibility of after death experience, 'but also the suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well', certainly, yes. 'The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological make-up. There are all kinds of bardo experiences happening to us all the time, experiences of paranoia and uncertainty in everyday life;'. It's not so much as though the experience is one of paranoia, though uncertainty, in a sense, yes. 'It is like not being sure of our ground, not knowing quite what we've asked for, or what we are getting into.' - it's more than that. But if you take death in the literal sense, from the ordinary point of view what is the basic characteristic of death? Accepting that you, as it were, survive death, in a manner of speaking. What is death, basically, then?

Sagaramati: Death of the physical body.

S: Death of the physical body. So what does that mean?

Subhuti: You are removed from all your familiar ...

S: Yes, you are removed from everything familiar. This is essentially what death is. So in order for any experience during our present lifetime, so to speak, to qualify as a death experience and to open up, as it were, the possibility of a bardo experience, it must remove us from something familiar, to some extent. You could say going to a foreign country, where you have no friends, no contact, where you don't know the language, where you have no moorings, no familiar landmarks to help you, to guide you. This is a sort of bardo experience. [9] Or when other people die, people on whom you have been dependent. People that you have been used to having around. To the extent that something is taken away from you and you therefore away from that thing, this is a bardo experience. So it's more than uncertainty. It's when something is actually taken away that there's the possibility of the so-called bardo experience. Yes, life **is** uncertain, in the sense that anything can be taken away at any moment, but that itself is not sufficient for one to speak in terms of a bardo experience. For a bardo experience to be possible in a strict sense something must be taken away. You must lose something and be left suspended, hanging in the air without it. This can give rise, of course, to insecurity. Yes, it could give rise to paranoia, but 'it is like not being sure of our ground' - no, it's **more** than that. It's like the experience you get when the ground is cut from under your feet. 'Not knowing quite what we have asked for or what we are getting into' - it's knowing **only too well!** It's more than what Trungpa says it is.

'So this book is not only a message for those who are going to die and those who are already dead, but it is also a message for those who are already born; birth and death apply to everybody constantly, at this very moment.' I think he weakens the message - this section is called 'the message of the book' - he weakens the message of the book to some extent. The bardo in this life is what opens up, the possibilities that open up, the glimpses of reality you get whenever the ground is cut from beneath your feet, when something which is familiar, on which

you have been depending, on which you have been basing yourself, is suddenly taken away, and you are confronted with a sort of void. So we have all had experiences like that from time to time. Change of place, change of scene, change in your relationships with other people, other people's deaths, your own illness. All these are sort of existential situations, death in life sort of situations, that enable a space to open up and enable us to see, to glimpse at least within that space, possibilities that we had not envisaged before.

Subhuti: He seems to be concerned to interpret it solely in subjective terms ...

S: Yes, right. Well I think this more or less hits the nail on the head, so to speak. And this is what is constantly done, as I mentioned earlier - the *pratitya-samutpada* is interpreted subjectively. The five or six realms of conditioned existence are interpreted subjectively, psychologically, rather than cosmologically or let's say metaphysically.

So why do you think we want to psychologise everything, subjectivise everything? That is quite an interesting point.

Kuladeva: Bring it down to our own level.

S: Yes - not exactly our own level, though; but we do experience things as existing out there, as well as experience them as existing in here, don't we? There is **apparently** an objective content to our experience, we do make statements about what appears to be external reality.

Devamitra: Do you think it's something to do with the *miccha-ditthi* about our spiritual life being something which it is essentially inward-looking rather than outward-going? [10]

S: It could be that. It could be that when we interpret things subjectively and psychologically it makes it quite easy. Because it is very easy and very obvious and very straightforward that the hell state means when you get angry, the *preta* state means when you are greedy. But if you accept it objectively and cosmologically, you are brought up against all sorts of quite fundamental philosophical problems, even about the nature of reality, the nature of your objective existence, etc., etc. You have to do quite a lot of strenuous thinking and I think the majority of people nowadays, especially those who get into anything like Eastern religions, Eastern mysticism, are trying to avoid anything of the nature of strenuous thinking. Their thinking is appallingly weak, a sort of vague meandering, dream-like, semi-speculative excursus [*Laughter*]. A sort of science fictional without the science, sort of attitude, if you know what I mean, is regarded as adequate. The thinking is left to the scholars of course who are despised anyway.

I think it is because the subjectivising and psychologising approach enables people to dispense with philosophical thinking. One must also say that perhaps to some extent it's a reaction from the other extreme. Because in ordinary life there is probably an excess of objectivity in the form of science, so one must also recognise this. But I think we have to resist the temptation to react to the opposite extreme and certainly if the spiritual path means any sort of attempt to grapple with reality or the whole question of the nature of reality, then we mustn't simply react from the extreme of objectivity as represented by science and technology, to the extreme of subjectivity as represented by a popularised psychology, a popularised maybe pseudo-Jungian psychology, or a weak pseudo-oriental mysticism. We must keep our hold on rational, philosophical thinking as well. [*Pause*]

How many really thoughtful books are there about Buddhism? How many? Very, very few. They mostly come from Germany and are a bit heavy. Grimm, though he is a bit old-fashioned and out of date, at least has a very definite thought content. But that sort of book on Buddhism is comparatively rare. You also get *The Doctrine of Awakening* by Evola. There is a certain amount of thought there. But the average book on Buddhism from America or Europe does not do any thinking at all, usually.

Devamitra: What you are saying reminds me of a point which is made in an essay by George Orwell about English prose degenerating into a succession of meaningless phrases. He quotes some beautiful examples in the essay. Basically what you are doing is you are clouding what you are saying, you are dressing it up to appear important, whereas if you look at it really there is no clarity, nothing really very much is being said. And I get this feeling from what we have just read today, but also looking back on the Suzuki seminar it is the same kind of approach. You make it sound important but in actual fact there is very little underneath it, there is certainly no clarity. It's a bit like that being, perhaps, one of the outside conditions affecting the presentation of the Dharma which you have been talking about recently.

S: You seem to get the two extremes, Either a very arid scholarly, or pseudo-scholarly, academic presentation of [11] Buddhism, or else a very fanciful - not only fanciful but imaginary - sort of presentation of Buddhism. A purely subjective version of Buddhism which has got no relevance to or congruence with the facts of the tradition as revealed by the actual documents.

Anandajyoti: In this connection I have just, over the last two weeks, started to read Chang's translation of Milarepa's Songs and I was quite disappointed. I had been quite looking forward to it and it seemed to me that his translation was very much a popular translation. I read the section on his translation of 'Milarepa and the Novices' which we studied last year, and it seemed that he had translated it - he had bent the translation just a bit so that the average American reader would understand it. Little bits that perhaps weren't that clear, or wouldn't be immediately understandable were bent a little bit. And a lot of subtlety was lost in the translation so that things would make sense and it would almost appear to be an obvious moral platitude instead of something being rather subtle.

S: In other words he was more concerned that the translation would make **a** sense, rather than **the** sense. There are two things to be said here, one is that I think his command of English is very limited, as Luk's command of English is very limited, and subtleties of any kind they seem almost unable to reproduce from one language to the other, even assuming they've understood the subtleties in Chinese. And of course they are mostly dealing with - well, Luk is dealing with - translations into Chinese from Sanskrit, assuming they are able to grasp the subtleties in the original Chinese or Tibetan text, they are certainly not able to reproduce them in English. The other point is that Garma Chang had the experience of being edited by a friend of mine who was the reader for Rider, called Gerald Yorke, who I am afraid is very, very naughty in this sort of way. Making things understandable to the reader at all costs even though what is understood is not what the text actually says. Intelligibility at all costs; that what is intelligible is not in fact what the original author was trying to say seems to be considered beside the point. The translation should be easy reading.

Anandajyoti: He seems to come up with moral platitudes instead of things that were a lot more subtle, a lot more relevant to practice, and a bit more disturbing perhaps.

S: Hmm. Well, my other friend Mr Chen used to be violently against all what he called 'commercial publishers'. According to him they were after nothing but money and cared absolutely nothing for truthful presentation of the Buddhist tradition. And he tried to get something published by Rider when Gerald Yorke was the reader but they demanded so many - well, he regarded them as falsifications - that he just wouldn't have anything to do with them. Admittedly he was a rather difficult person himself and a bit eccentric, and his English also wasn't all that good, but in the name of improving the English you sometimes alter the sense completely and this is a quite dangerous thing to do. But we are getting, now, some very good translations, like the new translation of Vimalakirti which has come from [12] America. I forget the name of the translator.

Sagaramati: Thurman.

S: Yes, that's the one I will be referring to for my talks. That is **extremely** good, but that almost represents a new school of translators. It makes Luk's translation look really amateurish and clumsy indeed. The English is good and the grasp of Dharma is extremely good, it is all done very carefully.

So what we really need is a really live, imaginative, faithful version of the Dharma. Not either scholarly aridities on the one hand or whimsical fancies on the other. Though I must mention this before we go on to the next paragraph: in a recent issue of *The Middle Way* there was an article by Dr Conze in which he stood up for the despised and neglected scholar and said some of the things, in his own way, that I've been saying. But in that very same issue, at the very beginning of the leading article by Anne Bancroft, there was a beautiful example of the very thing that he was complaining of. She started by quoting, as from the *Dhammapada*, a saying, 'Look within, thou art Buddha'. This was quoted by her as coming from the *Dhammapada*. Well, even if you didn't know the *Dhammapada* you would know that a statement of that sort could **not** have come from the *Dhammapada*, that is not the idiom of Theravada Buddhism or Pali Buddhism **at all**. If it is the idiom of any school it is the idiom of Zen, an idiom which can be misunderstood, as we have seen on more than one occasion. But in that very same issue, in I think it was the leading article, the opening statement was what was really a colossal blunder of the very type that Dr Conze had been criticizing and made his remarks appear all the more justified and necessary.

It is as though someone who is supposed to be writing about Buddhism doesn't even take the trouble to verify that that particular verse is in the *Dhammapada*. Doesn't apparently even know the *Dhammapada* well enough to know that she is not quoting from the *Dhammapada* as she claims to be, makes you doubt whether she has actually even read it; and also is so unaware of the difference of feeling and terminology between the Theravada and Zen, can imagine that a verse of that sort, which actually comes from a theosophical writing, I believe, is found in the *Dhammapada*! It is too painful to contemplate. [Laughter]

Subhuti: There is another consequence of this subjective thing, which is that you don't actually have to do very much, don't have to change very much in terms of the external world.

S: That's true. There is no question of adaptation to the external world. It might be said - maybe it's worth saying in passing - that in a way subjective experience is no closer to reality than is objective, let's say, existence. Because according to Buddhism the whole subject/object duality is in the last analysis illusory. You can speak of ultimate non-dual reality in subjective terms or in objective terms but neither really comes any

closer. So an adaptation to an apparently objectively existing reality is also part of your spiritual life. Perhaps you could look upon skilful means or compassion in that way. When you are in contact with external reality you are as much in contact with ultimate reality as when you are in contact with subjective reality. And that is a point [13] worth remembering. Subjectivity does not bring you really any closer to reality than does objectivity. It may be a more convenient mode of access from the point of view of meditation, just because it is standing upon your meditative experience you get a clear-visioned experience which enables you to see through the very distinction between subject and object, ultimately. It doesn't become more and more subjective as in some forms of mysticism. It breaks through from subjectivity into neither subjectivity nor objectivity. But you **can** have that sort of experience in the midst of objective experience dealing with people and things. It isn't necessarily confined to the mystical experience in the narrow subjective sense. This is why in the context of Zen you find so many people gaining Enlightenment when they were, so we are told, chopping wood or drawing water - not exclusively or invariably when they were meditating.

But thinking is a great responsibility, and as I said earlier on, it is the responsibility of thinking that so many people don't want. Whereas if you retreat into the subjective, into your feeling, you don't have to think, you don't have to test your thought against the objective reality. It's just like people avoid saying, 'I think' and they say, 'I feel', because that can't be challenged. 'I feel he's no good', 'What makes you think that?' 'Oh, I just **feel** it.' Well, you see, this is supposed to be conclusive - that you feel it. If you say that you think it then you are obliged to give reasons why you think it, but no one expects you to give reasons why you feel it. So if you actually think it by saying that you **feel** it you exempt yourself from all rational discussion and it may be that rational discussion is what you are afraid of.

For instance, supposing someone says to you, as a doctor, 'Oh no, the heart is on the right-hand side of the body'. You say, 'Prove it. I feel it, that's what I feel.' [Laughter] Well, you could open them up and show them but they might not even be convinced by that! An extreme example of this was D.H. Lawrence; perhaps with some justification he said, 'I feel it in my guts', the moon is not a dead planet, 'I feel it in my guts that it is something else, it's a mass of incandescence' or whatever, whatever. But you can understand it as a reaction in a way when you are, as it were confronted by, even oppressed by, even overwhelmed by a mass of objective material that you don't have the intellectual equipment to deal with. You retreat into subjectivity. But sometimes you do this when you just lack confidence in yourself and you want to avoid the clash of argument and discussion. So you retreat into your feelings and say, 'I feel it.' Well, that might be justified in certain aspects of life, just feeling about things, but not when you are making statements about objectively existing realities. There you should be prepared to back up what you say by arguments. I don't want to be too pedantic about this but I think people sometimes try to make feelings do the work of thinking. There are certain areas in which, yes, the feeling approach is quite valid and it can tell one a lot. But only too often instead of thinking things out and discussing with other people, and risking confrontation and disagreement and being wrong, people say 'I just feel', and it is supposed to be just left there. A feeling is neither right nor wrong, a feeling as such. [14]

Sagaramati: It is much easier to feel firm ground in feelings than it is in any thought.

S: Yes, right. That's a good point because you could say that in going from feeling to thought there is at least the possibility of the ground opening beneath your feet. There is a possibility of a death, there is a possibility of a bardo-like experience. And people shrink from that.

Devamitra: But isn't thought actually based in feeling?

S: Well, yes, I don't want to insist too strongly upon this distinction between thought and feeling, but in the average person they **are** distinct and even alienated from each other. I think I have said this in another context - that in a completely healthy person feeling and thinking are virtually identical; you think and you feel at the same time. There is no gap. But in our present alienated condition what usually happens is our thinking is quite separate from our feeling. Our thinking is over-objective and our feeling is over-subjective. And we shrink from the possibly over-objective thought, back into the very likely over-subjective feeling. So it is another evidence of our fundamental fragmentation.

Devamitra: I must say, actually, I don't think I ever understood what thought was until recently when I actually felt that I experienced what thinking really was. I certainly wasn't encouraged to think in my education. I don't know whether that was general, but it was my experience. It is not something that ...

S: D.H. Lawrence, probably as you remember, says something quite valid here about thought. Thought is 'Man in his wholeness wholly attending' and that is very good, though it is more than attending, it is sort of creatively grappling with the situation or a problem. But of course that means attending first, first you look at it. But with the whole man, wholly attending, so that is very good.

Sagaramati: Maybe it's the nearest part of you as a subject that you can do something objective. It's a sort of tool that you strive towards some objectivity with. Blake says it's the circumference of our energy, or something.

S: Yes, reason, he says, is the circumference of energy. The bounding or limiting factor which is necessary for expression, so that the expression doesn't degenerate into something chaotic and formless. But he sees it as the natural organic form, not the form imposed from without by force, as it were. The form that grows with the emotion, which enables the emotion to express itself, it doesn't sort of cramp it or constrict it.

So I think within the FWBO, broadly speaking, there is very little actual thinking goes on. There has been a bit more lately, but actual creative thinking is very rare, or even any sort of thinking. It is quite refreshing sometimes when we read for instance in *Shabda*, or even in the *Newsletter*, a contribution which shows evidence of actual thinking on somebody's part.

Anyway, let's go on. [15]

The bardo experience can be seen in terms of the six realms of existence that we go through, the six realms of our psychological states. Then it can be seen in terms of the different deities who approach us, as they are described in the book. In the first week the peaceful deities, and in the last week the wrathful deities; there are the five tathagatas and the herukas, and the gauris who are messengers of the five tathagatas, presenting themselves in all sorts of terrifying and revolting fashions. The details presented here are very much what happens in our daily living situation, they are not just psychedelic experiences or visions that appear after death. These experiences can be seen purely in terms of the living situation; that is what we are trying to work on.

S: Obviously he is quite right in saying that you have something to work on here and now, you don't have to wait until you die. He mentions these two sets of symbols, the Six Realms of Existence and the Five Buddha Families. All the deities he mentions are included in the Five Buddha Families, so they represent two sets of possibilities, don't they? The reactive possibilities and the creative possibilities. In the bardo you are suspended, as it were, between these two sets of possibilities and you have to choose; and the possibilities confront you, in both cases, in, as it were, visionary forms. Visions of the Six Realms of Existence, visions of the Five Buddha Families - you have to choose. And this happens not only after death but also in the course of this life, when the bardo space, as it were, opens out, you are confronted with the choice; either act reactively or act creatively. And you see the same thing in terms of the *pratitya-samutpada*, as I have so often pointed out; there is a gap, and where is that gap? Well, you pass over where in the series the first of the action series of the present life succeeds the last of the fruition series of the present life. So you are, as it were, suspended between the two. You are completely free either to act in a way which furthers the reactivity or in a way which sets up the creativity. You can either go again round on the wheel or you can start going up the spiral. So that is a bardo also, that point at which the *vedana* is succeeded by the *trsnā*. But the *vedana* need not be succeeded by the *trsnā*, you are poised in that gap in between; you can either react with *trsnā* or you can respond creatively with *sraddha*, those are the possibilities in that particular space. When you experience *vedana*, especially in the form of suffering, it can either lead to further grasping or it can lead to faith.

So we are confronted by these twin possibilities at every stage, virtually, of our career, but especially we are confronted by them in a particularly poignant way when we are in the midst of, or confronted by, an existential situation, especially of a more traumatic nature. And most of all, of course, when we actually come to die. So the two sets of symbols of the Six Realms of Sentient Existence on the one hand, and the Five Buddha Families on the other, embody these two possibilities between which, as I have said, we are suspended.

So, 'The details presented here are very much what happens in our daily living situation.' Which **can** happen, it isn't just that it happens **to** you, you are given an opportunity, as it were, to enable something to happen. 'They are not just psychedelic experiences or visions that appear after death. [16] These experiences **can** be seen purely in terms of the living situation,' and here he is harking back to the old psychological approach, 'that is what we are trying to work on.' - all right, work on that now but don't forget it is really only a preparation for working upon the really existential situation which arises when you die.

Subhuti: You say it's really only a preparation for working on the existential situation when you die?

S: In the sense that it is the experience of death which is the real, irremediable cutting of the ground from under one's feet. The other experiences can do that but not in the same really drastic and radical way. So in a sense, yes, all the little deaths are leading up to the great death, but of course not in the sense that it's only that which gives you your real opportunity, no; you can go, obviously, directly to reality itself even from one of these minor deaths, so to speak, in the course of this lifetime. You can take **that** as your point of departure. You don't have to wait for the after-death experience, you can make your little death in the context of this life itself the Great Death. Though that is quite difficult, but it can be done.

Sagaramati: It seems that it's harder in life because there are so many things you can grab on to. (**S:** Yes). In death ... there don't seem to be so many things that you can grab.

S: Yes, you can't take a little walk in the garden, you can't just grab a Mars bar, or put on a record.

Devamitra: Going back to what you were saying about the *pratitya-samutpada*, it seems that you are implying that the experience of *dukkha* in fact is a bardo. As you say, you can either respond creatively with *sraddha* but that has to pass through the medium of *dukkha*, doesn't it?

S: Well, it's in the sense that the experience of suffering, *dukkha*, seems to wake us up better than the experience of pleasure. Though, as I have pointed out, a pleasurable experience can be the basis of the development of insight, but it doesn't seem very often to happen like that.

Devamitra: But what I am trying to get at actually is that when you are experiencing *dukkha* you wouldn't necessarily respond with *sraddha*, (**S:** Oh, No) you fall away from that experience (**S:** Indeed) into *trsna*, so in that case the *dukkha* is in fact a bardo in a sense.

S: The *dukkha* gives the possibility of a bardo state, that is to say, a state of suspension between possibilities. But it may be that for you, due to the force of previous conditioning, it isn't a very real possibility as yet. Almost inevitably one reacts in a reactive way. You don't take advantage of the opportunity which is offered. In other words you don't really have a bardo experience because you are so closely linked with, you still are so grounded on, what you actually have at the moment. So this is where the usefulness of death comes in, where you are actually taken away in a way that you cannot resist. [17]

Anandajyoti: It can happen on just a very minor level, if you have got a habit that you are working on. To begin with, that you are perhaps not even aware that it is a habit; then you introduce awareness; then there comes a point where there is definitely a choice - where you can just carry on or you could break out of that habit.

S: And that is sometimes dangerous, because you start thinking, 'I am not really bound by it, I could give it up, therefore I don't really need to.' So you go on and then after a while the habit is reconfirmed, as with, say, smoking, or whatever it may be.

Sagaramati: What are the gauris?

S: We will see when we come to those, he describes them as messengers of the Five Tathagatas. Well, maybe that will do for the present, but we do encounter them in greater detail later on. Literally it means 'fair ones'. *Gaura* is 'fair', in the sense of fair of complexion, in that sense beautiful. It suggests beautiful fair maidens, but we need go no further than that for the moment.

'The details presented here are very much what happens in our daily living situation.' I think that is a bit of an exaggeration, overstatement, because you don't get in your daily living situation normally anything corresponding to the terrifying apparitions of the bardo, even though you don't take them literally. You take them as representing something, but they represent them as they exist with a very great degree of concreteness and vividness.

'These experiences can be seen purely in terms of the living situation' - well, depending on what that living situation is. Some people's living situation is so dull and unreal and apathetic that it is quite impossible to see the bardo type experiences in terms of that sort of living situation. It anyway flatters the audience a bit, if you see what I mean, that the experiences of the bardo are capable of being seen in terms of their living situation. Do you see what I am getting at? It is like saying when you put a few flowers in a vase you are experiencing exactly what Michelangelo experienced when he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; it's just the same. It is a bit like that, you are flattering the person too much. Apparently in democratic countries you have to do that sort of thing. [Laughter] Don't take me too literally.

Let's go on then.

In other words, the whole thing is based on another way of looking at the psychological picture of ourselves in terms of a practical meditative situation. Nobody is going to save us, everything is left purely to the individual, the commitment to who we are. Gurus or spiritual friends might instigate that possibility, but fundamentally they have no function. [18]

S: 'In other words, the whole thing is based on another way of looking at the psychological picture of ourselves in terms of a practical meditative situation. Nobody is going to save us, everything is left purely to the individual, the commitment to who we are. Gurus or spiritual friends might instigate that possibility, but fundamentally they have no function.' This is a bit vague, but anyway, let us say this, that very often it is not so much our meditations, not so much our study of the Dharma, our reading of books, that really brings us up against it in an existential sense, but something that **happens**. Do you see what I mean? And therefore Trungpa is right in saying that Gurus or spiritual friends might instigate possibilities, or a possibility, by instigating an existential situation.

Supposing, for instance, you are very, very emotionally dependent on the Guru, so he just goes away and leaves you. In that way he has instigated an existential situation within which a space can open up for you with some potential in it, if you are able to take advantage of that. So I think actually we often tend to underrate or underestimate the importance in our spiritual lives, or the importance of the part played in our spiritual lives, by these existential happenings within the context of our, as it were, ordinary experience. We tend to go looking for it, in our meditations and our studies, but very often it isn't there that it happens and it isn't there that we will find it, therefore. Do you see what I mean? *[Pause]* You might refuse to give up your cosy flat or your nice little caravan in the country, why? - so that you can go quietly on reading about non-attachment and giving it all up! The actual non-attachment and giving it up, or the situation which will bring you face to face with that, you refuse to confront.

Sagaramati: Is that why solitary retreats seem to be so attractive sometimes? It's how I have experienced it and I think Devamitra has, of getting back into work after, say, something like a solitary retreat, It's almost as if you enjoy yourself so much that you don't really want to face up to some objective demands that are made on you.

S: Well, there is the question of the healthy balance in your life and the fact that in the context of the solitary retreat a lot of energy is generated and the healthy person needs to use his energy. And the objective situation gives you the opportunity of doing that constructively and creatively. For a long time in the course of one's spiritual life one needs not only contact with spiritual friends, one needs **clashes** with spiritual friends. It isn't just a question of this nice, sweet, lovey-dovey contact or strolling around the garden hand in hand; it can **include** that, yes, I am not excluding that, but it can or should include also something very much more rigorous, something very much more dangerous even.

Virabhadra: Existential situations are more likely to arise within the spiritual community. (**S:** Yes indeed.) And are more likely to be thrust upon one.

S: Yes, because certainly within the context of a solitary retreat an existential situation can arise, loneliness, fear, all that sort of thing. But it is usually just along those sort of lines. Yes, it is challenging, it has to be confronted, [19] and usually you do. It's - what shall I say? - it's extreme and sharp, but in a way not very difficult, it isn't complex. But where other people are involved it does become more difficult in a very special way, and therefore, yes it is good to have not only the contact but the clash with spiritual friends. There is a quote from Blake which is no doubt appropriate here, I can't quite lay my tongue on it, he said something about contentions of friendship, something of that sort. Nietzsche had something to say about this.

So we must be very careful not to flatter the ordinary person that in the course of his ordinary humdrum life - going to the office and coming back and helping his wife with the washing-up after a meal, and helping to put the baby to bed - he is going to confront the sort of existential situations that are bodied forth in the symbolism of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*! *[Laughter]* But you might if you live in a live spiritual community. Even the washing up could become a traumatic, existential occasion.

All right, let's go on.

How do we know that these things actually happen to people who are dying? Has anyone come back from the grave and told us the experiences they went through? Those impressions are so strong that someone recently born should have memories of the period between death and birth; but then as we grow up we are indoctrinated by our parents and society, and we put ourselves into a different framework, so that the original deep impressions become faded except for occasional sudden glimpses. Even then we are so suspicious of such experiences, and so afraid of losing any tangible ground in terms of living in this world, that any intangible kind of experience is treated half-heartedly or dismissed altogether. To look at this process from the point of view of what happens when we die seems like the study of a myth; we need some practical experience of this continual process of bardo.

S: There is some point in this. An analogy occurs to me; you could look upon a retreat, say an ordinary retreat, as a bardo experience. It's in-between, it's inbetween two periods of ordinary life and ordinary experience, so to speak. It's a more intense situation, it is a more, as it were, existential situation. It's also a situation, we know, within which things can happen, but also the retreat experience is an experience that you can very easily forget. You can even forget what it is like to be on retreat, so much so that the prospect of going on retreat doesn't appeal to you because you have forgotten what it is **like** to be on retreat. Several people recently have admitted this to me, that they have forgotten what it was like to be on retreat and that when they did go on retreat again they realised that they had just forgotten what it was like to be on retreat. So this, it occurs to me, is a bit of analogy to what Trungpa is talking about. You can quite understand how even the experience which is very vivid and positive and powerful at the time can be so overlaid by subsequent experiences of a more ordinary sort, you just completely forget that you ever had it. And you get so much out of touch with it you cannot even remember what it was like or even reconstruct what it might be like if you were to go on [20] retreat again. So it's hardly surprising that people, even granted that they have gone through an actual bardo

experience and retained a few fragments of memories, perhaps, when they are very small children, should as they grow up forget about the whole thing and be unable to understand it, even. So perhaps from this point of view, he is a bit justified in trying to approach the whole question from the standpoint of, or within the context of, 'what happens in the course of ordinary, everyday life'. It is for many people, perhaps, the only intelligible approach, at least as an approach. When you can forget something like a retreat, so recent, so vivid, so memorable, so positive, so inspiring, but a few months later you have forgotten and you cannot recapture any of the feeling that you had on retreat. It has become completely unreal in extreme cases, so much so that you don't feel attracted by the prospect of going on another retreat. You no longer know what a retreat means, what it's all about, what it's like to be on retreat. It can even apply to meditation, if you get out of it too much you just forget what it's like to be in a meditative state.

Sagaramati: There does seem to be a lot of proof these days for life as impression gathering. Somebody in Manchester was talking about this. He has been to a retreat where some people are actually taken back and they remember, or they seem to home in on some traumatic experience, usually some death in a previous life.

S: I wouldn't regard this as proof, I would regard it as evidence pointing in the direction of. I think one could subject that to a critique, which would - what shall I say? - take out that particular interpretation of it as a recollection of a previous existence experience. Because you could interpret it in terms of that being your construction of a feeling. You could actually experience in that particular way. So, I regard it as evidence pointing in the direction of, rather than as straight proof. I don't think we can take that in a naïvely realistic way. But anyway, that's in passing.

Devamitra: I was going to say, that from what I have heard about the regressions, is that nearly everybody who gets subjected to them can describe a very traumatic experience and ...

S: I would say for it to amount actually to real evidence for rebirth, or proof, there would need to be some objective corroboration.

Sagaramati: People who maybe sent records from their past as evidence.

S: Yes. I would say the recollection could be a sort of instant construction of that kind of episode to fit the experience. Because, 'How do I feel? I feel **as though** someone had battered me to death', and you can then actually - well, we know in a dream - create the experience of being battered to death. So you also create the experience of being battered to death and then have that taken as a recollection of what happened in a previous existence.

So it needs, I think, to be objectively, empirically [21] corroborated before it can constitute genuine evidence or proof.

All right, last paragraph in this section.

There is the conflict between body and consciousness, and there is the continual experience of death and birth. There is also the experience of the bardo of *dharmata*, the luminosity, and of the bardo of becoming, of possible future parents or grounding situations. We also have the visions of the wrathful and peaceful divinities, which are happening constantly, at this very moment. If we are open and realistic enough to look at it in this way, then the actual experience of death and the bardo state will not be either purely a myth or an extraordinary shock, because we have already worked with it and become familiar with the whole thing.

S: This is a bit vague, 'There is the conflict between body and consciousness, and there is the continual experience of death and birth. There is also the experience of the bardo of *dharmata*', *dharmata* means something like dharma-ness. You can take that as meaning reality, the 'luminosity, and of the bardo of becoming, of possible future parents or grounding situations'. The expression 'grounding situation' is quite a good one. This is how we try to take things, as grounding situations; we try to make situations a ground for ourselves, something on which we can stand. It is said in, I believe, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* itself, that one of the sensations you have when you are dying is of collapsing, of the ground sinking beneath your feet, of there being nothing to support you. That is supposed to be due to the withdrawal of the earth element, this experience of collapsing, of sinking, of not having any ground on which to stand. And actually, usually we want ground on which to stand, or even we need ground on which to stand until we are able to take flight because we no longer need that sort of ground.

'We also have the visions of the wrathful and the peaceful divinities, which are happening constantly, at this very moment.' I would say this is an exaggeration, it's an overvaluing, a giving too much significance to our ordinary everyday experience. You could admit that, yes, in a very, very slight way you get little intimations, but I think actually *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, howsoever one looks at it, whether in terms of after-death experience or experience during this lifetime, is concerned with the relatively sharp, vivid, obvious traumatic, powerful experiences, not just very little experiences. And you shouldn't flatter people that in the course of

leading their ordinary American or English lives they are in fact going through these sort of experiences. They need something much more heightened to be able to do that.

_____: I suppose what he is trying to do is to make it clear to his audience that it is relevant, but he seems to be going overboard.

S: Yes. He is certainly justified in making it relevant, even if one has to play down the literal or the obvious meaning in terms of after-death experience. But not, as you say, to go overboard and render it almost innocuous. Otherwise you have the sort of mental satisfaction of concerning oneself with very sublime experiences, esoteric teachings, but what you [22] really come back to is just your ordinary life in the ordinary sort of way. Which seems rather a pity.

So, 'If we are open and realistic enough to look at it in this way' - well, maybe not very open or very realistic - 'then the actual experience of death and the bardo state will not be either purely a myth or an extraordinary shock, because we have already worked with it and become familiar with the whole thing.' Well, have we?! That would be the great big, as they would say in America, sixty-four thousand dollar question. *[Laughter]*

Anyway look back over what we have done so far and I think then it will be time for coffee. So 'The Message of the Book'; I think the message is that we shouldn't dilute the message. *[Pause]*

It's true that we must make things accessible but we mustn't go too far in that direction. It mustn't make them so accessible that they lose their meaning virtually. Make them so accessible that people can ignore them. *[possible break in recording]*

I don't want to be too hard on Trungpa. I am sure that he had a quite difficult group of people to deal with, and he is no doubt doing the best that could be done in that sort of situation. But still, one needs to be really very careful, and not make too many concessions, or make things too easy. *[Pause]*

Going back to one of those paragraphs: 'nobody is going to save us, everything is left purely to the individual'. That is an exaggeration, 'everything is left purely to the individual', what about spiritual friends? They certainly do have their place, they certainly do play a very, very important part. So I think he overstates the matter here.

Sagaramati: It's almost forgetting the Sangha, isn't it?

S: Well, it is forgetting Sangha, because it says quite categorically 'everything is left purely to the individual'. Not even the individual plays the crucial role - not even that. **[Tape 2]**

Devamitra: There is a point in the second last paragraph, he says, with regard to forgetting death, the period between death and birth - 'but then as we grow up we are indoctrinated by our parents and society', etc. So he is implying that conditioning is entirely external, that there are no subjective factors at work (**S:** Yes), which I think is misleading.

[Pause for Coffee break]

S: All right, let's go on to the next section, the Bardo of the Moment before death. Let's carry on reading round.

THE BARDO OF THE MOMENT BEFORE DEATH

The first basic bardo experience is the experience of uncertainty about whether one is actually going to die, in the sense of losing contact with the solid world, or whether one could continue to go on living. This uncertainty is not seen in terms of leaving the body, but purely in terms of losing one's ground; the possibility of stepping out from the real world into an unreal world. [23]

S: The first basic bardo experience. It's interesting that he uses the expression, 'basic bardo experience is the experience of uncertainty about whether one is actually going to die, in the sense of losing contact with the solid world, or whether one could continue to go on living.' The uncertainty would seem to be here, or have to be here, a real uncertainty. There would have to be genuine alternatives, which would include of course a genuine possibility that you were going to die. It is not clear whether literal death is meant here, or a death-like situation.

Only a few days ago I got a letter from one of our friends who is a nurse, and she was relating the case of a woman who was in hospital and being looked after by her, who was very ill, but who didn't know that she was very ill, whose husband didn't know that she was very ill. And it was only about five minutes before she died that she knew she was dying, she had no idea of it before. So I think this sort of experience, that is being referred to here, when you are in a state of uncertainty and that close to death. When the woman realised for the first time that she was going to die, well, it couldn't have presented itself to her as the fact that she was

going to die, but that she was very near to death, that death was a very real possibility. And that is a quite traumatic experience and therefore an experience within which there can be a possibility of openness and expansion, if one can take advantage of that. But if one takes it in a less literal, more metaphorical sense then 'this uncertainty is not seen in terms of leaving the body, but purely in terms of losing one's ground; the possibility of stepping out from the real world into an unreal world', that is to say a world which one regards as real into a world which one regards as unreal.

You get this sort of thing happening, say, when somebody retires, say when a man retires, that he really loses his ground very often. And quite often, again, he literally dies not very long afterwards. He loses his ground. That ground may be managing director, it may be caretaker, but whatever it is he loses his ground, he has got nothing firm left to stand on. Because he not only stood on that ground, he **identified** himself with it, with that position, with that situation. When that is taken away from him it's as though he is taken away from himself, he dies.

Sagaramati: Can't something like self-consciousness be a ground? I've often wondered about this, this thing we call self-consciousness, does it have its ground as having a brain in a physical body, and therefore when that's taken away what we call self-consciousness, i.e. ability to try and evolve, is also taken away?

S: No, self-consciousness is not associated with the physical brain, leaving aside for the moment whether you can really distinguish brain consciousness from any sort of consciousness, but self-consciousness is not associated exclusively with brain consciousness. You made reference before to this, in between the sessions, to - what did you call it - auto...?

Sagaramati: Autoscopy.

S: Autoscopy. Well here, clearly, you are conscious, you are self-conscious, but you are not functioning through your brain. [24] You can see yourself, you can see your physical body, but the sight with which you see is not mediated through the brain or through the nervous system. So it would seem, therefore, that self-consciousness is not necessarily bound up with the functioning of the physical brain.

But yes, there is this point that you also raised, whether self-consciousness itself is a ground. Yes, it can be a ground for further development of the individual, but it can also be just a ground. It can be something that we hang on to, especially in its more alienated forms, and which we are afraid to give up. Some people don't like losing themselves. To come back to the quite ordinary level, as it were, some people are afraid of taking a bit too much to drink because they will lose consciousness, lose control of themselves and they are afraid of that. Some people, in the same way, sometimes find it difficult to go to sleep, and one of the reasons for that is you don't want to lose control; you are over-identified with your ordinary waking self-conscious mind, so to speak. You hang on to that, you are reluctant to lose that, you are reluctant to allow yourself to sink back, so to speak, into the unconscious. But you need to do that from time to time, obviously.

So in this way you can make your self-consciousness a ground, in a slightly - I won't say negative - but non-progressive way. You can hang on to your self-consciousness too much. In a way I think you need to balance - it's a very fine point, but you need to balance - your alienatedness to some extent, sometimes, with self-forgetfulness. You need to forget yourself as well as to remember yourself. There will come a time when the two are one, so to speak, but when your self-remembering, which means your self-consciousness, or coming back to your self-consciousness is only too often a rather alienated sort of thing. It's cut off from feelings, so you have to as it were balance and compensate by allowing yourself to forget yourself sometimes, to let go. And I think this is sometimes why people tend to drink, especially if they drink very much or regularly, is to forget themselves, it is the only way in which they can compensate. They are not able to, say, meditate, or they are not able to get absorbed in a really good, imaginative story, or poetry, or music, so they drink. Sometimes even if normally you can get absorbed in these other ways they don't always work, and then you might be inclined to just have a drink, because you know from experience that that can do the trick and relax you a bit. Or something else of the same kind. Some people use sex in that sort of way, well, that is quite dangerous because there are other factors involved. But you see what I mean? So yes, self-consciousness can be a ground in that, as I said, non-progressive sense.

'This uncertainty is not seen in terms of leaving the body,' that's just a particularly dramatic and radical form of it, 'but purely in terms of losing one's ground.' Can you think of other situations in which you lose your ground? Well, the idiom itself suggests one or two situations in which you lose ground. You lose ground to other people in, say, a competitive situation; they start winning, you lose ground, and yes the ground is pulled from beneath your feet. You don't like not winning because your self-identity is bound up with winning and being successful and being the boss and all the rest of it. So that's a sort of existential situation. I sometimes think that people who take part in competitive sports try to neutralise all that by saying 'It's only a game', and 'It doesn't really matter', etc., etc., 'You play for the sake of playing not for the sake of winning', but I think that is an [25] attempt to counteract their own actual feelings about winning and losing. It may be that some people genuinely do feel that you just play the game for the sake of the game, but I think others are concerned to neutralise their own feelings of loss and disappointment, so they shouldn't experience them too traumatically.

‘The possibility of stepping out from the real into an unreal world’. As I said, a world which now seems real to you, or for you, into a world which now seems to you or for you unreal. It’s more than unreal, it’s alien; a situation, a world in which you don’t wish to be, which you are reluctant to enter, but you are catapulted into entering, sometimes, by circumstances even. And how you react to that is very important. You can either react reactively or so to speak creatively.

Sagaramati: Going back to that idea of self-consciousness, I’ve identified that it’s the growth of self-consciousness which leads to the Transcendental.

S: This is true. But it is not the growth **only** of self-consciousness. I think this is a delicate point. The danger is that the self-consciousness results in a sort of alienation from the more organic and emotional side of oneself. So an important part of the self-consciousness is making sure that you are not **over**-self-conscious, and therefore not alienated from the rest of yourself which is unconscious and in which, very often, your emotional energies are stored up. So one of the functions of self-consciousness is to make sure that you don’t get out of contact with the unconscious, with your emotions, your deeper energies and so on. So individual development isn’t only development of that self-consciousness pure and simple, that leads to alienation. But it has, by virtue of its quality of self-consciousness, progressively to integrate the emotions from which, owing to the development of self-consciousness, one has to some extent become separated if not alienated, and also to establish, or re-establish, contact with the deeper energies generally. Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: It does seem, though, that it’s with other people that we lose contact with those deeper energies, in a funny way.

S: Sorry, say that again.

Sagaramati: Well, like it’s when - I am thinking again of the solitary situation - I find during the solitary retreat you can lose that alienated sort of self-consciousness. It’s as if you contact yourself emotionally in a much deeper way. It’s when you come back and you come into contact with other people. It’s as if the self-consciousness that continues tends to be more of the purely conscious.

S: Well, you see, it is not only a question of where you are at but of where they are at, because communication is mutual. In a way you have to get on to the other person’s wavelength. If **they** haven’t been on solitary retreat and have not got into contact with their feelings, how are you to have a satisfactory communication with them? Sometimes you can actually experience this, that the person that you are talking to, or trying to communicate with, is on such a different wavelength that you can’t really, yourself, speak naturally, or in [26] accordance with your own real feelings. They are not even conscious of those, perhaps. You are conscious of that person but that person is not conscious of you. In a way you have to come down a few steps and sort of function in his relatively alienated way, and then just try to lead the communication in another direction. So it isn’t surprising that when you come out of solitary retreat, and are in contact with yourself and your feelings, you have difficulty communicating with other people. Because communication is a **two**-way business. You are not giving a lecture. If it’s a question of just giving a lecture and people just listening, that is a different matter, to some extent, but even there you have to take into account their level of consciousness. But when you are actually talking to people and exchanging, you can be almost at cross purposes. It can be painfully different.

So it doesn’t mean that there is anything wrong with you or your experience during your solitary retreat, it doesn’t mean that at all. It really means that the two of you are not on the same wavelength. More than that, he is out of communication. You cannot communicate with someone who is out of communication. Because you are in communication, or at least you possess the potentiality of communication in a very real way, you can perceive that he is out of communication but you cannot establish communication with him simply because you are, as it were, in communication. Do you see this point? Communication requires **two** people to be in communication. You can be in communication with yourself, and aware of yourself, and aware of him, but communication doesn’t take place until he is aware of **himself** and in touch with his feelings and aware of you, etc. So you mustn’t expect, because you are in a healthy, positive, clear state, that you will necessarily be able to communicate with somebody. In a way you don’t communicate with somebody, you communicate with each other. It is essentially a two-way process.

Devamitra: I suppose that’s why it can be quite painful in a way coming out of a solitary retreat, because ...

S: Well if you expect too much from your contact with other people. If you come out of solitary retreat thinking, ‘Oh, I am really in contact with myself, in contact with my emotions, wow, what a wonderful communication I am going to have with everybody’, well, then, you are just deceiving yourself. You are disappointed because you have expected too much. Also in a way you are slightly out of communication, yourself, perhaps, because you aren’t really seeing where they are at, and that they are **not** in communication, and expecting them to be. Not seeing that they are **not** in communication, and that you cannot expect high-level communication from them in their state. That they have to be coaxed up to that level first, and you have to be prepared to do that.

Otherwise you are in the position of the person who has been thinking amorous thoughts about a certain young lady all day and when she turns up he expects her - and perhaps she hasn't given a thought to him during the day - to be in a similar mood, and expects that they can start communicating on that sort of basis. A quite unreal expectation. She has to be coaxed into the mood first. [Laughter] But you see what I mean, it applies on all sorts of levels and in all sorts of ways. The fact that **you** are able to communicate in that way doesn't necessarily mean that the other person is, therefore **you** cannot [27] communicate with them. Your communication depends on them just as theirs depends upon you. Again, it is mutual. You communicate with a tree, in a way, but all that you need to do is to be aware of the tree, but to communicate with a human being, the other human being needs to be aware of you too.

So we mustn't expect too much from people. Just because we have been on a retreat it doesn't mean the whole world has come into communication. Just because you have been on retreat does it mean that everybody has got to be perfect? Paraphrasing Shakespeare.

Devamitra: What was that?

S: *Twelfth Night*, paraphrasing Shakespeare and turning it around just a little bit. 'Dost thou think because thou art virtuous [there shall be no more cakes and ale?]' etc., etc.

Anyway let's carry on. Enough about this 'uncertainty'.

We could say that the real world is that in which we experience pleasure and pain, good and bad. There is some act of intelligence which provides the criteria of things as they are, a basic dualistic notion. But if we are completely in touch with these dualistic feelings, that absolute experience of duality is itself the experience of non-duality. Then there is no problem at all, because duality is seen from a perfectly open and clear point of view in which there is no conflict; there is a tremendous encompassing vision of oneness. Conflict arises because duality is not seen as it is at all. It is seen only in a biased way, a very clumsy way. In fact, we do not perceive anything properly, and we begin to wonder whether such things as myself and my projections really exist. So when we talk about the dualistic world as confusion, that confusion is not the complete dualistic world, but only half-hearted, and this causes tremendous dissatisfaction and uncertainty; it builds up to the point of fear of becoming insane, the point where there are possibilities of leaving the world of duality and going into a sort of woolly, fuzzy emptiness, which is the world of the dead, the graveyard that exists in the midst of fog.

S: Well, perhaps that just about describes it, 'the graveyard that exists in the midst of fog.' Let's try to disentangle this a bit. 'We could say that the real world is that in which we experience pleasure and pain, good and bad.' Real world from our present point of view, that is to say, things that we experience as pleasant and painful, things which we regard as good and bad. 'There is some act of intelligence which provides the criteria of things as they are, a basic dualistic notion. But if we are completely in touch with these dualistic feelings', notions have become feelings, you see, 'the absolute experience of duality is itself the experience of non-duality. Then there is no problem at all, because duality is seen from a perfectly open and clear point of view in which there is no sense of conflict; there is a tremendous encompassing vision of oneness. Conflict arises because duality is not seen as it is at all. It is seen only in a [28] very clumsy way.' What do you think that is?

Virabhadra: It sort of has the ring of not being a happy, healthy human. You don't even exist in the ordinary world properly.

S: Yes. Well, take this question of duality, dualism, pleasure and pain. I don't think one need look at it in a necessarily very highly spiritual or metaphysical way. What is the tendency that Trungpa is really getting at here? It seems to be the tendency to absolutise the terms of dualities. Do you see what I mean? That when you experience, say, loss - say you lose something - say loss and gain are a duality, let us say, it's a very loose usage of the word duality. Anyway, loss and gain, you lose something, the whole world is filled with your loss, so to speak. You can only think in terms of that loss, what you want is to have that thing, to gain that thing, so you are completely dominated by this sort of dualistic conception. Life contains for you only two things, either loss or gain.

We find it especially in the case of people. Suppose we have an addictive relationship, whether to husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, or parents; we have an addictive relationship. Then that relationship comes to an end in one way or another, perhaps because the person dies. So we are absolutely overwhelmed by a feeling of loss, just as perhaps before we were completely overwhelmed by that addictive feeling of possession. So here we are enslaved by the dualism. In fact the two things are the same thing, at different times and from different points of view. The loss and the gain, the painful experience and the pleasant experience. So what happens is that we absolutise these two things, when there is gain there is only gain, when there is loss there is only loss. But when we cease to absolutise, when we see within the broader perspective, yes, we experience the loss but it's not overwhelming, yes, we experience the pleasure of possession but it doesn't take us over completely.

There's a wider framework, a bigger context within which these experiences take place, therefore we are not bothered by them so much. We think, 'They are just aspects of life, life is much bigger than possessing or losing this particular thing.' You don't identify with that so much, it doesn't bother you so much one way or the other. So life is a bit enlarged, as it were. Your horizon is not filled by these two things which are really the same thing, the loss of that particular object or the gain or continued possession of it. So in this way you see things in a truer perspective and within a wider context.

So he seems to be getting at this. That, yes, there will be things like pleasure and pain, there will be things like loss and gain, but you mustn't make them so big that they occupy the whole field of vision. Let the field of vision be much bigger than these things, and then, even though there is a certain duality, and an experience of duality, it will not be all encompassing. *[Pause]*

But also he says, 'But if we are completely in touch with these dualistic feelings, that absolute experience of duality is itself the experience of non-duality.' What do you think he means by that, do you think it's very clear?

Kuladeva: Is he not trying to say that in absolute terms [29] there is no subject/object duality at all?

S: Well, yes, you could come to see, if you really experience the pleasure of possession and the pain of loss, that they are really the same thing. You suffer on account of your previous enjoyment, the one makes the other possible, so they are not really two things, they are the same thing. That you cannot grasp for that pleasure in that way without incurring that pain in that way. You could look at it like that. And this sort of intensified experience of the duality, if you reflect upon it, leads to an experience of non-duality, though it is not so much non-duality in the ultimate metaphysical sense, it is more an understanding that you can't have the sweet without the sour. I don't think he actually means that, I don't think he is very clear here, actually.

Sagaramati: It certainly isn't Enlightenment.

S: It certainly isn't Enlightenment, but when you do see that loss and gain really do go together, that pleasure and pain go together, then if you really see this your attitude towards them becomes more relaxed. You see them more and more as aspects of life, you see them more and more within a wider context, and therefore they affect you less. Not that you don't go on experiencing them, you do, but because you experience them within the wider context you experience them less traumatically and they matter less and less. And to the extent that they matter less and less, yes, sometimes you can enjoy things quite genuinely but without experiencing any corresponding suffering because when the time comes to let them go you let them go quite contentedly.

Kuladeva: So it's not really seeing them in their right perspective, it's blowing them up out of all proportion.

S: It amounts to the same thing, one could say, yes. You know that, sometimes you are quite aware yourself of having blown something up out of all proportion and then you see that subsequently and you see that it didn't really matter and you blew it up in that sort of way for purely subjective reasons.

Virabhadra: It seems to be quite tied up with awareness of others. As you become more aware that there are other people you tend to get a wider perspective ...

S: Yes, right. Because sometimes you are just concerned with your own feelings, your own reactions, you don't **consider** the other person at all, they hardly exist.

You can even go so far as to say that to be 'in love' with somebody is to negate their existence as an individual. *[Pause]* So no wonder there are misunderstandings.

'So when we talk about the dualistic world as confusion, that confusion is not the complete dualistic world, but only half-hearted, and this causes tremendous dissatisfaction and uncertainty; it builds up to the point of fear of becoming insane, the point where there are possibilities of leaving the world of duality and going into a sort of woolly, fuzzy emptiness, which is the world of the dead, the graveyard that exists in the midst of fog.' This isn't really very clear, I'm afraid. [30]

Virabhadra: It seems like he is almost presenting that as a real choice. You could choose to not be there, sort of not be much of a human being. *[Long Pause]*

S: One could say that to the extent that a basic point emerges, the basic point is that if you intensify your experience of duality then you see more clearly its dualistic, and in a sense its non-dualistic nature, and to that extent become more free from it, **as duality**. But if your experience of duality is only half-hearted, if it's dull and weak, so to speak, you don't really experience the duality, it doesn't reveal itself in its true nature, it isn't therefore exposed and you don't succeed in rising from that duality to non-duality. You don't succeed in widening your perspective.

Sagaramati: You were talking earlier - I don't mean earlier today - about we have to be a lot more passionate. (S: Almost) So does that mean we have to actually experience the conflicts of passion? In that way intensify the dualistic experience?

S: No, put it this way, when we are experiencing them, we have to allow ourselves to experience them consciously instead of allowing them to influence us unconsciously. It's not that we have to produce a passionate conflict out of thin air, as it were. The passion **is** there but we don't allow it to become conscious. And because it doesn't become conscious it doesn't come out into the open, we aren't able to take a really good look at it, and therefore nothing happens except the same uncomfortable situation continues. Sometimes it seems as though people aren't able to be passionate because their feelings, if you like their passions, are so deeply buried. Sometimes they seem quite anaemic, emotionally speaking - tepid. So perhaps Trungpa is getting a bit at tepidity in our experience and relationships; better to have it all out into the open and intensified and heightened even though that's sometimes painful, so that we can see its true nature better, more clearly, and ultimately transcend it.

Subhuti: Is what's happening here, he's in a sense cheapening the experience of non-duality?

S: Yes I think that is the appropriate word, in a way, just as before, perhaps, he was cheapening the experience of the after-death state.

Subhuti: He seems to be talking about non-duality as simply an intense and healthy human experience.

S: Yes, a more intense and healthy human experience which enables you to see its limitations.

Subhuti: I get the feeling all the way through, from what we have done and what I have skimmed through already, that he is actually talking about - I don't know - just being a normal American, a red-blooded American.

S: Well, perhaps one makes that sort of statement in the light of other reading and other information, but this particular text so far does nothing to counteract that impression, let us say. Admittedly it must be quite difficult; on the one hand to establish contact with people on their own level, and on the other not to do that to such an extent that you lose contact with your original source, with your actual material.

This reminds me of this great Gnostic myth that I have referred to in the series on the *Parables, Myths and Symbols of Mahayana Buddhism in the White Lotus Sutra*. In the lecture on the return journey, there is the Gnostic myth of the pearl. Do you remember that? The king's son goes down into the land of Egypt, but in going down into the land of Egypt he forgets his own original identity and has to be reminded of that. So this is sometimes what can happen with the would-be Bodhisattva. He might go forth under the influence of his Bodhisattva Ideal and he might be trying to carry the Dharma to people who don't know anything about the Dharma, and because he is a Bodhisattva, or would-be Bodhisattva, he wants to talk their language, so he learns their language and he ends up speaking it very well. But in the end he forgets what it was that he came to tell them. He forgets that he's a Bodhisattva, he forgets about the Dharma, he ends up simply talking their language quite efficiently.

This reminds me of another story from Japanese sources. It is based on a little extract I published, I think in the *Maha Bodhi Journal* and also in *Stepping-Stones* at one stage, about a master who found his disciple one day sedulously practising the Japanese lute, so he says, 'Why are you practising the Japanese lute?' (it must have been the samisen or something like that). He said, 'It's like this, after I become Enlightened I shall have many disciples and because I have many disciples a big temple will be built and many people will come there, and many important lay people. And they will be very moved by my discourses and I shall become very popular with them, and they will invite me to their homes. And I shall go along there, and they will offer me a little sake. It would be a great pity if after all that hospitality I just wasn't able to repay them by a little item on the lute.' [Laughter] You see. So here he gets out of touch even before he has got **in** touch, if you see what I mean.

One must be careful of that, and I think, I suspect, that some Buddhist teachers do this. It can happen very easily, and especially it can happen when your experience of the Dharma is confined to, and virtually identified with, familiarity with a certain cultural language of the Dharma. When you cease to speak that language you cease to be in contact with the Dharma. You can take language in a wider sense than the merely linguistic or the merely verbal. So I think there is a danger - I am not necessarily saying that this is the case with Trungpa - but there is a danger when, say, someone goes from a Tibetan Buddhist environment, goes to a place like America, learns the language, learns American English, learns the social customs, the way of doing things, the way of getting around, and is able to appeal to people and speak their language, but in the meantime he has lost contact with the Dharma, and he has nothing to say from the Dharma point of view. He goes on using certain words. So, do you see the possibility? So there seems to be a [32] tendency in this direction here. That the language that you use, or the language that you have started to use, is so powerful that it sort of determines your thoughts, and therefore excludes certain other thoughts, excludes for instance, perhaps, Dharma thoughts. So the only safeguard is to be in touch, provisionally, to begin with, not with words, not even with thoughts, but

with things, with realities, with spiritual experiences. And then you are not misled by words, and you don't get out of touch as you learn to speak a different language, and are, as it were, coming down to the level of certain people and trying to speak their language to communicate your message. So if you are not careful you end up just reinforcing the American message, the American mythos, and saying nothing of Buddhism, just have a few colourful things around which make it appear that you are Buddhist.

And of course on the other hand you can be using the same words but mean something completely different. Just as we found in connection with the festival of Body, Mind and Spirit that we were using lots of words that lots of other people were using, Enlightenment, positive, creative, reality, evolution, personal, communication and all the rest of it, but we were using them in a quite distinctive meaning of our own which was not communicated to other people by our usage of those words themselves. To other people those words themselves did not communicate what we meant because they were accustomed to attaching a rather different meaning to them. So for us to use those words in our discourse with them was not sufficient. We had to be more intelligent than that, and more creative and resourceful than that. It is not enough, apparently, to say to some sympathetic person who is shopping around, 'We believe in the development of the individual'; he thinks he knows what that means but actually he doesn't know what **we** mean by that. He only knows what those words mean in a certain context for him so far. But what we mean when we use those words he doesn't know. The content has to be filled out and our meaning really communicated by contact with the Movement, or even before that possibly, hopefully, by the person with whom he is in contact being a little more creative and skilful and not just trotting out the old familiar slogans and using the old familiar jargon. In other words really being aware of the person he is talking to and just seeing whether he has understood or not, and really trying to communicate.

Devamitra: Actually it's very difficult to do that. Working in that sort of situation I have found I have been a bit flummoxed, actually.

S: You need also time. I have met, recently, several Buddhist monks, and I just accept at the beginning you are talking completely at cross purposes. I met some up in Glasgow, I talked about it at Order Day, I think, subsequently. I met Piyasilo recently. They all talk the language of organisational Buddhism, of organisational activity, without any reference to the actual spiritual quality of the person engaged in the activities, and that seemed very strange. Less so in the case of Piyasilo, but more so in the case of the other monks I met. They seemed completely oblivious to the fact that in order to engage [33] in Buddhist activities you needed to be a Buddhist. It's as though their Buddhist activities leave out the Buddhist, the individual Buddhist. It is as though you can have or manipulate Buddhist activities without there actually being any Buddhists. Do you see what I mean? It's a terrible state of affairs. So they think of Buddhist activities and meetings, and organising this and organising that; they really think that they are doing something for Buddhism in that way. What they mean by Buddhism, of course, is another matter.

All right, let's go on from there.

The book describes the death experience in terms of the different elements of the body, going deeper and deeper. Physically you feel heavy when the earth element dissolves into water; and when water dissolves into fire you find that the circulation begins to cease functioning. When fire dissolves into air, any feeling of warmth or growth begins to dissolve; and when air dissolves into space you lose the last feeling of contact with the physical world. Finally, when space or consciousness dissolves into the central *nadi*, there is a sense of internal luminosity, an inner glow, when everything has become completely introverted.

S: Here there's the symbolism of the elements - earth, water, fire, air, space or ether, and consciousness. And the process of death, as described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is envisaged as a process in which the grosser element is dissolved into the subtler one, and this of course results in various experiences. So physically you feel heavy; I don't know if this is borne out by modern studies, perhaps Virabhadra could say something about this, the actual process of death. Physically you feel heavy, you start off, you feel heavy, weighed down, oppressed. This is explained as being the earth element dissolving into water. And then the circulation ceases to function, perhaps we could say the metabolism. And then fire dissolves into air, the body becomes cold. Air dissolves into space, breathing ceases and then you lose all contact with the external world, all awareness of it, and your consciousness is completely withdrawn.

Virabhadra: I find that really evocative, actually, that way of describing it. You can really imagine somebody expiring in that way. *[Pause]*

S: There's also the senses themselves. It is said, I believe, that the more refined senses are the senses to go first. Is anyone familiar with this? You don't see or hear anything, first. You cease to see or hear, everything becomes dark. Then you no longer smell or taste anything, then the sensation of warmth disappears, the whole body becomes cold. Then the breathing ceases. Then consciousness becomes actually dissociated from the physical body. And of course the elements are associated with the senses. I don't know whether there could be a systematic correlation of these things.

You get the impression of a systematic withdrawal, because you are withdrawing from the physical body, so that can be looked upon as withdrawing, first of all from the grosser aspect of the physical body, then the subtler, then the subtler still, until you are in fact completely dissociated [34] from the physical body.

Sagaramati: But if the eyes and the hearing go first, they are the subtlest senses.

S: In a sense they are the subtlest; well, subtlest in the sense of the latest to develop, presumably. I don't know how you would reconcile that.

John Wakeman: Because in the Bardo Thödol it is through hearing. They have maintained that the hearing stays some days after death.

S: Ah! Well, this is not hearing through the physical ear. You can also see, as I have mentioned earlier on, but not with the physical eyes, not through the physical brain.

Virabhadra: It's certainly true from a neurological point of view that the higher functions are lost first and gradually the more gross things are lost.

S: Yes, because they have developed latest. So in that case what would the order be?

Virabhadra: Well the higher functions, sensation ...

S: Sight? First sight? Then hearing, then smell and taste?

Virabhadra: I don't know about the order of the senses but certainly senses. And the things to go last would be things like breathing, just reflexes which don't have any consciousness.

S: Yes, these are purely chemical or physical, so to speak. Death is described as a *syncope*, which I believe means a collapsing. You collapse, you lose the more refined states, they collapse into the more gross. But here it is the gross which are described as going first, apparently. I am not sure, as I said, how one would reconcile the two accounts.

Sagaramati: He seems to be saying, though, that's what you might feel. That's how I would see it, physically you might feel very, very heavy...

S: Yes.

Virabhadra: It might vary according to your circumstances, the particular manner of your decease.

S: Yes. Well, supposing you died in your bed, say, of old age or a lingering illness.

Buddhadasa: Well, if you transpose this and say, 'This is how one experiences going to sleep at night', you can say that he has got a point here, because one feels heavy first, then one ...

S: Yes, heavy in the sense of drowsy. Yes, and then?

Buddhadasa: Let's go through it, heavy, then circulation [35] begins to cease, you start being still. Then fire dissolves into air, any feeling of warmth, then you feel you lose physical sensation.

S: But here you do get warmer, you do feel the warmth of the bed and the cosiness and that makes you feel drowsy. But hearing seems to go relatively late, doesn't it? Because you close your eyes ...

Buddhadasa: But you can still see sometimes. You can imagine, that sort of sight is still intact.

S: Yes, imaginative sight.

Buddhadasa: Then finally you completely withdraw, as it were, to the sort of dream state, but you keep the consciousness going.

S: So howsoever it is explained, or in what terms or what symbols, there is this gradual withdrawal from the physical body, which means also from the so-called objective physical world. The two things go together, as you withdraw from the physical body you withdraw from the objective physical world. And, 'Finally, when space or consciousness dissolves into the central *nadi*', that is nerve, 'there is a sense of internal luminosity, an inner glow when everything has become completely introverted.' This doesn't usually happen in the case of sleep, does it, but it is sort of paralleled by the dream experience. Because in the dream experience there is sort of luminosity. In the dream experience you **see** things. For instance, if you have a dream that you are walking through a beautiful meadow on a bright sunlit day, your experience of the light and the colour is as

vivid as though you were actually awake. It can be as vivid, and it is not like imagining in your mind, as you do, say, when you are awake. So where does this luminosity that you experience in the dream come from? It is not a physical phenomenon, certainly. It can only come from the mind, so to speak. It is subjective. So it seems to correspond to the sense of internal luminosity, 'inner glow', as Trungpa calls it, which you experience 'when everything has become completely introverted'.

You find, of course, much the same thing happening in meditation, when you reach states or experiences of luminosity, of light in a quite literal sense, which is not a physical light. And of course the same thing happens, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, in the course of the Bardo in the sense of after-death experience. In the same way that when you are withdrawn from the physical body, and you have this experience of autoscoping, the light in which you see your physical body, for instance, is not the light of the sun, it is not any physical light. It is what the Hindus would call, the Indians would call, the light of the self, though Buddhism doesn't use that language because it doesn't believe that there is a constant unchanging self corresponding, say, to the sun, from which the light comes. It's equally diffused, if you see what I mean. It doesn't have to have a source, in the ultimate sense.

To go a little further, sometimes space or ether is explained in this sort of sense. It is not, as it were, Newtonian, physical space. It is not ether in the sense of a subtle physical element, it is the inner space and the inner luminosity, but short of the Enlightenment experience itself. The dream state seems to approximate to this, and the meditative state [36] even more so, at certain stages.

Sagaramati: Is that what's *akasha*?

S: *Akasha*, yes. *Akasha* comes from a root meaning to shine or to be bright. But *Akasha*, in this sense, differs from physical light, as I said, in not having an actual source from which the light radiates, it is so to speak equally distributed. It seems, from our point of view, rather a strange concept; of light which doesn't come from anywhere, or therefore go to anywhere - an equally diffused luminosity.

But it's apparently into something of that sort that one dissolves when one goes to sleep, though in dreams this light is very obscured and very fitful; or when one meditates or when one dies. So there is a parallel between these experiences, which of course are all Bardo experiences. The dream experience, the meditation experience, and the after death experience.

John Wakeman: Is this light to be paralleled with the light of Reality, that the book describes at one point, or is that something different?

S: Well, the light of Reality would certainly be quite different from the *akasha*, the ether. But one could say that the light of Reality corresponds to the ether on the Transcendental level. And here again it's probably interesting to point out, there's no source of that light. We can't help thinking of something that is sending forth the light, but even at the level of the ether, so to speak, that is not the case, so how much less is it the case on the Transcendental plane. There is simply light, equally diffused and of equal intensity, but not emanating from a source as, say, sunlight emanates from the sun. Or from a luminous person, let us say. Anyway, let's go on.

Such experiences happen constantly. The tangible, logical state dissolves, and one is not quite certain whether one is attaining enlightenment or losing one's sanity. [Laughter]

S: It must be quite difficult to make up one's mind! [Laughter]

Whenever that experience happens it can be seen in four or five different stages. First the tangible quality of physical, living logic becomes vague; in other words, you lose physical contact. Then you automatically take refuge in a more functional situation, which is the water element; you reassure yourself that your mind is still functioning. In the next stage, the mind is not quite sure whether it is functioning properly or not, something begins to cease operating in its circulation. The only way to relate is through emotions, you try to think of someone you love or hate, something very vivid, because the watery quality of the circulation does not work any more, so the fiery temperature of love and hate becomes more important. Even that gradually dissolves into air, and there is a faint experience of openness, so that there is a tendency to lose your grip on concentrating on love or trying to remember the person you love. The whole thing seems to be hollow inside.[37]

S: I think he is trying very hard to explain ordinary experiences, with which he seems very much concerned, in terms of the whole bardo experience, and therefore in terms of dying, and therefore in terms of this five-element symbolism. So that he seems to be taking the stages that people go through, say, in a relationship between two people, and applying this way of looking at the bardo experience to that relationship. It doesn't seem to come out very convincingly, or very successfully. But perhaps it does hold good, it is valid in a general way. When you say you die to a relationship, or you are torn away from it, no doubt there are different emotional experiences which are analogous to the different experiences that you get at the time of dying.

Something is pulled from beneath your feet; OK, that is the earth element disappearing, you lose your sense of solidity and groundedness. So you try to take refuge in or escape into some other situation, that is the water element, but then that is taken away from you. So you try to escape into something more vaporous or less tangible, perhaps there is more security there, but **that** is taken away from you. So you try something very intense and positive and concrete, the fire, and **that** is taken away from you; and so on. Perhaps it can be worked out in those sort of terms, but only, I think, in a general, illustrative sort of way, I don't think one can take it too literally.

Anandajyoti: The only way that I could make any sense of this paragraph when I read it was, it reminded me more of a drug experience, more of just getting very stoned, the progressive stages of that.

S: Yes. Well, it's more like the progressive stages also of becoming de-stoned. Or when you rely less and less upon drugs, what you go through then.

You could say, supposing someone is trying to give up smoking. The cigarette is taken away, or cigarettes are taken away; all right, the material thing is removed, earth element disappears. So you try to find a substitute, maybe you take up sucking sweets, you go into that sort of activity, that's the air element. Then that doesn't work very well so you get into something else which corresponds to the air element. You could look at it like that, it seems a little bit far-fetched, doesn't it?

But you see the sort of analogy he is trying to draw. Perhaps it could be done if more care was given to it, or it was looked at more closely. These are all different sort of withdrawal symptoms when your particular drug is taken forcibly away from you. And we know that withdrawal symptoms are never very pleasant. But it really is amusing that he says at the beginning, 'Such experiences happen constantly.' This is another example of what Subhuti called the cheapening of the whole thing. 'The tangible logical state dissolves and one is not quite certain whether one is attaining enlightenment or losing one's sanity.' **Does** this happen constantly? Perhaps American life is more... *[Laughter]* ...than we realise. Perhaps it is, perhaps people there don't know from minute to minute whether they are - well, maybe not attaining Enlightenment - but certainly whether one is remaining rational or becoming insane. Lots of people in the States do go to analysts, don't they? Lots of people are committed to mental institutions, don't know what they call them there, I am sure they don't call them [38] that - rest homes. And lots of people commit suicide, there are lots of murders. So perhaps we aren't sufficiently taking into account the rather hectic pace of life in the States, especially with, perhaps, the middle class, the professional middle class people that Trungpa seems mainly to be concerned with. Maybe lots of them are teetering on the edge of nervous breakdowns.

Sagaramati: I remember the way Atula described last Order Day, Central Park in New York. That sounded just chaotic. So much noise and everything blaring out in every direction, so many things going on simultaneously, it must be quite raw on your experience.

S: But anyway, I am pretty certain that people are not constantly poised between attaining Enlightenment or losing their sanity. I think this is to flatter them too much. More often than not they are poised between one insanity and another.

Subhuti: There's a difference between neurotic insecurity and the bardo state, isn't there? (**S:** Oh yes, indeed) He seems to be identifying the neurotic insecurity with the bardo.

S: Yes indeed. He seems not only to be identifying the spiritual with the psychological but to be identifying the psychological with the neurotic. Which means ultimately, almost identifying the spiritual with the neurotic, or the neurotic with the spiritual. One definitely gets that impression sometimes. It's as though the more neurotic you are the closer to the spiritual you are.

Subhuti: It is quite often said how a neurotic is attached to his neurosis, so it's actually part of the ground of his being. So it is obviously not a bardo state from that point of view.

S: Yes. *[Long Pause]*

All right, next paragraph.

The next experience is the luminosity. You are willing to give in because you cannot struggle any more, and a kind of carelessness arises at that moment. It is as though pain and pleasure are occurring at the same time, or a powerful shower of icy cold water and boiling hot water is pouring simultaneously over your body. It is an intense experience, very powerful and full, the experience of oneness where both pain and pleasure are the same. The dualistic struggle of trying to *be* something is completely confused by the two extreme forces of hope for enlightenment and fear of becoming insane. The two extremes are so concentrated that it allows a certain relaxation; and when you do not struggle any more the luminosity presents itself naturally.

S: Is anybody familiar with this? [*Laughter*] 'It is as though pain and pleasure are occurring at the same time, or a powerful shower of icy cold water and boiling hot water is pouring simultaneously over your body.' Well, actually, this can happen, but it doesn't happen quite as easily or normally [39] as Trungpa seems to suggest. What happens is this: supposing you are very attached to something, and the thing that you are attached to is suddenly taken away. On the one hand of course there is intense pain, intense suffering, that that particular thing has been taken away. At the same time there is intense **relief** that it has been taken away. Why should there be relief? Because the fact that you were attached to it meant that you not only enjoyed that particular thing but you suffered on its account, you were afraid of losing it. Well now you **have** lost it you are free from the fear of losing it, and this can give you a quite positive and happy, pleasurable experience. So you oscillate between the feeling of grief at losing that particular thing, and relief at, in a sense, no longer having to bother about it. But it's a very fine point, and according to your changing mood you can just flick from one to the other, and then you actually see that pleasure and pain are very, very closely connected, in fact are the same thing. Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: I don't see that pleasure and pain are the same thing.

S: It isn't that pleasure as a sensation is the same thing as pain as a sensation, but it means as though there's a sort of wire there - maybe you have got your finger, you turn your finger a little this way it's pleasure, a little that way, it's pain. They are the same thing in that sense. It requires the tiniest movement of your finger, the movement being your changing attitude towards that thing, to give you either an experience of intense pleasure or an experience of intense pain. It's up to **you** which way you turn your finger.

So this can happen, as Trungpa says, 'It is as though pain and pleasure are occurring at the same time'. Well, it is not actually **quite** at the same time, but as near as makes no difference, so to speak, because you can just move your finger like this - pleasure-pain-pleasure-pain-pleasure-pain-pleasure-pain and it does seem as though you are experiencing them at the same time. 'or a powerful shower of icy cold water and boiling hot water is pouring simultaneously over your body. It is an intense experience, very powerful and full, the experience of oneness where both pain and pleasure are the same.' Well, yes, this is a possible experience. This can happen, but again it's not that such experiences happen constantly, no. They may in very tiny, niggly sort of ways but nothing that really is likely to do anything for one.

Subhuti: I think he keeps on making a false situation by putting in something like the experience of oneness, where both pain and pleasure are the same. (**S:** Yes) It sort of ...

S: Yes, it suggests a metaphysical oneness which is just not really the case here.

Subhuti: Yes.

Devamitra: It sounds like in the previous paragraph when we were discussing about duality. Because normally you would use such that in - an experience of non-duality is normally associated with *sunyata*, and there's no intimation of that at all in that paragraph. (**S:** Exactly) So it's completely devalued. [40]

S: 'The dualistic struggle of trying to *be* something is completely confused by the two extreme forces of hope for enlightenment and fear of becoming insane.' I think this is completely unreal, unless in fact it is true of the people to whom he is talking - this was a seminar originally - who must in that case be very strange people indeed.

'The two extremes are so concentrated that it allows a certain relaxation, and when you do not struggle any more the luminosity presents itself naturally.' Well, yes, that is true, but one needs to experience the opposite at a very high degree of intensity indeed for that sort of thing to happen consequent upon a relaxation of that tension. It wouldn't happen within the context of just an ordinary life.

Anyway, let's finish this last paragraph.

The next step is the experience of luminosity in terms of daily life. The luminosity is neutral ground or background, a gap when the intensity slackens. Then some intelligence begins to connect it to the awakened state of mind, leading to a sudden glimpse of meditative experience or Buddha nature, which could also be called the *Dharmakaya*. But if we have no means of connecting with the basic intelligence, and confused energy still dominates our process of mind, then the energy builds up blindly and finally falls down into different levels of diluted energy, so to speak, from the absolute energy of the luminosity. Some basic tendency of grasping begins to develop in the state of luminosity, and from that the experience of the six realms of the world develops according to its intensity. But that tenseness or tightness cannot just function by itself without an activator of energy; in other words, energy is being used in order to grasp. We can now look at the six realms of the world from the point of view of different types of instinct.

S: This is somewhat clearer. 'The next step is the experience of luminosity in terms of daily life.' He seems to envisage three stages: there is the experience of death, the experience of luminosity, and the return to daily life. These of course are based on the teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* taken, as it were, literally.

First of all you have this experience of the ground being whipped away from under your feet, and this hopefully projects you into a wider space, so to speak. It enlarges your perspective. Then within that wider perspective you try to establish contact with a higher, or wider, or broader principle of reality and then to connect with things on the basis of that. But of course if you are not able to do that, then the blind compulsions, from which the experience of death was trying to free you, reassert themselves and the old, as it were pre-death situation is re-established. Or in the more traditional terms you are reborn. So he is trying to explain the whole bardo experience, that is to say [41] death, the experience of luminosity, rebirth, in ordinary terms, which is quite OK, which is quite justified, but he does seem to explain it far too much in terms of **ordinary** life, not just in terms of **this** life but in terms of **ordinary** life. So, 'The luminosity is neutral ground or background, a gap when the intensity slackens', the intensity of the dualism slackens. When everything is broad, and more open and more relaxed - so that is good, it could be a meditative state. 'Then some intelligence begins to connect it to the awakened state of mind, leading to a sudden glimpse of meditative experience or Buddha nature, which could also be called the *dharmakaya*.' So there is **that** possibility. So it's clear that he is not speaking of the experience of luminosity in the ultimate sense; it is just that relative state of breadth and freedom and openness and luminosity when we respond positively to the death or death-type experience. So then what we hopefully are able to do is just to connect with some higher principle of reality. 'But if we have no means of connecting with the basic intelligence, and confused energy still dominates our process of mind, then the energy builds up blindly and finally falls down into different levels of diluted energy, so to speak, from the absolute energy of the luminosity.' In other words we return to the pre-death experience. This is what usually happens, we have a little insight, a little broadening out, but then we fall back. It's as though we hadn't died, we do the same thing over again. We see the situation more clearly and we see what we need to do to remain free from it, **but** the luminosity fades and we are back again in the same old situation. We haven't been able to use that experience of luminosity to connect with a higher principle of reality. In more traditional Buddhist terms we haven't been able to use, say, the *samatha* experience, to develop *vipassana*, which would deliver us as it were permanently from falling back into destructive mental states that we experienced before we experienced the *samatha*. *Samatha* itself being a sort of death, as I explained, I think it was last year, on the Convention.

Sagaramati: So *samatha*, it can be a sort of seeing. Normally I think about it in terms of positive emotion.

S: It isn't so much a seeing, it is more like a sort of breadth, a sort of relaxation, a sort of firm, really firm ground - or relatively really firm ground - on which to stand and **from** which to try to see. It gives you the opportunity of seeing.

But you can see the pattern which he is struggling to express in terms of ordinary, everyday life, not very successfully. You have a traumatic experience, that widens your perspective, you can take advantage of that widened perspective to see things more clearly and truly, as it were for good, so that you don't fall back. But if you **fail** to do that, that broadened perspective doesn't remain a broadened perspective, the perspective contracts again, and then you are back where you were originally before you had that traumatic experience. That seems to be the pattern.

So you have got, for instance, ordinary life, traumatic experience, experience of opening out or opening up, then hopefully from that something higher. But if that doesn't happen then the open space closes up again and you are back in the original situation from which you started, the enclosed situation. And this is [42] the pattern of our spiritual life very often. You could apply it to retreat. For the few weeks or few months before you went on retreat you were in a confused, disturbed state of mind. In the course of a two or three week retreat it's all straightened out, you become calm and clear, you start getting little glimpses. But then the retreat comes to an end, you return to the world, your old situation, with a little of the calmness of the retreat but since you didn't get any, as it were, insightful experience on the retreat the calm is gradually overwhelmed and you are back exactly where you were, more or less, before you went on retreat. Perhaps even the memory of the retreat fades, eventually, as I said some time ago.

Subhuti: Do you think when he talks of intelligence and basic intelligence he actually means *vipassana*?

S: I don't think he means *vipassana*, but something Transcendental. I think by basic intelligence he does mean something more like the basic Buddha Nature. But he doesn't like to use metaphysical words, he uses an ordinary word like intelligence, which again degrades it and makes it very ordinary.

Subhuti: It's quite interesting that he doesn't use capitals for Buddha Nature. He is trying to make it into something a bit more ordinary.

Devamitra: The same with *dharmakaya*.

S: Yes. I can sympathise with the intention but I think it can result in grave misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the teaching. *[Pause]*

So this is sort of preparatory really - these two sections that we have done this morning - 'The Message of the Book' and 'The Bardo of the Moment before Death'. From tomorrow, which means of course tomorrow afternoon, we will be coming on to something which concerns us much more directly, and from which I hope we can branch out a bit, and explore much more than we have been able to do today. Be less concerned with the text, take the text more as a starting point for our own exploration of that particular realm, so far as it concerns us in this life.

Any more general questions arising out of our consideration of these two sections? A general view, let us say. To what extent have they been useful? *[Pause]* Out of the first section there does emerge the point that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* isn't only about death, it's also about life. We have to be careful that we don't forget that it is actually about death too, we have not to forget that point. And as for the bardo of the moment before death, similarly, it can be in this life any existential situation, painful though it may be, traumatic though it may be, which precipitates us, at least for a while, into a broader space, a wider perspective, from which or within which we can see things more clearly than before, and from which, hopefully, we shall not fall back, as we only too often do, into our old situation.

(Tape 3) [43]

Sagaramati: What is it that makes the difference between... if you are thrown into a wider perspective what is it that causes you to actually develop insight there? Or you feel you understand something but somehow it becomes like a faded memory in time.

S: Well, you see a thing clearly when it is actually before your nose, so to speak. When it's no longer there you don't see it. So that means where there's an object there is also always the possibility of an object being taken away. It is only when object, so to speak, has become subject, that it cannot any longer be taken away. You have to assimilate it, you have to assimilate that knowledge and that understanding and what you have seen has to become part of you. This, one could say, is what insight really is. It's not just seeing but it's the assimilation of what is seen, so that you don't require an object in front of you to remind you of it, it's there, it is part of you.

Sagaramati: You become a suitable vehicle for assimilation through meditation and other activities.

S: Yes. Meditation is a refining and heightening process which enables us to see more clearly, provides us with a sort of vantage point from which we can see. But even seeing, taking the word literally, is not enough, there must be the assimilation of what is seen, the growing into what is seen. *[Pause]* Otherwise 'the vision splendid fades away into the light of common day'.

This is the process that Trungpa has been describing, isn't it, or the possibility that he has been describing. Perhaps we mustn't be too hard on him, as I said, he might be dealing with a very difficult group of people who really need things to be brought down to earth in this way, even though it does appear to diminish or even derogate from the teaching. But one can only hope that he is aware of what is happening and does not himself forget the teaching. *[Pause]*

Any final point? *[Pause]*

Perhaps a more general point is that - though I have mentioned it - we don't really need to separate our spiritual experience and keep it in a separate compartment, as it were, or identify it simply with meditation and **specifically** religious or spiritual activities. That these traumatic experiences which even lead to an experience of openness and possibly vision can occur to us - if our lives are lived at a sufficiently high level of intensity - can occur to us in almost any situation at any time, and in fact almost in a sense should do. They won't be confined, as it were.

Sagaramati: It seems to me that what's being said is we shouldn't sort of take life out of the reactive mind, but we should even intensify it.

S: Yes, yes, so that you can realise what is actually happening all the more clearly, yes. That is to be distinguished, of course, from indulgence. But your ordinary life will yield opportunities of, let us say, space and vision and insight **only** if your ordinary life is led at a sufficiently high level of intensity. The ordinary humdrum life will not normally afford these sort of opportunities, unless something really catastrophic happens, somebody dies or something of that sort, and then if you haven't [44] led your life at a sufficiently high level of spiritual intensity even the traumatic experience of death will not really touch you. You will feel very upset and grieve for a while, and then everything will be as it was before, you lose one person and you may just look around and find another one and do the same thing all over again.

All right, let's adjourn until tomorrow afternoon.

Next Session

S: First the Realm of Hell, and then after the tea break no doubt, the Hungry Ghost Realm.

THE REALM OF HELL

We can begin with the realm of hell, which is the most intense. First there is a build-up of energies, of emotions, to a crescendo, so that at some stage we find it very confusing whether the energies are controlling us or we are controlling them. Then suddenly we lose track of this whole race, and our mind is put into a blank state which is the luminosity. From that blank state an intense temptation to fight begins to develop, and that paranoia also brings terror. Originally the paranoia and terror were supposed to fight against something, but one is not quite certain whom exactly one is fighting; and when the whole thing has developed, the terror begins to turn against oneself. When one tries to strike out, instead of fighting the projection one is striking inward.

S: Do you see what Trungpa is doing, or trying to do here, in the case of what he calls paranoia and terror? Well, he is trying to repeat a certain pattern, isn't he, so what is that pattern? Or he is trying to explain it in terms of a certain pattern - the pattern of the bardo itself. He speaks first of all of the build-up of energies, of emotions, and then of the blank state which is the luminosity, which seems totally contradictory, and then of course the fighting against something. 'From that blank state an intense temptation to fight begins to develop, and that paranoia also brings terror.' This seems somewhat artificial. So I think we can more or less ignore that. [Pause]

I doubt whether that sort of thing really actually happens. Let's take them one by one anyway, to see what we can make of them, and then perhaps go into the realm of hell proper, so to speak.

'First there is a build-up of energies, of emotions, to a crescendo, so that at some stage we find it very confusing whether the energies are controlling us or we are controlling them'. So far so good, we know that this does happen, doesn't it, we get so carried away, so swept away by a build up, a crescendo of energies and emotions, that we don't really know whether we are in control any longer.

'Then suddenly we lose track of this whole race and our mind is put into a blank state which is the luminosity'. Does one actually find this happening in one's experience? Is there anything corresponding to this **in one's experience?**

Sagaramati: I think sometimes when you meditate and you've got a lot of vigour, too much vigour, and you close your eyes the picture in your mind, as it were, can be quite bright. Like there's a lot of sparks inside your head or something, like your mind is over active and it produces a sort of light [45] inside your mind.

S: But you haven't, as it were, had a build up of energies or emotions to a crescendo, which has become very confusing whether the energies are controlling us or we are controlling them, it seems to fall short of that, what you are describing. After all we **are** considering hell, we are considering paranoia and terror, we are considering the temptation to fight. So it is as though it is the aggressive energies and emotions that start building up - so we are concerned especially with those, it seems. So when that happens **do** we feel so carried away, say by our emotions of aggression, anger and hatred, that we lose control or we are not sure, we become confused whether we are controlling it or it is controlling or has taken possession of us? Do we then get into a sort of blank state? Do we lose track of this whole race and our mind is put into a blank state which is the luminosity? **Do** we find this happening, what happens?

Anandajyoti: We generally speak of the opposite, in our case, in our terminology, because that's the point that we almost anticipate a **breakthrough**, if one can stay in tune with one's spiritual practice from that build-up of energy.

S: So it would seem as though Trungpa's attempt to correlate the development of the unwholesome or unskilful emotion which precipitates rebirth in this particular state, i.e. hell, with the overall bardo framework isn't really very successful. Do you see what I mean?

And then he says, 'From that blank state an intense temptation to fight begins to develop, and that paranoia also brings terror. Originally the paranoia and terror were supposed to fight against something, but one is not quite certain whom exactly one is fighting; and when the whole thing has developed, the terror begins to turn against oneself. When one tries to strike out, instead of fighting the projection one is striking inward.' It is a bit confused, actually. What one could say is that it's as though what he calls 'the intense temptation to fight begins to develop' - here we get back into contact, as it were, with our own experience. Sometimes one is conscious within oneself of an intense temptation to fight, even without there being any reason for fighting, or even anybody to fight. This sort of 'intense temptation', as he calls it, this sort of strong feeling, this aggressive feeling, this angry feeling, even this hateful feeling, rises as it were spontaneously within oneself.

Does this accord with people's experience? Does one not find this sometimes happening? What I mean is, out of proportion, perhaps entirely out of relation, to the actual objective existing situation. Clearly, in terms of the existing situation it has arisen out of nothing, it has arisen out of a blank state, or that blank state as Trungpa calls it. You cannot account for your feeling of anger in terms of anything that is happening in your current environment. [46] So what happens then? It's as though you start looking for a justification for your anger. You start seeing things as though they deserved your anger, and it is perhaps there that what Trungpa calls the paranoia comes in. You start seeing things as threatening not because you really see them as threatening but so that, because they are seen as threatening, you can discharge your anger and hatred and resentment against them. In other words, you don't see a threatening situation and then start feeling angry, you feel angry and then you see a threatening situation. You construct the situation as threatening. Or, to put it in its more traditional, cosmological framework, so to speak, you feel angry, you are under the influence of anger and when you die you are reborn in hell. This is perhaps a neater and clearer way of making the connection than Trungpa's, if I may say so, rather clumsy way of doing it.

But actually we find this happening. We interpret our surroundings, we interpret the environment, we interpret the objective situation, in such a way as to justify our subjective feeling, in this sort of case. So in this way, or when this happens, we create hell. I remember being given a very vivid illustration of this - it was when I was living in Kalimpong, it was when I was living in my Vihara there on the hillside, with the beautiful view of the Himalayas, etc. etc. - I experienced living in Kalimpong as really very peaceful and pleasant on the whole, very inspiring. But one day I went to see a certain friend of mine, and this friend said to me, 'Kalimpong is a terrible place, this is happening and that is happening. This person is doing such and such against me and against my husband and that other person is doing such and such against me and against my husband. There is that plot going on in the bazaar.' So she went on like this for about half an hour, weaving this sort of story, as it were, and I got the impression that living in Kalimpong, for her, was living in hell, she actually did live in hell. That is how she saw Kalimpong. But I also got the impression, thinking over, that she saw Kalimpong in this particular way because there was within her such a strong, such a powerful reservoir, so to speak, of anger and aggressiveness and hatred. So she had to interpret her environment in this particular way, so as to accord with her subjective feeling.

So this is how hell is set up, one may say. And what happens in the extreme case, when you die and you go to hell? When you die, when you are detached from the physical body you have got perfect freedom to set up your own environment, just as you have within a dream. And you set it up. If you die filled with feelings of anger and hatred, the world that you set up, the world within which you find yourself, is hell. You can meet people who live in hell, actually. They are living in a sense in the same world as you, they may even live in the same building that you live in, they may do the same work that you do, you may be happy but they may be living in hell. They interpret the whole of their experience, the whole of their environment, in such a completely different way.

So, 'Originally the paranoia and terror were supposed to fight against something.' That isn't quite correct, in the light of what has just been said. You don't have cause for paranoia and terror and therefore you fight; you want to fight and therefore, as it were, you make yourself feel afraid or feel threatened. 'But one is not quite certain whom exactly one is fighting and when the whole thing is developed the terror begins to turn against oneself. When one tries to strike out, instead of fighting the projection one is striking [47] inward'. That may or may not be so, but the threatening nature of the environment has, as it were, been projected on to the environment. So when you see the environment as threatening you are seeing yourself, and when you fight with your environment in a sense also you are fighting with yourself. You sometimes again feel that with people of this sort. I felt that with that friend of mine, that her fighting with what was going on in Kalimpong was her fighting with herself. It was all a fight going on inside her own head, so to speak. So you end up fighting yourself.

So if one could describe the stages; first of all there seems to be a stage when apparently without reason, out of a blank state, so to speak, the feeling - what Trungpa calls the 'intense temptation to fight' - begins to develop. You feel anger, you feel aggression, you feel even hatred and malice. So because of that you start looking around for something to fight. So you have to have a justification for fighting - not a rational justification, but a sort of emotional justification - so you start seeing things as worthy to be fought. In other words, as dangerous, as inimical, hostile, threatening. So that is the second stage. The third stage develops when you actually fight, but inasmuch as the way in which you see things is not in accordance with the way that they are, you are not actually fighting things, you are fighting yourself. And that is the third stage. If you die in that state the objective support of your projected paranoia is taken away, you have only the paranoia. You remain there with the paranoia, fighting the paranoia or being threatened by it, or tormented by it, and that is the hell state. I am using the world paranoia simply because Trungpa uses it.

Devamitra: In terms of fighting I would have thought that that was a more appropriate idiom, actually, for the *asura* realm, rather than the hell realm.

S: Yes and no. In this case - well, all right, take it the other way round, or looking at it from the other end - you suffer in hell, but why are you suffering, what makes you suffer?

Sagaramati: Negative emotions.

S: Negative emotions. You can look at it as sort of a punishment for things that you have done out of your feelings of anger and hatred - we do touch upon that in a minute - but it isn't just that. What is happening is that you have created the threatening and the hostile environment, the environment which is tormenting you because you have got anger and hatred within you and are projecting that on to the environment. So it is not the environment which is tormenting you; you are tormenting yourself. There is an element of that in the *asuraloka*, but it is as though in the case of the hell realm attention is directed to the end result, as it were, the threatening or even tormenting environment which has been set up, rather than to the process of setting it up. What is at work in setting up hell is apparently anger and hatred; what is at work in setting up the *asura* realm apparently is jealousy and envy and competitiveness, which are certainly allied, certainly connected, but not quite the same thing.

Tony Wharton: In the hell realm you'd have absolutely no control over what happens, or very, very little, whereas in the *asura* [48] realm you'd have more a situation where you can make decisions.

S: It's as though the *asura* realm represents a less extreme situation, which is in fact what Trungpa says. 'We can begin with the realm of hell, which is the most intense'. I think in this connection, and even generally, it is very important to distinguish what belongs to the situation as such and what you, as it were, project on to the situation. Do you see what I mean? You have to be able to distinguish whether the environment is genuinely threatening and genuinely hostile and dangerous, and whether you are only seeing it as such on account of your own mental state or in order to justify your own mental state or action based upon or expressive of that mental state.

Virabhadra: I am particularly aware of that among my left-wing friends. They seem to be living in a different society to me. They are always suffering from oppression, which I just don't feel.

S: Oppression? (**Virabhadra:** Oppression, yes) Well, they live in a different world. It's as though they have an urge to fight with something, quarrel with something, pick a quarrel with something, so they have to see the environment as really faulty to give themselves a sort of occasion for fighting with it.

Virabhadra: They regard the whole sort of machinery of government and the state as the enemy.

S: Someone was mentioning my remarks on feminism in the recent *Shabda*. It's almost as though some of the extreme militant women feminists - I say women feminists because, it seems, I have recently discovered that there are men feminists, which would seem to be a contradiction in terms, but there you are - they seem to want to regard men as evil so that they can fight with them. Do you see what I mean, the two seem to go together? So you have to regard your environment, or any part of your environment as evil, so to speak, to use that word, so as to justify your urge to fight with it or fight with anything - your urge to get your feelings of anger and resentment which have arisen, out of this blank as it were so far as environment is concerned, off your chest.

Virabhadra: People even try and generate a feeling of oppression to stimulate some violent act. You sort of say you are not experiencing your oppression, say, to raise your consciousness.

S: Right, yes, this is called raising - a famous euphemism - raising your consciousness. In other words experiencing the fact that you are oppressed in some way or other, or seeing that you are oppressed in some way or other. But then again, you see - this is getting a bit off the track but it is very important - how can you regard yourself, or in what way can you come to regard yourself, as actually being oppressed? Well, you are oppressed by being deprived of certain rights, so the operation you perform is you endow yourself with certain rights - which are in fact imaginary - then you see the situation as it currently is, as depriving you of those rights, and therefore you see the current situation as being unjust and oppressive, and therefore as deserving to [49] be fought against and quarrelled with. Do you see what I mean? For instance, they have even invented rights for children against parents. So someone says, children have got rights, children have got the right, say, not to go to school. So children, in being forced by acts of Parliament to go to school, have been deprived of their right not to go to school. Formerly of course children had the right to go to school, but now they have got the right not to go to school. In the last century they fought for the right of the children to go to school, in this century they fight for the right of children **not** to go to school, because they want to fight for something. So the child has a right not to go to school, so the state has **deprived** it of that right. So you, the just, crusading person, will fight to the finish for the right of the child not to go to school! And it is this wicked oppressive state which is **forcing** the child to go to school and depriving the poor child of its right not to go to school. Do you see?

So in this way, by endowing yourself or any other party, especially parties which can't speak for themselves, with imaginary rights, you can then accuse the existing system of depriving them of those rights and then you can start a crusade for those rights. And you not only satisfy your own urge, your own intense temptation, to fight, you can also see yourself as a very noble, progressive, liberal, left-wing sort of person. Do you see how it all works?

So we see this happening in all sorts of ways. So actually these people all live in hell and they want you to live in hell too. They enjoy being in hell, they feel really at home there. So who is it that feels at home in hell? Well, devils, it is only devils that feel at home in hell, they are only happy when they are fighting and quarrelling, and expressing hatred and resentment; and all the time they are fighting with themselves, just like the dog that is chasing his own tail, biting his own tail actually. But unfortunately for us there is a sort of objective framework on to which they project and upon which they superimpose those subjective fantasies of oppression, so we get mixed up in it too. For instance, some militant feminist will come up to you and say, 'Have you stopped oppressing women?' And you might say, 'I haven't spoken to one for weeks'. 'You are oppressing her by not speaking to her' - you can't win. You are not allowed to be quiet as you are seen as part of the whole oppressive apparatus.

But anyway, when such people die, and they lose their physical bodies and they are not in contact with other people, so to speak, they are left to their own subjectivity - which is as it were what happens when you die - they are then free to construct their own world and live in it, which they proceed to do. So that is the hell experience in this particular case. Just as you would have a dream - I wonder what such persons' dreams are like, they are probably dreams of fighting and quarrelling, experiencing oppression and paranoia and all the rest of it. You can't imagine them as having happy, peaceful dreams.

Subhuti: What's the existential status of the world that they create, you say they are free to create their own world, is there an objective element in it, or is it more like a dream?

S: But a dream, also, as a dream objectively exists.

Sagaramati: The people in this world objectively exist, but [50] do people in the dream world objectively exist?

S: Well, one could argue this point. What is the proof that people in this world objectively exist in any sense other than that in which the people in a dream appear to exist objectively?

Sagaramati: Well, I mean every day I wake up and they are there! When I go to sleep and dream I can dream of all sorts of people.

S: Yes, but you can also travel when you are awake and you can wake up in a different place every morning and see different people. The contention of the Yogachara School, at least, or perhaps I should say the Vijnaptimatra school, the Vijnanavada school, is that existentially speaking, to use Subhuti's term, there is no difference between waking experience and dream experience.

Sagaramati: But I would have thought that, say, the person who dies and lives in their own sort of subjective world, I would have thought that the objective content of that world is less, and that's why you can't really become Enlightened or you can't really grow in a world like that. But in this world there is some objective content, that can...

S: But what do you mean by less objective content? Can there be **degrees** of objective content?

Sagaramati: Yes I think there can, yes. [*Bhante laughs*] [*Laughter*] It's like you were saying about the rights. It depends on the extent that you project, surely.

S: Yes. But actually what you are saying is, that as it were, from what I have said it would appear that there are two kinds of world, worlds which are entirely subjective and which have an objective existence, as it were only as subjective, and worlds which are subjective but subjective as projected upon an objective support. I would say, at least in commonsense terms, yes, one could say that that was so and that therefore there are, so to speak, degrees of objectivity and subjectivity. Because you can sort of just give a touch of subjectivity to your world and can be predominantly living in, so to speak, an objective world. That is to say a world which is shared by other people who even though they exist within your consciousness you are convinced, for some reason or other, are not actually wholly within your consciousness. So there is a difference between that world and the purely subjective world, which whether you recognise the fact or not, exists wholly within your consciousness as the world of a dreamer does. And clearly there can be intermediate worlds, there can be degrees of admixture. You can have a purely objective world and you can conceive of seeing things purely objectively in terms of seeing them more really, or you can have a purely subjective world. It's not even a question of just seeing the world wrongly, you don't even see the world. You are simply imprisoned within your own subjectivity. Of course you cannot take either objectivity or subjectivity as ultimately real. When you see things purely objectively, in the strict sense, you are not really seeing really them any more really than when you see things, as it were more subjectively. Because according to Buddhist thought or spiritual experience [51] reality is non-dual, it is not either subjective or objective. It is not, as it were, a subject and object side by side. It's a state which we can hardly conceive in which there is no interpretation of experience in terms of the polarity of subject and object.

Virabhadra: What's the advantage of becoming more objective then? Seeing things with a less , in a way, subjective bias?

S: Well, strictly speaking, when we talk of seeing things less subjectively and more objectively, we mean just that. But what we should mean within the Buddhist context is not seeing in terms of subject and object at all, that is the true objectivity. But inasmuch as we cannot envisage that reality which is neither subject nor object, except as an object, we cannot even conceive of it and speak of it except as an object, to that extent and to that extent only, as it were metaphorically, we speak of seeing absolute reality in terms of seeing things as they really are, as it were out there. In other words as object divested of subject. In other words to see things in terms of subjective and objective is a subjective projection.

Virabhadra: But if you're going to do it, it's good to be objective about it.

S: Yes. So it's not a question of an unreal subject inhabiting a real objective world. Or even a real subject inhabiting an unreal objective world. So this rather cuts the ground from under the feet of the sort of question that asks whether the hell world that you experience after death if you are an angry sort of person is objectively real or not.

Subhuti: Except that you were speaking before in terms of you are free to create your own world, which does imply a difference between ...

S: Yes. Well, as I said, in commonsense terms, so to speak, yes, there is the objective world and there is the subjective world and there are degrees of objectivity and subjectivity between them.

But we do see this sort of thing happening in this life itself, don't we? We see somebody as it were projecting his subjective mental state on to the world as a whole, perhaps, or at least on his environment, in a way that we, looking at things differently or from our point of view, can only see as completely unreal and unjustified. And it's borne out by experience. For instance I remember going for a walk with a friend of mine who was tripping and we happened to pass a dog and this little dog, it was a nice, dear little woolly doggie [Laughter] - quite playful and affectionate, but this friend who was with me said, 'Look at that dog, doesn't it look dangerous?' And he told me afterwards that he saw it as really dangerous, like a wolf with great big teeth. But no, I was seeing it as not like that at all. So you could say it is only my word against his, my perception against his. But supposing I had gone up to that dog and patted it and it hadn't bitten me, that would have perhaps, one could argue, have demonstrated that my vision, so to speak, of the dog was correct and that his was not, because had his vision been correct I would certainly would have got bitten by that dog because it was such a dangerous [52] dog, that is what dangerous means, surely. So it's as though there can be an objective criterion in the form of what actually happens. Because if the situation is in fact of such-and-such a nature, such-and-such can be expected to happen, and if it is not such-and-such cannot be expected to happen.

Virabhadra: So it is more of a practical approach rather than a ...

S: Yes, whether it works. If for instance a number of people say the dog is not dangerous and only one person says it is dangerous, it looks dangerous, the chances are that they are right and he is wrong. But sometimes one person is more perceptive than a lot of people. They might say that you are just mad, you are just projecting, but actually it could be that they are blind to what is there, or they don't want to see it; time alone can tell who was right, who was wrong, who was mad, who was sane, who was projecting, who was not projecting.

Sagaramati: But how do you deal with the energy that comes up? At least intellectually you know that it is purely subjective, but the thing is then what do you do with it?

S: Well what do you do with it? You can see it moving in the direction of projection but when you know that that is not justified, that projection is not justified by the environment, but none the less you see the energy moving to doing just that, what are you to do? This doesn't only happen with anger and hatred, it happens with so-called love. Somebody was talking to me about this not so very long ago and said that they were really quite puzzled because they had just been to see someone that they were quite infatuated with not so very long ago and found the encounter completely meaningless and wondered what on earth they had seen in that person just such a short time ago. And they were genuinely puzzled by it, because it seemed like a completely different person, but at the same time that person looked just the same as before. And they just couldn't make it out, that that tremendous feeling and experience that they'd had before just wasn't there, where had it gone to? It's the same person, it was only a few weeks before, the same person, but that corresponding feeling and experience is not moving towards that person, as it were. They don't see that person as they saw that person before.

So it is the same sort of thing, isn't it? So we can see this strong, this intense feeling and energy rising from within ourselves from that blank state and sort of searching for an object. So where has it all come from, what is it, is it from a previous life or is there some other explanation? But we know that this is what happens. The emotion, or the energy, is quite really independent of the situation, it is not really accounted for by the situation. I think the important thing to do is to, at all costs, keep them separate. I think it is at least the first thing that one

can do, keep them separate. Then you can see, when you have really kept them separate for some time, then see what you are going to do with that energy or with that emotion. In the case of the emotion perhaps it can find a more refined, more ideal sort of object. [53] Perhaps it doesn't really belong to or pertain to the, so to speak, material world at all.

Anandajyoti: When you say keep them separate do you mean the energy and the actual, what it is projected on to?

S: Yes, not allow, for instance if you have an experience of, say, wanting to fight, a feeling of wanting to fight, which is a sort of energy, not allowing that actually to fight with anything in the environment, having of course seen something in the environment as deserving to be fought with. Not allowing that to happen, just preventing that energy or that emotion from projecting in that way.

Anandajyoti: This reminds me of something you once said about one of the functions of the Sangha is to contain its own negativity. You don't project outwards on to other groups and organisations.

S: This is something which happens very commonly, groups always are doing this. They project their negativity, so to speak, on to other groups. But if you are in a spiritual community you can't really do this, you can't project. Or if you are an individual trying to develop spiritually you can't project. Maybe you can play around a bit with that energy or emotion which otherwise would have been projected and become familiar with it, maybe learn about it or try to understand what it is doing, what is happening, where it comes from, what it represents. It can perhaps go into whatever you are currently really interested in.

But it is as though this energy or this emotion doesn't come from, isn't justified by, in many cases, the experiences of the present life. I feel this in the case of many of the feminists, they really do hate men, some of them, but if you try to understand why, you find maybe they have never been married so they haven't been beaten by their husband, maybe they have never had a boyfriend so they haven't been ill treated by him. They apparently had quite a good home, or quite good parents, including quite good father. No man, it **seems**, has ever actually done them down in this life but they have got this dreadful, virulent hatred for men, so where does it come from? Perhaps it's got nothing to do with men at all, and gets projected on to men. Because man represents the opposite, they are woman so man is man - the opposite. So if you feel like hating somebody you tend to hate what is opposite, that's the opposite pole, so the anger and the hatred and resentment get projected there. Or that quality which is considered deserving of anger, hatred and resentment is projected. In other words, the oppressor and all that sort of thing.

So it's as though we fit the environment to our mood, so to speak. You feel like falling in love so you look around for someone to fall in love with. It's got nothing to do with them actually. Or you feel like fighting with someone so you look around for someone to fight with. It's rather like the tiger in the Indian story, wanting to eat the lamb. What happened was the lamb was drinking water from the river, from the stream, and the tiger was drinking water from higher up. So - I am just trying to get the story right, it's [54] many years since I have told it I think - so the tiger professed to be quite annoyed by this but the lamb pointed out that in fact the tiger was drinking above where **he** was drinking, so the tiger was polluting the water for him, not him for the tiger. So the tiger had no excuse for getting angry with him on that account. So the tiger said, 'All right, I am going to eat you for treading on my tail.' So the lamb said 'Your tail is not here, your tail is there, how can I be treading on your tail?' So the tiger said 'My tail is everywhere!' and promptly ate the lamb. *[Laughter]*

So when you get angry you are in a mood, my tail is everywhere, whatever you do, anything you can do is going to offend me and I am going to take action accordingly. Sometimes people get into that sort of mood, don't they?

All right, just go on, the next paragraph I think just elaborates a bit.

It is like the story of the hermit who saw a leg of lamb in front of him, and wanted to pick it up and cook it. His teacher told him to mark it with a cross, then later he discovered that the cross was marked on his own chest. It is that kind of notion; you think there is something outside to attack or fight or win over. In most cases hatred is like that. You are angry with something and try to destroy it, but at the same time the process becomes self-destructive, it turns inward and you would like to run away from it; but then it seems too late, you are the anger itself, so there is nowhere to run away. You are haunting yourself constantly, and that is the development of hell.

S: Of course it is not **quite** like that really, in a way, because supposing you are constantly projecting, constantly seeing the environment as threatening and because you see it as threatening, and because you want to see it as threatening to justify your intense desire to fight. Because you do actually get involved in fights with innocent and innocuous people who don't want to fight with you. But you want to fight with them because you see them in that particular way, so maybe they **have** to fight with you. So if you are behaving like that all the time there are lots of people that you make fight with you. So what sort of reputation do **you** start getting? You

start getting the reputation of being a nuisance, a dangerous person. So they might lock you up, your feeling of paranoia and persecution is then confirmed. It does become real, your feeling has confirmed itself.

So it seems rather that this is what happens. If you go on long enough in this way the reality **will** correspond to your projection, and it is rather unfortunate that people who do this sort of thing can involve you, eventually, in their fantasies and actually make you part of their fantasies, even objectively, however unwilling you may be to get involved.

Virabhadra: Would that tend to reinforce the original hatred?

S: Oh yes indeed. Well, you can meet people - for instance, people who invite rejection, who are convinced that you don't like them [55] and that you are rejecting them. So they will do things, it seems, of such a nature that you cannot but reject those things or even them, to the extent to which they are identified with those particular things they do. And then they will take that as confirmation that they are in fact rejected, that people don't in fact like them. They will invite that rejection, actually, but they won't see it in that way, but they will regard what happens as confirmation that they were right all along and that people did reject them.

Devamitra: That's quite a difficult thing to handle, actually.

S: It's very difficult indeed.

John Wakeman: That's presumably why the hell realm is so difficult to get out of - it just goes on confirming itself and getting worse and worse.

S: Yes. Because projection puts you out of contact with people. This is what makes it extra subjective, so to speak. If you are convinced that someone is rejecting you, and you behave all the time as **though** he is rejecting you, even asking him **why** he is rejecting you, and that person knows perfectly well that he's not rejecting you, he cannot but feel completely out of contact with you and you of course are out of contact with him. So he will eventually avoid you, because there is no communication between you. And then in the end you **will** be left on your own, and you **will** be rejected. So the more of projection the more of isolation.

Devamitra: So projection and alienation are very much ...

S: Alienation and lack of communication.

Devamitra: I suppose you can't really have projection without alienation?

S: You can't really. But there's one possibility that I want to suggest. Are not some kinds of projection a normal stage in one's development? I am thinking especially, say, when you fall in love, provided you fall out of it of course shortly afterwards. Could that possibly be regarded as a natural stage in one's development? If so, what significance does it have?

_____: Perpetuate the species. *[Laughter]*

S: Well not necessarily, I mean it helps, but as far as we know animals don't fall in love and they appear to perpetuate their species quite successfully. You could certainly perpetuate your species without falling in love, out of a strict sense of duty, so to speak. But perhaps that isn't sufficient.

Devamitra: Isn't it a projection of your own femininity, which you are not actually in touch with, and so it actually does bring you into contact with it but you project it outwards rather than ...

S: It would seem as though, if there is anything of a positive nature in that particular kind of projective process, it can [56] only be along those sort of lines, it would seem.

Virabhadra: I have been quite struck by mentally ill people that I've come across, and noticed that they can't project, in general. So in a way they can't even sort of be normal human beings through ...

S: Well, you say can't project, what do you mean? Can't fall in love?

Virabhadra: Yes, couldn't fall in love. Sort of dead in a way. I suppose they can't sort of generalise, emotionally.

S: So what happens, for instance, when you fall in love? Just go into it a little bit more. It is quite parallel with what happens when you start really hating somebody. When you fall in love, first of all there is an initial slight liking, let us say. And then you dwell upon that, and you start taking, as it were, more and more pleasure in what you see and you start building up what you see. And you start building it up with materials that you take from within yourself. So actually what you are experiencing is some part of yourself, in a sort of **semi**-alienated

way. Perhaps before you were completely alienated from it and not experiencing it at all, but now you are semi-alienated from it, you are experiencing it, but experiencing it as not belonging to you but as belonging to that particular person. But at least you are experiencing it to some extent. So it would seem as though the secret is to allow the process of projection to begin, and allow yourself to experience that as not exactly alienated, but - what shall I say, alienated is too strong a word - that unpossessed or unclaimed portion of yourself to become sufficiently concrete for it to be experienced by you but not allow it to definitely hook on to that other person in such a way that you can no longer separate what belongs to you from what belongs to that person. That of course is quite difficult.

Usually what happens is, you project, you experience as projected, thinking that it is part of the other person, then you as it were fall out of love, which means the projection is withdrawn. So it is, maybe, in some respects an improvement on the previous experience, because at least you have experienced, even though in - not to say alienated - perhaps separated, bifurcated form. But you haven't been able to take advantage of the opportunity to permanently claim it. Because you haven't understood what was happening it just withdraws after a time. But at least you are modified to some extent, at least you **have** experienced, in a measure, even though in a separated form, some other part of yourself. Do you see what I mean?

Subhuti: The trouble is there can be disappointment and pain attached to it so that you actually block it off again.

S: Yes, because there is that conflict of the projected and the real. For instance, you may project all sorts of perfections on to that person as part of the process of falling in love, but the person may not have those actual qualities and may in fact act in a quite different way - act in such a way that shows that they have the opposite qualities- and that may set up a terrible conflict within you and of course make it perhaps more difficult for you to project on some other occasion, quite apart from all the other incidental difficulties. You feel so puzzled, this person is so kind but at the same time they are so cruel, this person [57] is so beautiful but at the same time they are so ugly. This person is perfect but at the same time they are the worst person in the world, etc., etc.

Virabhadra: Could there be some advantage to a belief in God, then?

S: Pardon?

Virabhadra: Could there be some advantage to a belief in God in the same sort of way, projecting our good qualities on to something?

S: I think the projection which is involved in God isn't the same sort of thing. Because in the case of the projection involved when you fall in love there is actually a person there whom you are in contact with and upon **whom** you project. But you don't come in contact with some sort of supernatural figure who actually exists and then project qualities on to him which he doesn't actually possess.

Virabhadra: So if you developed a belief in God then you wouldn't have the real person there to disillusion you and (**S:** No) bring your projections to the ground, you would just keep going?

S: Only in some ways. Suppose for instance your God is at bottom an exploded scientific hypothesis, let us say. In other words, here is this big, complicated, wonderful world - somebody must have made it - let's call him God. Obviously, just as a man makes a watch, a man builds a house, in the same way this great big, beautiful world must have been constructed by some supreme architect of the universe; so that is God. So in this way you argue yourself into a belief in God, you arrive at that sort of position by philosophical means. So because he has contrived this world so beautifully and wonderfully, he must be perfect. But then there is an earthquake, and ten thousand people are killed. But that perfect God is responsible for that, so then you start realising eventually that all those qualities of goodness and perfection, and so on, you have projected on to the impersonal process of nature, which is neither good nor bad, perfect or imperfect. You just see that you have seen what is essentially power in terms of love, and that the two are incompatible.

So what you do in the case of God, from this point of view, is to project ideal human qualities, which really belong to you, onto the power, whatever it is, which is responsible for the physical world, the physical universe. Not that you encounter a person called God and then project unreal qualities on to him.

Virabhadra: Though it may be good in that you may at least recognise that those ideal human qualities do exist, whereas before you may have had no ideals.

S: It may be, especially under polytheism. But if you've got strict dogmatic theism, say especially in its Christian or Islamic form, it is very difficult to withdraw the projection, because the whole theology resists the withdrawal of the projection. You are, as it were, trained not to withdraw the projection, because the conception of an even higher level of development just does not exist within that sort of tradition. [58]

Virabhadra: It's like the Greek gods seem to be quite constructive in that respect. (S: Yes) They enable people to have the notion of ideal qualities.

S: Yes, right. So from that point of view it is probably better to be a polytheist than a theist. But even theism isn't **too** harmful provided it is of a loose, philosophical kind which is not enforced as an orthodoxy by a church under penalty of prosecution for heresy if you deviate from that particular belief.

If it's a sort of poetical dream rather than a strict theological conviction maybe it has its part to play in the spiritual evolution of humanity.

But in artistic creation there is an element of projection. Do you see what I mean? The artist embodies, not exactly his vision, but very often something of which he is not himself conscious, in the objective work of art, which has of course an objective existence, and then he sees it there, as it were in front of him. In a sense all creation is projection, because you then see, as it were in front of you, something which before you were not really conscious of. That you did not know, in a sense, was there. Though here it's projection in the sense of embodiment, or realisation, as it were, in concrete terms.

Virabhadra: So from the point of view of development, maybe we should be trying to encourage these positive sort of projections that ...

S: To go back for a minute to the example of the falling in love. If you became conscious of that sort of projective energy arising within yourself, instead of allowing it to attach itself to an actual person you could write, say, a poem about an imaginary person, or direct it to an imaginary person in the form of a poem. I think this is very often what happens in the creative arts. It's as though the poets and the creative are able to seize their projections as they emerge and head them off from the real world. Yes? Because, if say a novelist creates a really lovable female character, he knows that it is purely imaginary, it is produced out of his own mind, it has got nothing to do, perhaps, with any woman he has ever met or ever seen. But the ordinary person beginning to feel that sort of feeling, which led the novelist to create that ideal female character, would just project it on to the nearest woman and fall in love.

So the advantage of the work of art is that you know it's completely imaginary, using the word imaginary in its most popular sense. You don't mistake it for reality, unless of course you are in fact, as we would say, mad.

So art is, as it were, the purely subjective objectified. And the projective is the subjective seen as objective. No, not in quite the same way, it's - how shall we differentiate? - the work of art is wholly subjective, but since it has been projected and embodied it is then experienced as an object, or **exists** as an object, in other words the work of art. But when you project on to a person there **is** something there, you do not see what is objectively really there; you project the subjective upon that, and you see the genuinely subjective as falsely objective.

Sagaramati: What of the person who isn't a poet or an artist? [59] What does he do?

S: He falls in love. *[Laughter]*

Sagaramati: Yes, but without falling in love. I mean how would he get round falling in love if he's not a poet or an artist? How can he objectify and sort of ...

S: Well, even the poet or the artist sometimes falls in love. Sometimes more frequently than anybody else, it seems. But at least in nine cases out of ten, it seems, he is able to head off the projection - in fact he is rather projection prone. But the other thing does happen sufficiently frequently for him perhaps to know what is really going on.

But supposing you aren't a poet, well, you might ask yourself why aren't you? Could you not **be**, in some way or other? Or are there different types of artistic creativity? Sometimes I think that artistic creativity isn't limited, necessarily, to the production of poems and novels and so on. You can think of yourself as being your work of art, maybe that is the highest kind of work of art. Or you can think of some group or institution that you are trying to create, as being your work of art. You can think of **events** as constituting the raw material of your work of art. So if you're a statesman, I mean not just a politician. You see what I mean?

But in any case, one should not make the mistake of ascribing to the object what in fact belongs to the subject. It would seem that there is the possibility of projection having a healthy form which can contribute, actually, to our development, if we know what is happening and can use or guide that intelligently. *[Pause]*

Well, it's probably quite important that when you feel the projection beginning to happen you allow it to sort of develop, but without latching on to a pseudo-object. It's not an easy thing to do. For instance, it also happens in the case of fear. Allowing yourself to experience fear whilst at the same time seeing quite clearly that there is nothing, really, of which to be afraid. But that doesn't make the fear go away, so all right, don't try to make the fear go away, just try to keep it separate from the actual objective situation.

Anandajyoti: I think seeing it as projection can sometimes help. I know when I was on solitary, there was one evening on which I definitely realised that I was projecting, I could almost imagine girls (?) pressing their noses against the window panes of the caravan, there was a howling storm going on. I realised there was nothing objective there but that, as you say, didn't make the fear go away. But realising that there wasn't anything objective there did help, I just stayed with it and eventually it ...

S: Sometimes you can even play around with this sort of thing. For instance, you find yourself in a lonely spot, just start making yourself feel afraid, just as children do - 'that isn't a branch, maybe it's some figure', and seeing it as a figure and then making yourself feel afraid because you see it as a figure, and you can then experience for yourself just what happens, really. Experience the whole process.

Anandajyoti: Sometimes it can shade, you can start off by playing [60] and then it becomes a bit more than playing almost.

S: Yes. Well, that is what often happens when you fall in love, it starts off with playing but then it becomes real. But then of course your good friends can sometimes help restore you to a sense of reality. Though of course if you are too far gone sometimes even your **best** friends cannot help you. In fact they will be seen as your worst enemies because they are trying to drag you away from what is most precious in life. They don't understand you and they don't understand her either. They just can't **see** what is really there. That is what the projecting person will think.

But actually, the hard, even stubborn, fact of objective reality **behind** this objective projection sooner or later will help. But it is a pity that you will have to be disillusioned. The fact that it becomes a disillusioning process, or process of disillusionment, is a great pity. It would be really good if you could wake up to the fact of what is happening without going through the experience of a painful disillusionment. I really think that in the case of a normal, healthy person, you fall in love and then out of love comparatively easily, without much of trauma or painful disillusionment. I think it is where the projection is confirmed and obstinate that sooner or later you just **ask** for disillusionment, because your experience is so much at variance with the real facts of the situation.

All right, let's go on then.

Very vivid descriptions of hell are found in Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and symbolically each intense torture is a psychological portrait of oneself. In the hell realm you are not exactly punished, but overwhelmed by the environment of terror, which is described as fields and mountains of red-hot iron and space filled with sparks of fire. Even if you decide to run away you have to walk over this burning metal, and if you decide not to run away you are turned into charcoal yourself. There is intense claustrophobia, heat coming from all directions; the whole earth is turned into hot metal, whole rivers are turned into melted iron, and the whole sky is permeated with fire.

S: Why do you think this symbolism of heat is so universally used in connection with hell, or its equivalent?

Devamitra: Well anger is such a hot passion.

S: Also the painfulness of it. (**Devamitra:** Yes.)

So, 'Very vivid descriptions of hell are found in Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*'. Well, they are found in a number of Buddhist works, and of course they are found in non-Buddhist works. I think one must be really careful here. Trungpa himself says, 'In the hell realm you are not exactly punished', well, that is at least the exoteric explanation, or it appears like punishment. The suggestion being if you break the precepts you will be punished in this particular way - in hell. In other words one tries to get people to lead the spiritual life through fear of the stick, through fear of punishment. In [61] other words, coercively. So is this in fact really possible? It isn't really. You can keep people moral in a purely social sense through fear of punishment, whether in this world or the next, but you cannot induce people to develop spiritually through fear of punishment, or through the threat of hell, this is quite impossible. You can ensure a certain amount of social conformity and even social morality with the help of threats, or prospects of punishment or something, but you cannot ensure anyone's spiritual development in that way.

So you have to be quite sure what you are doing. You cannot make anyone a good Buddhist except in a purely social, not to say civic sense, by threatening them with all the tortures of the eighteen hot and eighteen cold hells, that is simply not possible. In the spiritual world there is no punishment. But you are not usually in the spiritual world, so usually you are punished, and you usually punish yourself in the long run.

So, 'in the hell realm you are not exactly punished', well, you are not punished at all; the Buddha doesn't punish you and the Bodhisattvas don't punish you, you punish yourself. 'but overwhelmed by the environment of terror'. There is not so much an environment of terror, he seems to use subjective terms in a quite objective sense. How can there be an environment of terror? There is an environment which **inspires** terror because you

see it, because you want to see it, in such a way as to **induce** terror. He seems to mean a terrifying environment, perhaps it is simply the English which is at fault here.

And what about the claustrophobia? Well, this, surely, is connected with the intense subjectivity. What is claustrophobia? It's fear of the confined space, isn't it? So if you project more and more you sort of cut yourself off from your environment, you cut yourself off from objective reality, so to speak, and as you do this more and more then your environment becomes smaller and smaller because it is just really an extension of yourself. So you get an experience of claustrophobia and pressure and suffocation and all the rest of it; and intense heat, because that is all intensely painful. You experience everything as threatening, everything as inflicting suffering upon you, and that is hell.

And the Bodhisattva who enters hell or descends into hell is the Bodhisattva who by some unheard of skilful means succeeds in penetrating through the shell of that person's intense subjectivity, of that particular type, i.e. the hate type. And that is a real art to be able to do, to penetrate through the shell of any extreme subjectivity in that way. *[Pause]*

Devamitra: Sometimes people at centres, when they hear about Buddhist cosmology and the hell realm - there's a lot of resistance to the idea that there could be an objective hell. Especially since it's symbolised in terms of people actually being tortured and so on and so forth. What exactly is one meant to understand? Is one meant to understand hell as simply being an intense state of mental suffering which is symbolised by that physical torture, or do you actually say or believe that there is such a realm where that is...

S: Well I have actually known people to say, 'I am being tortured, people are torturing me'. This is what they say, this is how they experience it, other people's innocent actions and words.

Devamitra: But is that all that hell really is? Or is there [62] some cosmological ...

S: But as I said before, if you subtract, if you take away, the objective reality on which the projection is superimposed you have only got the subjective projection. And it's within that that they live. So therefore that is their world, yes, and it is a world, as a dream is a world. Except in the case of a dream you are still attached to your physical body, can come back to it and the world of what is called public reality.

Perhaps though, as a sort of concession you had best explain it as symbolism - to begin with. There is this story from Japanese Zen Buddhism that a Samurai and the Abbot of a Zen temple had an argument about whether there actually was an objective hell or not, or whether there was hell at all. And the Samurai said 'There's no such thing as hell, it is just an old wives' tale.' So the Abbot said, 'No, no, of course there is a hell, the Buddha said so, the Bodhisattvas all tell us so, the Zen Masters all tell us.' So the Samurai said, 'No, I tell you there isn't a hell', so the Abbot says, 'There is, you are just a fool, you just can't recognise it.' So the Samurai got really angry and said, 'No there **isn't** a hell', and he shouted it, so the master said, 'Yes there **is** a hell', and he also shouted. And as the Samurai drew his sword, 'There is no hell', so the master said, 'There is a hell and you are now in it!' *[Laughter]* So the Samurai saw the point and he put his sword back in his sheath and the master said, 'And now you are out of it'. *[Laughter]* So you can tell little stories like that to put your point across, if you see what I mean.

Then you can emphasise that sometimes the psychological condition is so intense, it is so real that people really feel that they are in a sort of hell. And you can give the sort of illustration I gave you about my friend in Kalimpong. And go as far as that person seems receptive enough to be able to go with you.

Devamitra: There's another point, actually, which bothers me personally about hell, and that is that, from what I have understood, it almost seems like it is impossible, actually, once you have really sunk to such a low state, really to get out of it again because the thing sort of keeps confirming itself.

S: Well, this is why there is, in Buddhism, in the Mahayana, concepts like that of the Bodhisattva who descends into hell. It is as though it takes a Bodhisattva to break through into that sort of situation, and really establish contact with that sort of person. It is very, very difficult. This is why one must be so careful not to set one's foot on the path which leads inevitably, if you continue, to that sort of state.

Buddhadasa: But we do see from the symbolism in the Wheel of Life that the chances of gaining Enlightenment from hell are quite good.

S: Why do you think that is, in terms of our present discussion? What is the usual explanation?

Subhuti: You've got an intense projection, so you've got, in a sense, more chance of seeing through it.

S: Have you, do you think? What do you mean by an intense projection? Do you mean that the emotion is intense or do [63] you mean that the projection itself, as a projection, is confirmed? The usual explanation is that the beings in hell are suffering so greatly that they have got an extra motivation for reaching the state of

Enlightenment, where they will be free for ever from such sufferings. That is the usual explanation, but it doesn't sound altogether convincing.

Devamitra: Well, it doesn't when you know that hatred seems to lead to more hatred.

S: And to feed upon itself.

Devamitra: Precisely, that's what I can't work out.

Tape 4

S: Of course one way of looking at it is that the angry person has got tremendous energy, and it is that sort of energy that you need for getting to Enlightenment.

Devamitra: We've said that generally people with drive are people of the hate temperament.

S: It would seem so, yes. The choleric type.

Devamitra: But to get back to the point that I initially raised. Are you suggesting that once you really have sunk that low the only hope for you is external help? You have reached such a point where you've just sunk where you can't see any ...

S: It's quite impossible to say. No doubt there is that possibility. I think one should be very cautious in identifying any particular individual as a case of that sort, and therefore giving up trying. It may be that there are persons who do put themselves into that sort of state, well they will just have to be left to the Bodhisattvas, so to speak. But one shouldn't ever actually write off anybody as falling within this category. You never know, there might be a response. *[Long Pause]*

I think one of the great difficulties, one of the great dangers about the projective situation is that under the influence of the projection you will tie yourself to a situation which, even if it doesn't perpetuate the projection itself, will deprive you of your freedom to do anything else. I am thinking, for instance, of the projection of falling in love. Supposing you project in that particular way, all right, so because you have fallen in love and see a certain person in a particular way you want to be with that person for ever, so you legally marry them. And that leads, perhaps, to your having children, but then of course the projection is withdrawn and you see that that person isn't as you thought, and that you don't in fact want to be with that person for ever. But you have legally bound yourself to that person by way of marriage and also the bond has been further reinforced by the arrival of children and such things as mortgage payments and so on. So you are tied to the projective situation by virtue of what has objectively happened, or what you have done, under the influence of that projection. I think this is where the danger comes in - and you are thereby deprived of your freedom.

If it was a dream, you would simply wake up, but in this case you wake up but the dream continues in a rather less pleasant way. It's rather as though in your dream you kill [64] somebody and when you wake up you are sentenced to death. The consequences remain with you.

Sagaramati: But it is funny in a sense that you never ever fall in love in a dream.

S: I believe some people do, I believe some people have done this. Well, why not?

Sagaramati: I thought, the dream being more subjective you can't ...

S: Yes, you don't fall in love with a person who objectively is there, as in the case of the work of art you create the person totally, yes. Although I would even go so far as to say that in a dream you could have a dream about somebody whom you knew in the ordinary way and then in the dream sort of attribute all sort of ideal qualities to them and, so to speak fall, in love. Presumably this could happen.

John Wakeman: Perhaps generally you just don't have time in a dream to project all that on to the person you're dreaming about.

S: On the other hand time is subjective. You can have a dream which lasts for weeks and months, then you wake up and you have only been asleep half an hour. So where is the lack of time? In a dream you have got time to fall in love and out of it too, before you wake up. *[Pause]*

So I think just a few words about these very vivid descriptions of hell. Buddhist tradition doesn't altogether avoid these but I think in fact we need to avoid these, because they tend to be regarded as sort of - what shall I say? - not sanctifications, there's another word a bit like that I am searching for, not sanctifications - **sanctions**, for the spiritual life itself.

Sagaramati: Ah, but if you don't lead the spiritual life this is what would happen.

S: Yes, if you are a bad boy and not a good Buddhist this is what will happen to you. Much as the Catholics use this sort of mythology, so to speak. In other words the whole of religion, to use that word, becomes based on fear and coercion, in fact. And I further thought that if someone invokes these descriptions of hell too vigorously he in fact is not sort of warning you of the logical consequences, or natural consequences, of unskilful action, he is trying to force and threaten you into leading the spiritual life. He is in fact trying to assert authority over you. He is trying to force you, or to exercise authority over you. So it is **not** the function of the spiritual person to threaten anybody with hell. They are not then functioning as a spiritual person.

_____ : Are you suggesting that Gampopa had a touch of this?

S: I think there is a touch of this, unfortunately, in Buddhist tradition itself. Because it is a great temptation to - well, there is more of a touch of it in Christianity; Christianity, especially Catholic Christianity, is full of it - but there is, unfortunately, a touch of it here and there in Buddhism. [65]

Devamitra: There is quite a graphic, actually, I think it is in the *Mahavamsa* where Ananda goes and visits various hells. I've always found that difficult to read, actually! It's quite horrific.

S: That's quite apart from the fact that sometimes, by these descriptions of hells, people are gratifying basically sadistic feelings. There is that factor too. It depends how lovingly you dwell upon each and every detail.

Devamitra: It's interesting that such description should have arisen in Buddhist scriptures. Why do you think that did happen?

S: I think it is a result of human weakness. I don't accept all those descriptions as quite objective accounts of what actually happens. I think this sort of thing happens when the spiritual community becomes a group and one wants to ensure conformity, and what is one of the instruments of ensuring conformity? Threatening, fear. So you take the undoubted fact that unskilful actions do produce suffering and you try to present everything that is not in accordance with your ideas of what is right and proper for the group as unskilful and therefore as followed by such-and-such consequences of an extremely painful nature. And then you start enlarging upon those painful consequences more and more, painting vivid pictures of hell just so as to ensure the conformity of your flock, which by this time has in fact become a group.

Devamitra: So you presumably would doubt whether in fact the Buddha gave any graphic descriptions of hell, which is in fact what is suggested.

S: I would doubt whether the Buddha gave very detailed descriptions or lingered upon the details. Though he might have just very quickly and so to speak unwillingly sketched in, but he certainly would not dwell upon those things. And certainly not within the context of spiritual development as such. Otherwise it is no more than a pseudo-spiritual equivalent of threatening people with the police. [Laughter] Is it not? And that is not spiritual life.

Devamitra: So we can take these as interpolations, perhaps - because it's dubious to me that **Gampopa** would do the same, presumably, if he was regarded as an Enlightened Bodhisattva he wouldn't have done.

S: Well, presumably not. On the other hand ...

Sagaramati: It's in Tibetan Buddhism that you come across the most graphic ... In Tibet the Buddhist doctrine had a very ethnic flavour to it, it kept the whole social order.

S: Yes, quite. Well, there is a justification in doing that. Perhaps there is even a case to be made out for threatening people and keeping them in order socially through the fear of hell, but this is no more than maintaining the stability of the social group, it has got nothing to do with the spiritual life and nothing to do with Buddhism as such, with Buddhism **as** the path of the spiritual life. Even a spiritual master might think that it is worth keeping a particular social group going, even if it means threatening people with punishment after death as well [66] as in this life, but he would certainly never confuse that with the actual leading of the spiritual life. Or ever think that you could frighten people, so to speak, into leading a spiritual life as distinct from a life of social and ethical conformity. Well, here there is a sort of, maybe not a fine distinction but a ... [gap in recording] ... well, sometimes in society there are very unruly elements, how is one to keep them in order? If little Johnny misbehaves you tell him that if he's not a good boy you will go and have a word with the policeman and he'll take him away. So what is the difference between that and telling little Johnny if he's not a good boy that God will strike him dead, as they used to be told in the last century. There's no difference in principle, because both statements are false. The policeman is not going to take any notice of what little Johnny is doing in the privacy of his own home and similarly God is not going to take any similar interest either, even assuming that there is a God, presumably. Some Christians seriously seem to think that actually he is very interested in what little Johnny is doing and quite prepared to take action if necessary.

So it resolves into a more general question of are you justified in telling lies for the sake of maintaining social order? Plato thought that you were, but anyway we had better not discuss that, it's quite a big question.

Devamitra: There's another point which stems from graphic verbal descriptions of hell. We have displayed, quite often Wheels of Life which have the hell realm - admittedly it's in symbols and all that but it does present quite a horrific picture. I mean it's the same thing, surely.

S: Well, I think it is a question of emphasis. Well, it's there as part of the total picture, you cannot exclude that. And people do land themselves in extremely painful situations on account of their own foolish, unskilful - especially angry and hateful - actions. That segment in the Wheel of Life is just pointing out that fact, with the perhaps additional suggestion that that process continues after so-called death.

Sagaramati: You **could** start on the spiritual life, like Milarepa, by realising the nasty and suffering consequences he was going to have to go through.

S: Well, he believed that; no one inculcated that particular belief in him, he already believed that and he therefore made that his motivation.

Sagaramati: So that could be your motivation if you did believe this might happen to you, you might be motivated to ...

S: Yes. But from a Buddhist point of view you could hardly teach people that sort of thing without believing it yourself so as to motivate them in the right sort of way. That wouldn't be regarded as justifiable.

Again it's a question of what do you use if you abnegate the use of stick and carrot? You can only fall back upon inspiration and vision and hope people are capable of being inspired and envisioned.

Finish this last paragraph and then we can go on to the Hungry Ghost Realm after tea. [67]

The other type of hell is the reverse, the experience of intense cold and snow, an icy world in which everything is completely frozen. This is another type of aggression, the aggression which refuses to communicate at all. It is a kind of indignation which usually comes from intense pride, and the pride turns into an ice-cold environment which reinforced by self-satisfaction begins to get into the system. It does not allow us to dance or smile or hear the music.

S: This is actually quite good except for that last sentence which is rather unfortunate. I don't know what dance or smile or music there would be in hell anyway, even a cold one, but still that's neither here nor there.

But yes, this is another type of aggression, the aggression which refuses to communicate at all. This is the sort of cold anger which is worse than the hot anger. 'It is a kind of indignation which usually comes from intense pride, and the pride turns into an ice-cold environment which reinforced by self-satisfaction begins to get into the system.' This is very true.

Sagaramati: Isn't this what we would call resentment?

S: No, I don't think resentment amounts to that, I think it's much worse. I don't think resentment amounts to this hot anger, it's just a little spark of that, just smouldering, as it were.

Sagaramati: This is worse than resentment.

S: I would say that the hot anger is worse than resentment and the cold anger is worse than the hot anger. It does create this ice-cold environment, the cold hell. This is a quite original conception of Buddhism, if I may say so, the cold hell. No doubt it is based, ultimately, on certain psychological facts. [Pause]

Sagaramati: But I thought that resentment came about through the non-expression of hot anger. Your hot anger is subdued and it builds up internally and that is what resentment is.

S: I think it's a question of terminology. I take resentment as being a dull, sullen sort of anger which is not very strong. Maybe it's not strong enough to force expression so it just sort of smoulders in an unsatisfactory way. Then there is the expressed anger which we can just call anger. But I think there is also a very violent anger which doesn't get expressed which is much worse than just resentment. I don't know whether we have got, really, a separate word for that. But it is a very dangerous feeling indeed.

Devamitra: Is it akin at all to what you've described as a sort of emotional ignoring?

S: Oh no, that is more like the cold anger.

Anandajyoti: A sort of knife edge, sharp, sort of cold.

S: No, no, I'm not thinking of anything like that. It's more like a sort of boiling within, boiling inside, you don't express it. It's more that when you boil inside, it's worse surely than resentment, isn't it. This is, I think, the expression which [68] covers it, when you are just boiling inside, maybe a bit of steam comes out but not much else, you don't really express that boiling anger but it goes on boiling inside you all the same and bubbling inside you and scorching you. But it is a much stronger thing than just resentment, even than strong resentment.
[Pause]

I don't quite agree here that, 'it is a kind of indignation', no, I think indignation is more like a hot anger. But certainly it is connected with intense pride. 'And the pride turns into an ice-cold environment which reinforced by self-satisfaction begins to get into the system.'

_____: Contempt would be a better word instead of indignation.

S: Contempt, yes its associated with contempt, hauser.

Devamitra: Why do you actually say it's worse than the hot anger?

S: It's more intense, it's more strongly associated with pride and ego.

Sagaramati: It's more hateful.

S: It's more hateful, it's malicious.

Adrian Macro: There's almost an extra degree of alienation in the sense that you tend to be cut off from the object of your hatred, as in the cold state.

S: Yes, right. If you are angry with someone at least you are in contact, in communication, to some extent. But in the case of the cold anger you are so angry that you cut yourself off from the object of your anger itself.

I normally distinguish between anger and hatred. Anger is sort of obstructed energy which is trying to break through an obstacle, perhaps an obstacle in the form of a person. But hatred is the definite ill-will, the definite desire to inflict injury and suffering on the other person. When you are angry you lash out and the harm which you do is done more or less incidentally, you just want to break through the obstacle. But when you are hating, when you are full of hatred, you do harm of set purpose, and wish to do harm, usually because harm has been done to you. When you wish to inflict harm without any harm having been done to you, this is usually called malice, which is **gratuitous** hatred, or the **gratuitous** infliction of suffering.

So hatred is opposed to love, say *maitri*, but malice or cruelty is opposed to compassion.

Anandajyoti: There is often an element of calculation in it, when you say 'cold and calculated'.

S: Yes, right, yes. So hatred opposed to love, malice is opposed to compassion, but what is anger opposed to then?

Sagaramati: Friendliness.

S: Friendliness or patience even, yes. [Pause] [69]

So I don't see anger, as defined in this way, as being necessarily a negative emotion. But hatred certainly is and malice very certainly is.

And aggressiveness is not necessarily a negative emotion, aggressiveness is more like using your anger in a constructive way to break through something which you see as needing to be broken through, or needing to be attacked. So it can be positive according to what it is used for. You may direct your aggressiveness against various *miccha-ditthis* in your environment, that would be positive and skilful.

Sagaramati: The people of Oldham feel they are being attacked. [Laughter]

S: Well, to the extent to which they are identified with the *miccha-ditthis*, or identify themselves with them they are being attacked. If they identify themselves with the *miccha-ditthis* then, OK, they are being attacked. If they don't identify themselves with them they are not being attacked.

Sagaramati: So they are being attacked without you attacking them.

S: That's right, yes. Which is the essence of projection, also.

_____ : It is quite important, then, to segregate aggressiveness from hatred.

S: I think so, yes.

_____ : You can block aggressiveness and block your whole spiritual development.

S: Yes, because you block your energy, yes. You could even, if you wanted to be a bit challenging and provocative, translate *virya* as aggressiveness.

Virabhadra: What's righteous indignation in the Christian sense? Is that hatred or just misdirected aggression?

S: I think righteous indignation is regarded as indignation or anger which is morally justified. But Buddhism would not agree with that, I think. It can amount to hatred being morally justified.

Virabhadra: But there are circumstances in which from a Buddhist point of view you could say that anger was justified. Or is that taking it too far?

Sagaramati: But not morally justified.

S: You could say that it would be psychologically justified, or psychologically understandable. If your energy was being persistently blocked and accumulated, after a point your blocked and accumulated energy would try to start trying to force its way through. Which is all that anger, basically, really is.

Aggressiveness would seem to be a bit different. In the case of aggressiveness you don't break through something which is obstructing the expression of your own energy; you use [70] your energy to break through something which is seen as wrong or harmful or undesirable in some other way or for some other reason. It may not necessarily be directly blocking you in the expression of your energy.

[Tea Break]

THE HUNGRY GHOST REALM

Then we have another realm of mind, that of the *pretas* or hungry ghosts. To begin with we get into the luminosity by working up not aggression this time but intense greed. There is a sense of poverty, yet at the same time a sense of richness, contradictory and yet operating together simultaneously.

S: Yes, this sort of getting into the luminosity by working up this particular passion is no more satisfactory than it was, really, in the last section. So let's carry on because there's a more detailed explanation; then we can consider, I think, the three first paragraphs together, so let's have them one after the other.

In the hungry ghost realm there is a tremendous feeling of richness, of gathering a lot of possessions; whatever you want you do not have to look for, but you find yourself possessing it. And this makes us more hungry, more deprived, because we get satisfaction not from possessing alone but from searching. But now, since we have everything already, we cannot go out and look for something and possess it. It is very frustrating, a fundamental insatiable hunger.

It is as though you are completely full, so full that you cannot eat any more; but you love to eat, and so you begin to have hallucinations of the flavour of food and the pleasure of eating it, tasting it, chewing it, swallowing it and digesting it. The whole process seems luxurious, and you feel extremely envious of other people who can really be hungry and eat.

S: The key note seems to be, 'there is a sense of poverty yet at the same time a sense of richness... whatever you want you do not have to look for, but you find yourself possessing it. And this makes us more hungry, more deprived, because we get satisfaction not from possessing alone but from searching... It is as though you are completely full, so full that you cannot eat any more', you are not full of course in the sense of being full, but only in the sense of possessing, and far from not being able to eat any more you can't eat anything **at all**, actually. So the *preta* state is pretty clearly indicated. You all know the sort of people who like to collect things. **Why** do people like to collect things? Why do people collect stamps, why do people collect pictures? Maybe it is out of a genuine interest in some cases, because they like stamps or they like pictures, but leaving that aside, that more positive possibility, why is it that people collect?

Adrian Macro: They need to fill in their time, they need to occupy themselves.

S: But are they ever satisfied, however big their collection is?

Adrian Macro: No, there's no theoretical limit to it.[71]

S: No. There's no theoretical limit. That is partly why, perhaps, they take up collecting. So what does that suggest?

Devamitra: It suggests an ongoing hunger.

S: An ongoing hunger, which can never be satisfied even by the actual possession of the object. So you have to possess another object of the same kind, i.e. add to your collection. So this is what the *pretas* symbolise. Because the *preta* has, as the next paragraph will tell us, the big belly and the thin neck, and whatever he touches, whatever food he gets, turns to flame or to poison or something of that sort. So he is able to possess the food but he is not actually able to enjoy it. He just hopes that he can enjoy it next time, so he adds a bit more food, he collects a bit more food. So this is the sort of collector mentality, you possess yourself of another object of the same kind in the hope that **that** object will satisfy your hunger. But actually you find it doesn't.

Some people are said to collect women, that is to say they have a succession of affairs, none of which gives them any real satisfaction, but they have this neurotic impulsion to have another one. It's as though they hope that the next one will, but the next one doesn't because the situation hasn't changed.

So what is it, or maybe what is one of the factors at the root of the *preta* sort of state? What is it that prevents you enjoying what you possess?

Devamitra: You don't enjoy yourself.

S: You don't enjoy yourself, yes, that's one way of putting it. So what does one mean by not enjoying oneself?

Devamitra: It's that you don't have a full experience of yourself, lack of metta for a start.

S: Yes, you don't have a full experience of yourself, don't have metta for yourself. You don't experience yourself emotionally. So that when something comes into contact with you, or you come into contact with something which should give you an emotional experience you don't feel anything.

Devamitra: So it's a complete emotional poverty.

S: Yes. For instance, I am sure that most people have had the experience, you might at some time in the past have really intensely enjoyed a certain book, say, a poem or piece of music. So maybe you are feeling one day a bit dull and a bit tired and a bit stale so you think, all right, let me put on that record, I really enjoyed that. You put it on but you get nothing out of it. Because there has to be some corresponding state in you. Do you see what I mean? To enjoy the music you have to be in tune with that, you have to be in touch with yourself emotionally, otherwise you can go on playing record after record but nothing happens.

So you add, as it were, something to your collection, or you go on adding, just because you aren't able to enjoy what you have. So collecting the, as it were, symbols, or means of enjoyment, becomes a substitute for the actual enjoyment.

Devamitra: Would you say that the miser was a species of the hungry ghost? [72]

S: Yes, one could say that. Well, the collector of anything, including coins, including money. He doesn't enjoy. The miser is one who accumulates money without ever spending anything on himself. Well, clearly he can't enjoy himself, that's why, and he doesn't love himself, obviously. [Pause]

Devamitra: Do you think this is akin also to the need for a hobby, is it that sort of thing as well or is that something positive?

S: I think a lot of people **enjoy** their hobbies and get genuine interest out of them. There are hobbies and hobbies. There are doing things and making things which are hobbies. There are some hobbies which are collecting hobbies. It could be that in some cases, in the case of some people, some collecting hobbies are of a *preta*-like nature. But I don't think hobbies as such are. [Pause]

Anandajyoti: This state, and I might be dragging in a bit of a red herring here, seems to be fairly akin to what some people have described as the dark night of the soul. And you in one of your lectures referred to a stage in one's development where you can encounter emotional impoverishment. You can't get ...

S: Dryness, it's called not so much dark night of the soul, which is a more specialised development, a more particular mystical tradition, but a sort of dryness.

Anandajyoti: Well, you can't get any satisfaction from anything, meditation, pujas, contact with friends particularly, even the environment. Everything seems to be quite dead, quite dry, quite grey.

S: Well the temptation there is to, as it were, go on collecting things, even experiences. Even though you don't get anything out of them. For instance, you are no longer able to enjoy a good read, so you collect books. Do you see what I mean? You may not even read them any more. So the important thing is to remain with the state of dryness or boredom, as it sometimes may be, until something else starts happening or until you get into contact with some feeling or other. It may be a more refined feeling then, but not to allow yourself to be distracted, or not distract yourself by the multiplication of experiences or possessions which you can no longer actually enjoy, or which no longer mean anything to you.

There is a difference between this and the *preta* state, because usually in this case you have enjoyed at some time or other, but can no longer enjoy. Perhaps because the potentiality of a higher kind of enjoyment is beginning to develop within you. You are growing up, in a sense, just as the child starts going off its toys. But in the case of the *preta*, within the time span that we considered the *preta*, so to speak, the *preta* has **never** been able to enjoy anything. That's the whole trouble, that's the whole problem.

So this sort of dryness and emotional impoverishment is in many cases due to the fact that you are growing out of certain things which before were important to you and which before you enjoyed, but which were good in their time, good at the particular stage of development that you were in when you were able to enjoy them.

This is of course a bit different from getting fed up with the spiritual life itself and finding the spiritual life itself dry, it's rather different from that. That means simply [73] that your sources of inspiration have dried up. Dried up - you see the expression - and the vision has faded, you have to then recapture those things. That might mean, in a sense, going back a bit, a strategic withdrawal. Going back to the things that you actually enjoy, even if they are, as it were, mundane things like music and poetry and so on. To re-establish contact with your own feelings.

But how is it people get alienated from themselves and no longer experience themselves, and no longer **have** feelings so that they **can** enjoy things and enjoy life and enjoy, say, music and poetry and meditation and the spiritual life itself? What **makes** somebody a *preta*? Trungpa says, 'To begin with we get into the luminosity by working up not aggression this time but intense greed.' How does it come about that we work up intense greed? Is it just intense greed? It is not a strong healthy greed which we are able to satisfy; it's a greed that we are unable, by the very nature of the greed itself, to satisfy.

Devamitra: Is it because, maybe whereas previously you could appreciate an object and then you somehow try to possess the object rather than simply appreciate it.

S: There is that aspect, yes. Or you consider possession equivalent to enjoyment. This is perhaps in a way the essence of the *preta*-like state. You so much mistake possession for enjoyment that you cannot enjoy, you think possession is enjoyment. The *preta* possesses but he cannot enjoy. In a sense you have to possess in order to enjoy but the *preta* thinks that possession **is** enjoyment, so he thinks that because I am not enjoying it it means that I haven't really got it, I have got to have more of it, so he goes on collecting it.

But there's also another sort of way of looking at the *preta*, which is in projective terms. The *preta* is unable to enjoy something because what he actually sees and what he is trying to enjoy is not in fact really there objectively. He can only enjoy it by contacting it, as it were, within himself, it doesn't exist outside himself.

Devamitra: So he's only enjoying his own projection, if he's enjoying anything at all?

S: He cannot enjoy his own projection because the objective nature of what he is projecting on to prevents him from doing that. Supposing you actually see sand as cake, and you put sand into your mouth, what will you then taste? Sand. This is what happens to the *preta*, he sees food, he puts it into his mouth and it goes down to his stomach and he experiences it as fire.

Adrian Macro: Or eating sweets as a sublimated form of reassurance.

S: Yes, right. Because the sweet does not contain reassurance, it only contains sugar. So you don't get really assured so you eat another sweet.

So it's as though there are two aspects of the *preta* experience, or non-experience; that is to say, not being in touch with your own feelings and trying to get feelings, or get experiences, by as it were swallowing things which are out there which you see as able to give you those feelings or those experiences or that nourishment.

So on the one hand you are alienated from your own feelings, you don't experience feelings, you don't experience yourself; on the other hand you try to supplement that by bringing in something of a feeling nature from outside, but you aren't able to actually experience that **because** you are out of contact with your own

feelings. In the case of the healthy person he is in contact with himself, he has a certain possibility of experience and there is something which when it comes in contact with him can as it were spark off a further experience. But in the case of the *preta* he isn't in contact with himself, he's alienated from himself, especially from his emotional experience, so instead of getting into contact with himself he brings into contact with himself something which he thinks of as being able to give him what he lacks, but since he lacks it it cannot be given to him. Because what he thinks of as the giving is in fact simply the contact between two things which are alive, as it were. [Pause]

But basically, yes, a *preta* is someone who is unable to experience anything and enjoy anything because he is out of contact with himself and his emotional experience, he is alienated from that. So no amount of bringing things in from the outside will help or will be of any avail, he will go on suffering from that emotional starvation. He has to re-establish contact with himself, he has to enjoy himself before he can enjoy anything else. But his previous intense greed is not the explanation, because that intense greed is already neurotic, in other words already *preta*-like. There is as it were no explanation. But you could say, well, how **do** you become a *preta*, how **do** you become a being in hell?

To begin with how do you become a *preta*? Presuming you are not born a *preta* could you become a *preta* in this life?

Virabhadra: You lose contact with yourself.

S: How do you lose contact with yourself, what causes you to lose contact with yourself?

Devamitra: You cut off from your feelings.

S: Why do you cut off from your feelings?

Devamitra: You don't like them.

S: Well, perhaps the feelings have become very painful. It could happen for that reason. You feel very painful feelings for some reason or other so you become afraid of feelings in general, you cut off. Because you can't cut off from pain without cutting off from pleasure. Or you could have been conditioned into thinking that certain kinds of feelings are wrong and you should not be feeling them, but it's very difficult to be selective and cut off the experience of certain feelings and not others. So the end result seems to be that you cut off from all feelings. So you can become a *preta* in that way. But at the same time you are conscious of some sort of lack so you try to compensate from outside, but that doesn't work, so you start collecting, and then you are a *preta*.

You could say this is a psychological application of the principle of back to the beginning. What is the beginning? Your own experience of yourself, your own self feeling. When things go wrong that's where you have got to get back to. [75]

Sagaramati: You've got to get back to when things went wrong?

S: No, experiencing yourself when you get alienated or become *preta*-like. Or if you are experiencing the cold anger get back to the hot anger.

Virabhadra: That's quite a different sort of psychotherapy to just following the process back. You could just keep following these states back without ever getting in touch with yourself.

S: Well, you would go back only so far as is necessary to go forward. If you are no longer able to go forward you go back until you reach that fork in the road, as it were, where you went wrong, and from which you can now go forward. You don't go back and back even after reaching the point from which there was a possibility of going forward again. That's the difference between reductive analysis, as it were, and the Buddhist approach. The Buddhist is interested in going forward, not in going back and back for its own sake. [Pause]

To go off on a slightly different tack, I did say once apropos of my experience of Tibetan Buddhists in Kalimpong that some Tibetans collected initiations, *wongs*, like some people collected stamps. Looking back upon that it's as though they collected so many, wanted to collect so many, because they weren't actually practising any, or perhaps weren't able to practise any. So collecting *wongs*, collecting initiations and *sadhanas* became a substitute for actually practising even a single one of them.

Maybe this is one reason why people have one drink after another. They didn't have the first one, do you see what I mean? They just swallowed it.

So the more you are in touch with yourself, in a sense - purely physical considerations aside - the less you need of something to satisfy you.

Sagaramati: But there are some things that maybe used to satisfy you and they become the opposite. Things like dope or drink that used to satisfy you, but you are more in touch with yourself after a meditation etc.,...

S: You don't need them at all.

Sagaramati: ...they actually have the opposite effect.

S: Yes. Well, it's as though your experience of yourself is so positive and so intense that anything else ranks as an interruption and therefore as a disturbance and therefore something painful. Because it interrupts your own self-experience. *[Pause]*

So was it in this study group that we mentioned chastity and virginity yesterday?

Sagaramati: Oh no! *[Laughter]*

S: Purity. So this is what purity is, purity - we agreed yesterday in the other group - was the experience of yourself in a completely undiluted way. So this is really what chastity - to use that word rather than celibacy or virginity even - is all about. Your experience of yourself is so intense and so positive that you don't need any experience of or with anybody else. That would in fact be experienced as disruptive. You don't need anybody else to help you experience yourself, [76] certainly not in a gross form. You may need it in, say, a more refined form, like conversation or something of that sort. *[Pause]*

Sagaramati: So when you get to that stage you can only give, like the Bodhisattva. I'm imagining! *[Laughter]*

S: I'm not quite sure of that. I was trying to differentiate certain strands; the biological, the psychological and the spiritual. We have been talking about the psychological. You may be as it were psychologically virgin, let us say, but continue to have a biological sexual function.

Sagaramati: You may be? Sorry?

S: You may be psychologically virgin, as it were, but continue to have a biological sexual function, not out of psychological need but simply because the biological urge was there. Do you see what I mean? Just like the need for food; but you can eat food without needing the food as a sort of psychological prop. So **possibly** - I say only possibly because I don't want to provide anyone with a convenient rationalisation - possibly you could be psychologically not only virginal but *virgo intacto* *[Laughter]* but still, as I said, function biologically sexually. Do you see what I mean? But I advance that suggestion or possibility only with caution and with many warnings. You see what I am thinking?

And it is the psychological virginity which is important, not the biological virginity. There's not much point in being a biological virgin if you are not a psychological one. *[Pause]*

Adrian Macro: So what's a psychological..., the opposite, - philanderer?

S: A psychological philanderer?

Adrian Macro: Well how would that manifest in that ...

S: Well in a *preta*-like way, constantly grabbing at experiences which you never actually experience.

_____: Don Juan.

S: Don Juan, yes. I mean, I said some men collect women like others collect stamps. It could manifest in that sort of way. Again that can be the manifestation of an exceptionally strong biological urge, it can be simply that, it is not necessarily a *preta*-like attitude. It becomes *preta*-like only when it is intended, mistakenly, to fulfil a psychological need, which in fact it does **not** fulfil. But you don't see that, so you continue going through those motions even though they don't satisfy you. You keep thinking, 'Satisfaction will come next time.'

Trungpa seems to be confusing the *preta*-like attitude with strong greed. You see, for instance in this last paragraph he says, 'It is as though you are completely full, so full that you cannot eat any more' - well, the *preta* is not full at all - 'but you love to eat, and so you begin to have hallucinations of the flavour of food and the pleasure of eating, tasting it, chewing it, swallowing and digesting it. The whole process seems luxurious, and you feel extremely envious of other people [77] who can really be hungry and eat.' That last bit is contradictory, isn't it? You may be physically full without actually being satisfied because you are expecting from the food a sort of **psychological** satisfaction. But your stomach can be physically full and you can still be empty, because you are **psychologically** empty. But there are people whose stomachs are full and who are

psychologically satisfied, but who, out of strong greed, just go on imagining even further culinary delights. He seems to be talking more about that sort of person, who isn't, I would say, strictly speaking a *preta*.

Sagaramati: Just a greedy person.

S: Just a greedy person, yes. The person who says, 'Oh, I wish I could have another helping but I am really so full' would actually like another helping, they are just greedy. They'd like another helping because they enjoyed it so much, not because they were unable to enjoy the first. This is the distinction between the greedy person and the *preta*. Trungpa seems to confuse these two.

The greedy person is the person who is over-fond of actual enjoyment, but the *preta*-like person is not even able to enjoy at all. Anyway, let's go on to this next paragraph describing the *preta*.

This is symbolised by the image of a person with a gigantic belly and extremely thin neck and tiny mouth. There are different stages of this experience, depending on the intensity of hunger.

S: It doesn't depend on the intensity of the hunger, it depends on the intensity of the neurosis, the neurotic desire.

Some people can pick food up, but then it dissolves or they cannot eat it;

S: He means some *pretas*, *preta*-like people.

some people can pick it up and put it in their mouth, but they cannot swallow it; and some people can swallow it but once it gets into their stomach it begins to burn. There are all sorts of levels of that hunger, which constantly happen in everyday life.

S: Well, that's true, but hunger is perhaps not quite the right term here, it should be at least **neurotic** hunger. It's not just greed, as we have seen, it's more than greed. Well, it's not just more than greed, it's worse than greed, it's different from greed, though connected with greed, or originally based on greed, even.

Right, just go on to the next paragraph, then. The last paragraph.

The joy of possessing does not bring us pleasure any more once we already possess something, and we are constantly trying to look for more possessions, but it turns out to be the same process all over again;

S: It isn't quite that you possess something and you enjoy it and then you get tired of it. No, the *preta* is in a worse condition than that. He possesses but he **never** enjoys, in an extreme case perhaps not even for an instant. So the *preta* is not someone who is satiated with enjoyment, the *preta* is one who is **unable** to enjoy. Again Trungpa seems to be [78] confusing these two things.

so there is constant intense hunger which is based not on a sense of poverty but on the realisation that we already have everything yet we cannot enjoy it. It is the energy there, the act of exchange, that seems to be more exciting; collecting it, holding it, putting it on, or eating it. That kind of energy is a stimulus, but the grasping quality makes it very awkward. Once you hold something you want to possess it, you no longer have the enjoyment of holding it, but you do not want to let go. Again it is a kind of love-hate relationship to projections. It is like the analogy that the next door neighbour's garden is greener; once it becomes ours we realise there is no longer the joy or appreciation of beauty as we saw it at the beginning; the romantic quality of a love affair begins to fade away.

S: As I said, there is a difference between the getting tired of something which we have actually enjoyed in some degree, at one time or other, and not being able to enjoy that particular thing at all, even at the beginning, but merely being able to possess it. Greed is unwholesome or unskilful, but neurotic greed is... well, it's neurotic!

Anandajyoti: Is it neurotic greed that's normally translated as greed in greed, hatred and delusion, in the three poisons?

S: Yes, I would assume so, yes. Put it this way, that greed is bad enough but neurotic greed is even worse. So you have to distinguish between desire and greed and neurotic greed, and should not confuse these.

Sagaramati: What's the difference between desire and greed?

S: Desire is the overall, not necessarily unskilful, impulsion towards something. Like desire for the Dharma, desire as the equivalent of *chanda*, urge, impulsion.

_____ : Aspiration is another word.

S: It could be aspiration, *dharmachanda* is not just desire for the Dharma, it is aspiration for the Dharma. [Pause]

Devamitra: So, if you experience neurotic greed, in order to overcome that one has to get back to some straightforward greed? [Laughter]

S: In a way you do, because straightforward greed, as you call it, is actually experienced in a relatively healthy way.

Adrian Macro: In other words, there is an element of satisfaction in greed but there is no element of satisfaction with neurotic greed.

S: That's right, yes. [79]

Virabhadra: The stamp collector has to learn to enjoy his stamps.

S: Yes, quite. So once you ...

Subhuti: Isn't it more of a shading than there is an absolute difference? That greed itself does actually contain some neurotic element, because what leads you to desire to prolong the enjoyment?

S: Well, how do you become alienated? How do you become a *preta*? This is what I was going to say, there is this sentence here, 'Once you hold something you want to possess it.' So all right, for instance you enjoy something, so what makes you want to possess that? Only so that you can have the guarantee of being able to enjoy that thing when you want to, it will be under your control. But the thing may be of such a nature that you cannot enjoy it while it is under your control. So when you get it under your control you find it's no longer possible to enjoy it. But you can't give it up. In fact the fact that you are not able to enjoy it under those conditions may make you start hating it, but then you can't give it up. You find this in relationships sometimes; two people get bound together by hatred rather than by love, rather than by attachment.

So the reason why this process starts up is quite basic, it's our experience of ourselves as egos and thinking in terms of possession. But if you experience yourself as an ego and think in terms of possession you are not experiencing yourself in a sort of healthy, positive way, you are experiencing yourself in an alienated way. The 'I' and the 'mine' go together. Because you experience 'I' which is alienated 'me' you strive for 'mine', you strive for possessions. If you were really experiencing yourself at the moment of enjoyment there would be no temptation to appropriate the object of enjoyment as your own. It's really that you don't actually enjoy yourself. If you'd really enjoyed yourself you'd let that thing go, you wouldn't even think about next time. It's because, perhaps, you are already alienated to some degree that you want to hold on to that thing, or because you are insecure to some degree, you want to hold on to that thing because you have found some security in it.

So in a sense there is a seed of something highly desirable right from the beginning, you are already fallen, so to speak. You cannot but crave. If you are an exceptionally healthy person in the ordinary sense, yes, you may be able just to enjoy something and let it go, but if you enjoy it very intensely then almost inevitably the thought occurs to you of trying to prolong or guarantee the enjoyment of that thing by making it your own. And perhaps you **can** do that for a while, but not indefinitely. I mean the thing may be of such a nature that you cannot possess it indefinitely, or the thing, if it is a living thing or even conscious thing, may have a will of its own and start going in the other direction.

But perhaps what you are saying is, is there really a positive, as it were, greed, as distinct from a neurotic greed ever? (**Subhuti:** Yes.) Well, it does seem that in certain relations or certain manifestations there is such a thing as positive greed. But it does seem that in dependence upon that positive greed a neurotic greed can arise at any time. So in a way the potentiality is always there. So to that extent even the [80] healthy positive greed can be described as not **actually** neurotic, or not even as potentially neurotic but as constituting the possibility of a development of neurotic greed.

There's no guarantee, ever, that healthy greed will not develop into neurotic greed. Perhaps one shouldn't speak in terms of potentiality at all in this connection. The occasion is always there. The only thing that can guard against that is awareness or, of course, some Transcendental vision or Insight.

But I don't think that in order to safeguard yourself against neurotic greed you can destroy greed itself. The way to destroy neurotic greed is to develop insight. Because if you have insight you can still experience greed - in a manner of speaking, and satisfy the greed - but it goes no further than that. As, say, with food. You don't lose your appetite just because you become Enlightened.

Subhuti: Yes, but then you're already shading greed up into desire. There is a difference between a desire for food - you just feel hungry.

S: Yes, that's what I mean.

Subhuti: That's not greed, is it?

S: I would regard that as greed. (**Subhuti:** Oh!) Or maybe that is just a question of terminology, but I intended that to be covered by the word greed, maybe we should find another word for it. I mean in the sense that hunger is desire for food, so that is compatible with Enlightenment. The enjoyment of food, in the sense of the satisfaction of that desire, is compatible with Enlightenment. What is not compatible is the continued desire for food when your hunger has already been satisfied and your stomach is relatively full.

Subhuti: Isn't that what we mean by greed? The latter?

S: No, I would call that **neurotic** greed. Because you are looking for something over and above the physical satisfaction which you already have. Perhaps you could say even that there are two kinds of neurosis, the desire for something when the desire has been already satisfied, and the desire for something when you have never been able to enjoy it. Both of these are neurotic.

Perhaps there are three degrees. There is the greed which satisfies itself, full stop, forget all about it. Then greed satisfies itself but you go on wanting something more because you have enjoyed the first meal, as it were, so much. The next stage is where you are not even able to enjoy anything but you go on desiring, you go on craving.

Subhuti: I thought that was the distinction that you actually started with, the distinction between desire, greed and neurotic greed. I must have lost you.

S: No, I think I regarded desire as something much more general, so therefore one would interpolate greed in this sense between desire and greed in that sense. So it makes four, then.

Sagaramati: Hunger and things like that are physiological, but what about a psychological greed? Let's say even communication, or something like that, is that compatible with Insight? [80a]

S: Well, if the purpose of the communication is to enhance the Insight, or if it is an expression of compassion, which is the other aspect of Insight, well, yes, it would be compatible.

Sagaramati: But say you just wanted a stimulus, not in a neurotic way but in a healthy sort of way. You just felt the desire, say, for company.

S: I would say if you developed Insight you wouldn't feel the desire for company except to develop your Insight further. You would enjoy company when it came along but you wouldn't particularly seek it out.

Sagaramati: I imagine with Insight you're not necessarily in a dhyanic state; could you desire dhyanic states?

S: Well, what would be the purpose of desiring dhyanic states if you have Insight? But you could desire dhyanic states in a healthy way inasmuch as the being has a natural tendency to desire optimum **well-being**. That is, as it were, a hunger of the organism, there is nothing incompatible with insight in that. So yes, there would be a healthy hunger, as it were, on the part of the being, for dhyana states. But it would not be, of course, a neurotic desire or greed for those states. It would not be **greedy** about those states. If circumstances did not permit them to continue it wouldn't bother, because the Insight would be all that mattered. [*Pause*] We don't find any evidence that the Buddha hankered after dhyanic states.

Sagaramati: There is that one in the *Udana* where he got fed up, he seems to get fed up with everybody and goes off on his own.

S: Yes, well, perhaps that was to satisfy the healthy hunger of the whole organism for that kind of experience. Just as he might have been prevented from eating for several days because of the press of business, well, he'd been prevented from nourishing himself on dhyana because of the press of business and now wanted to go and do that. The healthy hunger of his organism for that particular experience, objective kind of nourishment which it was capable of giving itself if left alone for a few days, asserted itself.

Dhyana experience is regarded in a way as food, as nourishment. Because it represents a highly positive emotional state, and highly positive emotional states are intensely nourishing to the whole organism. Therefore a healthy organism has a desire for them. A healthy organism has a natural tendency to meditate. [*Laughter*] And that healthy tendency, like a healthy appetite, will continue after the development of Insight. If you don't

want to meditate and experience dhyana states you are not a healthy organism, not a healthy psycho-physical organism. Because if you are in a healthy state why should you not desire your optimum well-being?

Devamitra: You might want to be in a dhyanic state but not want to meditate.

S: Well, that is possession, or appropriation, as distinct from growth into. [81]

Devamitra: A smash and grab on the Absolute.

Sagaramati: I could see dangers. When you desire your optimum well-being you might not take into consideration objective things to be done.

S: Well, then your Insight comes into play, if Insight has been developed. Insight sees what needs to be done and there is compassion along with it. So you may even sacrifice your own sense of optimum well-being for the sake of other people, and be quite happy to do that. There will be a satisfaction in that too.

_____: I am a bit confused about the character or figure of the Buddha in this sort of connection. I appreciate that he did have needs, that he had to go away let us say from the crowds, but you also get the impression that he also had the ability to override these needs. For instance, we are told that he had to die because he had a mortal body, but at the same time we are also told that he could preserve that body indefinitely if he so wished. So one is left, as it were, suspended between these ...

S: Not if he so wished - had he been asked. He had no wish, but had he been asked he could have done. I must admit that this is a mysterious episode; whether all the relevant information has been preserved is difficult to say, we just don't know. But what the episode suggests is that the Buddha could have lived longer if someone had told him, as it were, that he was needed, **asked** him to live longer. But it could be said that the Buddha, out of Compassion, if there was someone who needed him longer, should have been able to go on living anyway. So there is a sort of riddle here, actually, which it doesn't seem easy to solve. Perhaps there is some missing bit of the puzzle that hasn't come down to us. I must say I haven't found myself with a satisfactory solution of this.

Adrian Macro: There's that other one too where he says to the King he could meditate indefinitely. That would seem to be completely out of character with the activity of the Buddha himself.

S: Well, he only says that he **could**, not that he necessarily would. That wasn't the only consideration in practice - that he should continue to experience that sort of happiness, but he could, he could have done had he wished. But he didn't wish because altruistic considerations, Compassion, the Compassion side of Wisdom, intervened. So he didn't spend his time like that. Well, as we know from the episode of Brahma Sahampati immediately after the Enlightenment, he could have gone on just sitting there just enjoying the experience of Enlightenment but didn't, in a manner of speaking. Well, there was a further range of experience out of which, or one aspect of which was compassion so that Enlightenment, by its very nature, is not something that can be individually enjoyed in, as it were, a selfish manner, to the exclusion of the needs of other people. [Pause]

But to come back to this *preta* question. I think one of the *miccha-ditthis* about spiritual life, or about Buddhism in particular, perhaps, is that the spiritual person becomes incapable of enjoyment. But you could go so far as to say that it's just the opposite, that the spiritual person becomes [82] **more** capable of enjoyment because attachment is less. And there is no **neurotic** craving, which can be so frustrating and painful. So the spiritual person is **more** capable of enjoying life than the non-spiritual person, and **does** in fact enjoy life more. I mean, if you look around at so-called worldly people, how much fun or pleasure really, or happiness, do they get out of life? Very often not very much. It's as though they don't know how to go about it. I think we ought to make much of that passage in the *Dhammapada* where the Buddha's disciples say, 'Happily indeed we live.'

Anandajyoti: And the beginning of the Sangha *Vandana*: 'Happily proceeding.'

S: Yes, right - *supatipanno* - that's also well proceeding but yes, happily will also do as a translation.

Sagaramati: You can see the spiritual life as getting yourself in preparation for really enjoying yourself.

S: Yes, indeed.

Anyway, any further points because we are now drawing to a conclusion, about *pretas* or hell beings for that matter?

Devamitra: He doesn't mention anything about - is there any connection between the *pretas* and the disembodied spirits which people see?

S: Sometimes *preta* is used in the sense of a disembodied spirit as in the Pali (*peta?*) as in (*petabattu?*) is used in that sort of way.

Devamitra: But is this something distinct or is it ...

S: As it develops apparently, later, *preta* does definitely mean the hungry ghost - not just a departed spirit. The line of division is fine, whereas the *preta* is the one who comes back, the revenant it's sometimes translated, or *peta* is translated as revenant. So why does he come back? Because of unsatisfied desire, unfinished business as it were. Why is he hovering about, why is he lurking around the doors? So in this way the idea of the departed spirit sort of merges with that of the hungry ghost.

Virabhadra: I believe in the Tibetan tradition there are certain rituals in connection with feeding *pretas*.

S: In Buddhism generally, actually.

Virabhadra: Do these have any sort of relevance to us?

S: Well you can't feed *pretas*. [Laughter] Do you see what I mean, *pretas* can't be fed. You can feed, theoretically at least, departed spirits, but you can't feed *pretas*, really. So it is *pretas* in the sense of departed spirits that you are supposed to be feeding. I think the Tibetans themselves mix up these two. But logically how **can** you feed *pretas*? They have got to work on it themselves, so to speak. So you can encourage them to work on it themselves, that's all, if you meet any. [82A]

_____: The Buddha that visits the *preta* realm in the Tibetan Wheel of life, doesn't he actually give the *preta* what he wants, what they need?

S: Yes, but how does he do that, how does he do that?

_____: Well, for instance if the *preta* is craving affection, presumably that person ..

S: You can't **give** a *preta* anything because he is not able to receive it, you can only help by helping him to become able to receive it. You have to do that first, as it were.

_____: Oh I see, go through the preliminaries.

S: It isn't just there's some thing which the *pretas* **can** swallow and the Buddha goes and gives it to them because he happens to have it. No, the *preta* has to be enabled to swallow anything.

_____: He's got to be taught to eat.

S: He's got to be taught to eat and taught not to be a *preta*. This is basically what the Buddha in that realm has to do. There's not just some wonderful, magical substance that he **is** able to swallow. That is how it is presented very often, certainly pictorially, but that is not actually the case.

Sagaramati: So the most you could do to a *preta* would be to try to put him in experience with himself. (**S:** Yes) That would be the basis.

S: Yes, which would be quite difficult. But still if you were a Buddha or Bodhisattva presumably you could do that.

Tape 5

I mean, people who are in the position of craving for affection but being unable to experience it when actually offered are in quite a terrible position. 'Nobody loves me' - well, you don't love yourself, how can you expect anybody else to love you, not to speak of loving anybody else, you don't even love yourself?

Sagaramati: But even if somebody else did love you you wouldn't be able to experience it, would you?

S: No, you wouldn't be able to experience it, you wouldn't know it. So they have got to teach you to love yourself, and along with that to love others and be able to experience the love of others. [Pause]

It's not that certain people are necessarily *pretas* through and through, but a lot of people have their *preta*-like moments. I can sometimes experience when people are hovering near in a *preta*-like sort of way. It's quite tangible, I am sure some of you have experienced that. They actually hover [Laughter], almost like this, they are waiting to sort of pounce. It isn't just greed, it is *preta*-like, you can never satisfy them however long you talk with them, they go away unsatisfied. Unless of course you can break through the *preta*-like state, as perhaps you can in the case where someone is just in a passing *preta*-like mood for some particular reason. But

you can really detect this, you can really pick up on this. Just as you can on the combative person, the person who just wants to pick a fight with you, pick a quarrel with you. You can feel this too, you can feel, [83] say in a question and answer meeting, someone just wants to disagree with you and that is what he has come for, to disagree regardless; you pick this up pretty quickly. *[Pause]*

All right, let's leave it there until tomorrow morning when we come on to the animal realm and the human realm.

Next Session

THE ANIMAL REALM

The animal realm is characterised by the absence of sense of humour. We discover that we cannot remain neutral in the luminosity, so we begin to play deaf and dumb, intelligently playing ignorant, which means that one is completely concealing another area, the area of sense of humour. It is symbolised by animals, which cannot laugh or smile; joy and pain are known to animals, but somehow the sense of humour or irony is not known to them.

S: So 'The animal realm is characterised by the absence of sense of humour'; is this strictly correct? Does anybody know anything about recent research with animals, especially chimpanzees?

Sagaramati: I've heard something about *[unclear]*

Devamitra: I don't see that there is any way that you can actually tell.

S: Well, why not? If you can tell whether a human being has a sense of humour or not, why not an animal?

Devamitra: Well, how do you recognise it in an animal, that's what ...

S: Well, how do you recognise it in a human being?

Devamitra: Well, it's obvious because they can laugh.

S: Can't animals laugh? *[Laughter]*

John Wakeman: It's not always laughter, it's playfulness as well.

S: Yes. One of the things that have emerged recently is that it has been - I think I can even say proved or at least demonstrated - that animals, the higher animals, some of the higher animals do have at least some of the characteristics, or perhaps you should say a few of the characteristics, which were formerly regarded as exclusively human. For instance - I think most of the experiments have been done with chimpanzees - that they can count, that they can form abstract ideas and also that they can speak; at least they can communicate in a way that could be regarded as using a language. So the line of division in a way is not quite so hard and fast as was thought, not only by orthodox Christians but even by evolutionists. So I think it would not be really quite correct to say that the animal realm is characterised by the absence of sense of humour. But none the less 'animal realm' here is being used as a sort of [84] symbol. But why do you think Trungpa takes absence of sense of humour as so important? Why do you think he takes the animal as symbolising lack of the sense of humour? What does the animal usually symbolise?

_____: Stupidity.

S: Stupidity, but leave aside Buddhist tradition. If you say that in somebody the *[break in recording]* was strong, it's stronger than the human nature.

_____: Indulgent.

S: Indulgent, but is an animal indulgent?

_____: Gross.

S: Gross, yes.

_____: Ignorant.

S: Ignorant.

Anandajyoti: It's got a lot of strong desires of a rather unhealthy nature, perhaps.

S: A lot of strong desires. When we speak about the animal functions what do we usually mean?

Devamitra: Natural functions.

S: Yes, natural functions, presumably the bodily functions. We usually mean eating, drinking, and reproduction. This is what the animal usually stands for, surely, isn't it? This would seem to be the natural thing.

So why do you think that Trungpa says the animal realm is characterised by the absence of sense of humour? That is not the **first** thing that one would consider as characterising the animal realm, surely? I mean traditionally, yes, the animal in Buddhist tradition, the animal realm represents the realm of ignorance and especially ignorance in the form of a total preoccupation with bodily concerns, as I said, eating, drinking and reproduction. So why do you think Trungpa as it were avoids that, and speaks in terms of absence of a sense of humour? *[Pause]*

Well, I think it's due to the American context. Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: The Americans haven't got a sense of humour, then? *[Laughter]*

S: No, I don't mean that, but that perhaps within the American context it isn't very acceptable to stigmatise eating, drinking and reproduction as merely animal activities. Or perhaps even within the pseudo-Tantric context. You see, those things are as it were idealised, especially reproduction, especially sex, so those as it were are not to be associated with the animal state. Because this suggests there is something sort of unworthy or belonging to the lower part of our nature, something that you have got to grow beyond, whereas a good red-blooded American, especially those who have taken up Tantric Buddhism, might not like to **hear** that sort of thing. So I think, probably, this is [85] the reason why Trungpa says the animal realm is characterised by the absence of sense of humour.

Now this question of sense of humour is rather interesting nowadays. Nowadays not only in America, it seems, but in Britain, I don't know about other Western countries, a great deal is made of this sense of humour, it's almost a great virtue. But as far as I remember never before, in the history of the world or any sort of civilisation or culture, has a sense of humour been regarded as a virtue. Why is this, do you think? Why do we regard a sense of humour as so important, why do we place such an emphasis on it? If you read a book review in one of the Sunday supplements, or if you read about somebody, very often the point is made that the book shows the author's sense of humour, or delightful sense of humour, or some well-known person, that he had a great sense of humour. As though this sort of places him in a special category. Do you see what I mean? But you don't read this, for instance, about Queen Elizabeth I, that she had a wonderful sense of humour, or Plato had a great sense of humour, or Michelangelo had a great sense of humour, do you see what I mean, or Napoleon was well known for his great sense of humour! But nowadays we make a great deal of this, don't we? - and if someone doesn't have a sense of humour or is alleged not to have a sense of humour this is almost a black mark against him. So **why** is this?

There are so many things we take for granted, we are so accustomed to, but which actually are rather unusual or rather new. So why this emphasis on the sense of humour? Certainly I believe in Britain and the United States, again I am not sure about other Western countries or cultures.

Virabhadra: Well, if you haven't got a sense of humour it tends to mean that you are wrapped up in fairly ordinary concerns, that you take them perhaps more seriously than is appropriate, and maybe being just sort of boring.

S: So do you think that is the condition of all other countries except America and Britain? That they are all boring sort of people wrapped up in ordinary everyday affairs and don't have a sense of humour?

Anandajyoti: Is it something to do with industrialised society, to do with technological society where perhaps people can't function in a very whole way, and so a sense of humour is regarded as a way of..., if you have got a sense of humour at least you can see that you don't take it seriously?

S: Yes, at least you can laugh at it. I think you are getting a little near to it now.

Devamitra: Is it an inability to really take life seriously?

S: Yes, yes, it is in a way. I think it approaches that.

Sagaramati: What, a sense of humour is?

Devamitra: No, it's because you can't take life seriously, the sense of humour ...

S: It's almost you don't **dare** to take it seriously. [86]

Devamitra: It's almost a demonstration that you don't take life too seriously as well. Isn't it that as well? That's how it strikes me.

S: Yes, it's as though you can't **afford** to take life seriously, you are not in a position to, so it's almost a confession of weakness. Do you see what I mean? Because if you took it seriously you would get really angry. I don't want to generalise too much and I am almost thinking aloud to some extent, but I think sometimes laughter helps to deflect anger. It's as though more - what shall I say - more healthy societies, communities, cultures, don't need the safety valve of humour in that sort of sense. It's not that they don't have a sense of humour, but it certainly doesn't assume the almost social importance that it does with us. Indians have a sense of humour, they have a sense of fun, but I have never heard an Indian saying of another Indian, 'Oh, he is a really great chap, he's got a great sense of humour.' No. In fact I am not so sure that they have even got a word for humour in that sort of sense in some of the Indian languages. I remember my Nepalese friends saying of somebody, they wanted to describe an Englishman and his sort of sense of humour, they would always use the word joker, they would say, 'He's a real joker'. The nearest they could get to it is that he is a sort of clown, do you see what I mean?

But in Britain, and I think in America, a politician would regard it as an asset as being regarded as having a sense of humour.

John Wakeman: There's also an aspect we find, often in newspapers and so on, that descriptions of, say, the communist states, politicians there are described as being humourless. (**S:** Yes.) With the implication that there is something lacking there.

S: That they take it all too seriously, yes.

Devamitra: So what people really have then in that situation is a sort of jocularity.

S: A jocularity, a sort of jokiness, it seems to me.

Devamitra: I remember I once took part in a production of *King Lear* and the director asked the actor playing Lear to play a particular scene with jocularity. It was a scene where I think Oswald, the servant, is taking a few liberties with Lear because he is no longer the king and Lear, egged on by the Fool, is laughing at Oswald - at least in this particular way it was directed, in this particular play. And it worked really well, actually, because you could see, you could really see the anger seething underneath, it was very very effective, actually.

S: Again I emphasise that I don't want to over-generalise or be too sure about this, but I do feel that there is something suspect about the importance that we attach to a sense of humour, or having a sense of humour. And I also suspect that this so-called sense of humour or jocularity is in fact connected with anger.

Sagaramati: I've been reading Conze in the biography he has just written; he seemed to be stressing the sense of humour, he sees himself as being a very joking sort of person. [87]

S: Well, he's a very angry person, isn't he? It may be that teasing is, no intermediate here, I mean teasing. You can go from teasing to ragging, but from ragging you can go to almost violence, can't you? You see the sort of connection.

So I am not too happy with this statement that the animal realm is characterised by the absence of a sense of humour. First of all because I don't think we can be so sure that animals don't have a sense of humour, the higher animals especially, and also I really doubt whether a sense of humour in our Anglo-Saxon sense is really a very human sort of thing anyway, certainly not in the healthy, happy, and human sense of the term.

Sagaramati: I've felt that it's quite positive sometimes, when you have been taking something seriously and maybe you just see the ridiculousness of it, then you can just laugh.

S: Yes, right. Oh yes, I am not saying anything against that; what I am drawing attention to is the greater importance that we seem to attach to having a sense of humour compared with other, especially previous, cultures and civilisations. That seems to mean something, or at least to suggest something. As I said, I am also a bit doubtful about Trungpa's as it were not facing up to the fact that the animal realm usually symbolises such things as preoccupation with purely bodily - animal - functions, like eating, drinking and reproduction.

Anyway he says, 'We discover that we cannot remain neutral in the luminosity', whatever that may mean, 'so we begin to play deaf and dumb, intelligently playing ignorance, which means that one is completely concealing another area, the area of sense of humour.' Well, I would have thought if you are intelligently playing ignorant it almost is pretty close to a sense of humour! [*Laughter*] I think he is just getting a bit confused here. 'It is symbolised by animals, which cannot laugh or smile; joy and pain are known to animals, but somehow the sense of humour or irony is not known to them.' Well, I don't think this is borne out by the facts.

But anyway, let's just go on to the next paragraph and take what he says about the animals at its face value regardless of whether it really applies to animals or is really symbolised by animals.

One could develop this by believing in a certain religious framework, theological or philosophical conclusions, or by just simply remaining secure, practical and solid. Such a person could be very efficient, very good and consistent at work, and quite contented. It is like a country farmer who attends to his farm methodically, with constant awareness and openness and efficiency; or an executive who runs a business; or a family man whose life is very happy, predictable and secure, with no areas of mystery involved at all. If he buys a new gadget there are always directions for using it. If there is any problem he can go to lawyers or priests or policemen, all sorts of professional people who are also secure and comfortable in their professions. It is utterly sensible and predictable, and highly mechanical at the same time. [88]

S: Here Trungpa seems to be on safer ground, you can see here what he takes the animal state, the animal realm, as symbolising, leaving aside this question of whether or not animals have a sense of humour. It's the secure, the sense of what's predictable, because animals' behaviour is much more predictable than that of man. The animal is governed, as we say, by instinct. So there are human beings like that, who live just like animals in the sense that their lives follow a very strict, rigid, predictable sort of pattern. They are very safe, they are very conventional. So one can take the animal realm as representing this.

But at the same time rather strangely he says, 'It is like a country farmer who attends to his farm methodically with constant awareness and openness', that seems to be quite contradictory, doesn't it?

But you can imagine a rather narrow, limited, blinkered, stodgy sort of person. And he very often would be concerned with eating, drinking, reproducing - and his job as the means of keeping the whole thing going. He might have a sense of humour, that is not necessarily excluded, but his outlook would be pretty limited. So Trungpa seems to take the animal state as representing this, and, yes, to a great extent I would say that is so, except I doubt whether there **is** the constant awareness and openness, that does seem to be quite contradictory.

I think perhaps it's important to realise just the extent to which human beings are animals in this sense. How great a part of our time and energy is usually taken up with ensuring to ourselves food, drink, clothing, housing, sex, entertainment, etc. Most of our time and energy is taken up by these things in the ordinary way, so most of our lives are geared to quite animal preoccupations. And all the major agencies of society just help to maintain this, as Trungpa says, 'the lawyers, the priests, the policemen'. I think the majority of people don't realise what an animal sort of life they lead in this way, in this sense. But you feel it sometimes if you are around, you can feel it sometimes in a place like Bethnal Green, when you see all the men going into the betting shop and all the women pushing their prams along the pavement, it really does seem quite animal in a way, in this sense.

Anandajyoti: Going back to the first paragraph where he says, 'intelligently playing ignorant', you could almost swap that round and think it's 'ignorantly playing intelligent'. (**S:** Yes indeed.) Because quite often people think that in fact they have got life sorted out and they know what it is all about.

S: Yes, the more successful, the more flashy, the more cunning, the sort of people who find their way into advertising or into TV, if you see what I mean. *[Pause]*

I do believe, incidentally, that the country farmer in the United States is quite a limited sort of person, I don't think we quite have anything like that, probably, in this country, even in, say, a place like Norfolk. Perhaps one shouldn't say so but perhaps it's no accident that Mr Jimmy Carter is an ex-peanut farmer. *[Laughter]* Do you see what I mean? Also, traditionally, as I mentioned before, the animal realm is associated with, or symbolises, ignorance, ignorance in the sense of the higher more distinctively human awareness, or perhaps we should say at least self-consciousness, self-awareness. That is simply not there in the case of the animal, or in the [89] case of the animal person. This again brings us back to the point I have mentioned often enough before that we shouldn't take it for granted that we are in fact human. For many people humanity is something which is yet to be achieved.

It also raises the interesting question of the relation between our animality and our humanity. Supposing you do succeed in becoming human does that mean a complete elimination of the animal, and what is the relation, so to speak, between the animal element in you and the truly distinctively human element? When you become a true human being do you stop eating and drinking? These are purely animal functions, they maintain in existence your animal organism. But when you develop self-consciousness, self-awareness, when you become truly human, when you become aware, sensitive, responsible, emotionally positive and all the rest of it, do you no longer exercise those animal functions? What is the relation between your animality and your humanity?

Virabhadra: Your humanity would include your animality.

S: In what sense, in what way?

Virabhadra: Well, obviously you still would eat. (**S:** Yes.) But the main emphasis of your being would be in the human realm, there would be a sort of animal there as well, but the main emphasis would be in the human sphere.

Devamitra: Certainly the driving force of your life would not be the animal..., wouldn't be the natural instincts.

S: Yes. Of course, being human, in the sense of having developed a self-consciousness or reflexive consciousness exposes you at the same time to certain dangers which the animal isn't exposed to. Because as I mentioned the other day, I am not sure if it was with this group or in the other one, self-awareness in a sense involves a slight degree, or at least the very real possibility, of alienation. So to the extent that you are self-aware and therefore to that extent slightly perhaps alienated, or with the possibility of alienation always present, you can as it were manipulate your purely animal functions and indulgences in the interests of a slightly alienated consciousness. Do you see what I mean?

For instance, supposing the animal is hungry. What happens? He goes in search of food, he satisfies his hunger and he just goes to sleep more often than not. Does the animal, even when he has a full stomach, start fantasising about himself having another even more delightful meal, does the animal do this, as far as we can tell, as far as we know? No, it doesn't, but a human being **can** do this; why? Why is it possible for a human being to do this? Because a human being has developed that self-awareness and is able not only to feel but to be aware of himself as feeling, to see himself as it were objectively, and then start imagining himself doing all sorts of things in a way that the animal cannot. The animal is never neurotically greedy, ever.

Sagaramati: Well, that's not true, is it?

S: Well, except by association with human beings, as in the case of a pet dog. Here again the human and the animal overlap. Unfortunately, yes, you can have neurotic dogs. But I am sure [90] a dog left to its own devices in the wild doesn't become neurotic.

Anandajyoti: There's a saying in that context that most animals eat to live whereas humans are the only animals that live to eat.

S: Yes, right. Well, it is the reflexive consciousness which enables you to do this, so it has its dangers as well as its advantages.

Virabhadra: Some people say that about the French. [*Laughter*]

Devamitra: You can always say that about the French!

Sagaramati: But even, I mean human beings left on their own, like say country farmers and things like that, I don't think they'd be so prone to neurosis.

S: Probably not, because they are closer to the animal state, they are as it were less human, and they do not have the advantages of being human, nor are they exposed to the **dangers** of being human, in the sense of the dangers of self-consciousness, or self-awareness, or reflexive consciousness or reflexive awareness, because if it goes slightly in the wrong direction then it can tend to alienation. And that risk is inherent in that type of consciousness, it seems.

Devamitra: Would you say that that was possibly one of the factors conditioning an eventual rebirth as a *preta*, the emergence of a slight degree of self-consciousness leading to a ...

S: Yes, the *preta* state seems to depend upon that sort of possibility. So what is difficult for the human being is to integrate his animality in a deep of healthy way, do you see what I mean? You do find this, people who are intelligent, who are self-aware, who are self-conscious and have all the other human qualities, but whose animality so to speak just remains simply animal and is smoothly integrated with their purely human nature. But quite a few people, it seems, in the process of developing self-consciousness distort their animal nature. So a lot of people are sort of abortive human beings but at the same time they are not healthy animals, they cannot be healthy animals.

Devamitra: In a sense they've fallen lower than the animals.

S: In a sense, yes, in a sense, but they only have fallen lower because in a sense there is a higher possibility already there. It's the inability fully to achieve the higher which has resulted in a distortion of the lower. It's as though the higher has not been smoothly grafted on to the lower. I think in our case in the West, of course, Christianity has got a lot to do with this; you don't get the pagan sort of growing into the Buddhist, well the pagan is a poor crippled sort of animal, sort of limping along in the direction of humanity, in the West. We are crippled by Christian conditioning. There aren't any Pagans, actually, except one or two who escaped that sort [91] of conditioning, you do find them occasionally. So do you see what I am getting at? - that just to integrate

the animal with the human is not a very easy thing because the central human characteristic itself, that is to say self-consciousness, in the process of its emergence, tends only too often to distort the animal. So part of our development as human beings is very often straightening out the animal nature which has become distorted in the process of our entering upon the process of the higher evolution. It's as though we have to go back a bit and sort out the confusions of our animal nature, or the distortions of our animal nature, before we can be truly human in a fuller sense.

Sagaramati: Like even sort of maliciousness and spite, they're purely human. (**S:** Yes.) They are like a distortion of just healthy aggression.

S: Yes. *[Pause]*

So you can see that self-consciousness is a very two-edged instrument, isn't it? It does enable us to pass on to the further stages of the higher evolution, but it does enable us to do very strange things to our animal nature. I mean we see this in the realm of eating and drinking, and we certainly see it in the realm of sex; we see it in the realm of everything which has to do with the physical body. It's the sort of interference on the part of the alienated consciousness in the animal processes and functions. *[Pause]* Almost the exploitation of one's own animal functions and processes in the interest of an alienated self-consciousness.

Sagaramati: This brings a slight problem when you are, say, taking classes and teaching the Dharma, because you're putting forward something that is from the human and above that even myself and other people that you are dealing with are in a sense not even ready for. Most people are ...

S: In a sense. Well, it's the path of irregular steps, very much so, yes. You have to straighten out where and when you can according to circumstances. Some people may be under the impression that they are ready for, say, meditation or higher spiritual development, but after a while they may just have to go back and straighten out their animal nature, so to speak. Again there is the further possibility of rationalisation in doing that. It can be not a question of really genuinely and honestly going back to straighten out your animal nature in the interests of your fuller, higher evolution, but it's an excuse for indulgence. You say, 'Well, I am going back and straightening out my animal nature', you are just slipping back. Because this alienated consciousness is so clever, so tricky. *[Pause]*

Well, what do you have to say about this sort of ordinary life that Trungpa envisages, that is symbolised by the animal realm? What is its place, so to speak? Should it just be allowed to carry on in its own way or should it, or could it even be, as it were entirely broken up, or is that the way that most people just have to live and cannot live any differently? Or is there something special about this kind of development in modern times?

Virabhadra: It seems like it's in a way easier to live as an [92] animal in our society because there are so many things designed to sort of cushion you. There's like the welfare state, the whole system of things designed to cushion you from the harder aspects of life, which might shake your animal complacency.

S: Yes, this is one of the things that I really felt in India, that in many ways people were less animal, which seems a strange thing in a way, because often they live on the minimum of what we would regard as necessary. Well, many live below subsistence level.

Anandajyoti: I would have thought it would have been the other way around because in a sense in a country like England, or Western Europe or America, people tend to be more alienated, tend to be more neurotic and in a sense hence less animal-like.

S: Yes, in a sense that is true but then, say, coming back to England after being in a place like India, I just get the impression of solid, not to say stolid, animal comfort, everybody has sort of happily got their two front legs in the trough and are lapping or munching away. All sort of fat and piggy-like. And as you go around the majority of people are definitely overweight, even young people. Just go round a place like Bethnal Green, they all look sort of porky, they all look overfed and puffy and pale and pasty and stolid and indifferent, and they munch chocolate or gum, just like cows chewing the cud. You really get the impression of something heavy and gross and a bit contented though a bit disgruntled too, but quite animal-like, don't you? Well, this was the impression I got.

I think it's this that Trungpa is getting at, and he has probably seen quite a bit of it in the States. And the priests and doctors and lawyers, they are all to keep this way of life going for you in one way or another. The function of the priest is just to sprinkle a bit of holy water over you at certain crucial junctures in the piggy process! *[Laughter]* But what I am really asking is: is this the way that the majority of people have to live, or is there any other possibility, can there not be a better kind of group, a better kind of positive group? What I am thinking is, is the weakness of this sort of group the fact that it is not open-ended to higher possibilities? Because certainly, yes, in India, in any Eastern country even with a cultural and spiritual tradition, people do live on a quite low level, but they are **aware** of other possibilities, so their society, their culture, is open-ended with regard to those possibilities. But here it is not really the case like that, it is closed, it is shut off, it is not

even **aware** of such higher possibilities, it is **really** animal in that sense. Not animal in living on the lower level, because we all do that to some extent, but animal in the sense of not even being aware, even dimly, of some sort of higher level. And I must say, with all its faults, at least this is one thing that the Catholic Church sometimes does manage to do - to keep, even in its own sort of distorted way, to at least compel almost some sort of acknowledgement of something which is a bit beyond. You don't find that Protestants or ex-Protestants really have that. But it is just unfortunate that in the case of the Catholic Church it has just been so distorted, more often than not.

But maybe it is in that that the essence of the animal realm consists. That even a human society, a human group, which is concerned for all practical purposes with eating and drinking and reproduction [93] and job, should at least be open-ended with regard to the possibility of some higher development. At least be aware of that, or have some recognition, give some recognition to that, however dimly. In India this is certainly the case.

Sagaramati: That's what culture should be for, really.

S: This is what culture should be for. I think one of the great difficulties is that the Western spiritual tradition, the Christian tradition, has become unable to function in that way, it is itself part of the piggy process, as I have called it. The Church just services the existing society, for the most part, rather than keeping alive some higher vision beyond the existing society, or beyond **any** society.

Devamitra: There is, in a way, some kind of vague possibility of those higher values coming into play because you do have an educational system, no matter how bad that is. I mean there are ...

S: Well, yes, you can read and write, you have access to whatever is printed, certainly, yes. I was going to say that in the absence of the churches being able to point to something beyond, the arts do that to some extent. But even that is incomplete because the arts have taken over, to some extent, the role of religion. In a sense they should, in a sense they shouldn't. In a sense religion should be art rather than art having to be religion, if you see what I mean. It shouldn't be that art is, or **the** arts are, split off as a separate thing from religion, which has happened in the West because religion was no longer able to be a vehicle for the aspiration of many individuals, or the **vision** of many individuals. So they broke away and gave independent expression of their vision, or to their vision in the form of one or another of the arts. So we have this sort of breach between the arts and religion. The modern arts in the West do not take religion really seriously, on the whole, and they are certainly not connected or affiliated to it. There may be the odd reminiscence of religion, or something of that sort, but really not much more. It is a bit of a *tour-de-force* if it happens at all.

The arts are not expected to be religious or to have any particular connection with religion, as it is known and understood in the West, apparently. If an artist does happen to design a stained glass window for a church it is news, it is not the sort of thing that artists normally do.

So the essence of the animal realm seems to be that it is a sort of closed circle of utterly sensible and predictable and highly mechanical activities, as Trungpa says. Everything remains secure, practical, solid. I think this is what is so depressing about so much of ordinary life in Britain, there is no touch of imagination at all. It's the same with politics, it's so utterly dreary and unimaginative, there is no vision in it, no idealism in it, it's all bargaining and confrontation and misrepresentation of the other side and petty manoeuvring. You hardly ever hear anyone speaking out of his ideals and giving expression to his ideals.

So perhaps we should be careful not to make the mistake of thinking that society as we experience it, say, in Britain, since after all we are concerned with that in the first instance, represents society as it always is and can only be. [94] Life for ordinary people at this sort of level, that is to say the lives of people who **aren't** wholeheartedly into spiritual development, do not have to be as bad as they are in Britain at present. Do you see what I mean? Even if you are not going to commit yourself completely, or as completely as you can, to the path of the spiritual life or higher evolution, your life does not have to be so dull and stuffy and shut off from those sorts of ideals as at present it almost always is. That fact is the product, as far as I can see, of our own peculiar historical situation in the West, and in Britain especially.

Anandajyoti: If you read about the *polis* of classical Greece it is quite a shock, at least it was for me, to realise what a life people could live even if they weren't actually involved, as it were, in the spiritual life. It could be quite a meaningful life.

S: Yes. So it's not only that we have to create a spiritual community but we create what we call, rather optimistically or perhaps rather - what's the word? - almost euphemistically, the positive group. The positive group, as I have said before, is the group which is open-ended with regard to the spiritual community, so that the ideal of spiritual community is at least accepted and the way to it is open for those who wish to develop and grow in such a way that they want to become part of the spiritual community. But it is as though you can't really have a truly positive group unless you have also, underpinning it, in a sense, or pointing beyond it, a spiritual community.

This is perhaps at the back of the thinking of those people who believe - I don't think there is much scientific evidence here - but they believe that the beginnings of culture were inspired by people of extraordinary spiritual development. It's the sort of, as it were (in inverted commas), 'Theosophical' idea. Because some of the early civilisation was so positive, in the group positive sense, that some people find it difficult to believe how they could have just evolved like that in the ordinary way from purely animal origins. It's as though there was some higher wisdom guiding them, some more enlightened people guiding them and laying down the foundations of their institutions, so that ordinary people could live not just in an animal way but in a better way than that without necessarily aspiring directly to spiritual development. Do you see what I mean? As I say, I don't think there is any hard scientific evidence for this but you can certainly understand some people believing or wishing to believe this. If you studied, say, the civilisation of ancient Egypt or the civilisation of ancient Sumeria, they really do seem to have been extraordinarily healthy and complete and positive. It's as though they could hardly have developed by accident as a result simply of social and political factors. It's almost as though there was some wise person at the very beginning laying down the foundations of those societies.

The Greeks certainly had this sort of idea, which they perhaps got from the Egyptians, that you needed to have a lawgiver. So certain great men were invited to frame laws for cities that were going to be founded, which they sometimes did. So Plato's book, *The Laws*, is believed by some scholars to have been actually a sort of blueprint for a new society, a new *polis* which was going to be founded perhaps by his friends in Sicily. *The Republic* represented a sort of general vision and *The Laws*, the book called *The Laws*, or the dialogue called *The Laws*, represented the specific [95] provisions on which the State would be based. But it's as though ancient civilisations tended to be open-ended positive groups, and Indian society even today is very much an open ended positive group. The way into spiritual life is always open, it's always recognised that there is such a thing as spiritual life beyond the group. Though they don't, it must be admitted, have the idea of spiritual community very strongly or clearly, it is usually just an individual affair, which of course it has to be at the beginning.

Devamitra: Do you think that's being undermined at all by the Western culture?

S: To some extent, yes, of course. But still the population of India is very big and it is going to take a long, long time to undermine that cultural tradition completely, if in fact it ever does, which I hope it won't.

Virabhadra: Do you think there's a specific benefit in, say, a lack of security, in our society? It seems like one of the characteristics of this animal state is this sort of comfort. Would it be a good thing if it wasn't so comfortable?

S: Well, it would be - Trungpa goes on to say something like that in the last paragraph - but again it is a question of degree. If your life becomes too insecure you cannot function at all, if it becomes too safe you don't **want** to function at all. So there has to be a happy - if that is the word - medium. You presumably all know what it feels like to be constantly shifted around and not able to settle down to anything, you can't get on with your meditation properly. Though actually, of course, you ought to be able to get on with it better now because you're so free. Here you are in one place today and another place tomorrow, what could be better than that from the point of view of meditation and non-attachment and the rest of it? - but no. It's as though you have need to settle down in a particular place to get on with your meditation. If you are interrupted too much or too often you just can't do it.

So yes, you do need to have your routine broken up sufficiently to keep you on your toes but not to such an extent that you are just put flat on your back for the time being, laid out for the time being.

Devamitra: Actually that must be quite a difficult thing to integrate into your spiritual life. You have for instance talked about eventually having one or two Order Members travelling around all the time. Presumably it would be very difficult for them - well it wouldn't be easy for them to meditate.

S: Well travelling around, what does one mean by travelling around? You don't necessarily mean that they are going to spend only one night in each place, they could spend a few weeks, even a few months. It depends on the individual; some people **can** settle in just for a few days, happily get on with their meditation, even their writing, and then move on. Others require several months to be able to get into things in that sort of way. So when I say I hope there will be some Order Members who etc., etc., it is not that I hope that some people will be forced by hook or by crook into that pattern, but I hope that there will be [96] some people turning up who are naturally of that type, because there will be a useful job for them to do.

Right, read that last paragraph, then.

What is lacking is that if any unknown, unpredictable situation occurs, there is a feeling of paranoia, of being threatened. If there are people who do not work, who look different, whose whole life-style is irregular, then the very existence of such people is in itself threatening. Anything unpredictable fundamentally threatens the basic pattern. So that apparently sane and solid situation without sense of humour is the animal realm.

S: Of course, animals don't think in terms of predictable or unpredictable anyway, they just live so completely in the present, so to speak, because they are not aware of any other possibility. Because they don't have the alienated awareness, or don't have that self-consciousness or self-awareness which is at least potentially an alienated consciousness or awareness. They can't imagine themselves as being in any other time because they can't, as it were, separate themselves from themselves and look at themselves as it were objectively.

But do you think ordinary people feel threatened by the existence of people who 'do not work, who look different, whose whole life-style is irregular'? Do you think this always happens?

_____: Yes, I would say it is true.

S: In the West, I mean, or in Britain, America?

_____: Yes, I think it's true but I wouldn't say it was **animal**, particularly.

S: No, exactly.

_____: So I can't get this at all, actually, what he is talking about. But I think what it does say in that last paragraph is true. The population on the whole is very paranoid and does feel threatened.

S: Some people seem to feel threatened by the gypsies, don't they? Leaving apart the fact that sometimes they do behave in a way that constitutes a public nuisance, but people's reaction often seems to go beyond that. At one time, I believe, people did react a bit against the hippies, but in the end I think the hippies became accepted as part of the scene, as another aspect of the same sort of order of things; the hippies themselves became just a corner of the same solid, settled, scene.

Tape 6

If you are dressed like a hippie now it is almost conventional, isn't it?

Virabhadra: It always strikes me in London you get the feeling that you could do virtually anything and nobody would take any notice. You could wear green hair and go about naked and people would probably hardly notice, you wouldn't feel threatened or anything like that. [97]

Sagaramati: I think that's why some people actually move down to London. [Laughter] You can be sort of individualistic without feeling paranoid ...

S: Well, it depends where you go in London, I mean London is a big place. If you go where there are solid settled communities, you may be looked at with some disapproval. If you just circulate in Central London where **everybody** is practically as you are, where nobody really lives and where there are no, as it were, indigenous communities, well then, you can easily get away with it. Well, if you walk around, say, Piccadilly, with a bunch of flowers in your hair, no one's going to take any notice, or even behind your ear, but if you go around like that in some parts of South London, you won't be allowed to get away with it so easily; or even Bethnal Green, I imagine. I am sure you can get away nowadays in Bethnal Green with quite a lot more than you could two or three years ago. And also there is the point that when a community feels very secure, it can feel so secure that it doesn't easily feel threatened by difference and non conformity, because it is so sure of itself. It can tolerate quite a lot of non conformity, it doesn't concern it.

Devamitra: Do you think that's happened here, because you've often commented on the extent of tolerance that we enjoy in this country?

S: I'm not so sure, but in certain respects we do, but not always in other respects perhaps. [Pause] But we are certainly free to preach Buddhism here, but I wonder if we are free, or whether we are **as** free, to start taking it really seriously. For instance, one thing I've discovered was - I've only recently found this out - what constituted a political organisation, technically. [98] A political organisation is one which sets out to bring about a change in the law - yes? I didn't realise that. So this is the definition for the purpose of the Charity Commissioners - that you are not a religious and charitable organisation if you set out to change the law. Now, for instance, the FWBO does not have - none of the FWBOs has - as one of its central objects to change the law, but if we were to be able to put our ideals into practice on a wide scale, that would certainly involve a change in certain laws. So whether we actually state so or not, or whether we are explicitly at present doing so or not, in fact we're working for a change in the laws, or in certain laws. But if that were to become explicit, we would of course at once lose our charity status. In other words, a religion is not permitted to try to change anything, because that change is reflected and embodied in the laws. You see what I mean? So, in other words, you can follow a religion, or believe in a religion, practise a religion, so long as it doesn't change anything. So is that a complete freedom, so to speak? So that's why I say you are free to sort of propagate Buddhism, but you are not **so** free yet to practise it.

Subhuti: Well, you're still free to do it, but you can't do it as a registered charity.

S: Yes, which would mean, of course, that you were deprived of the advantages of being. In other words you were penalised for wanting to change things. Whereas one would have thought, in a sense, that people would have been only too happy to have a religion working to change things, which presumably means wanting to change things for the sake of certain ideals. But no, if you have ideals, so to speak, especially religious ideals, you are penalised for trying to bring the law into line with those ideals. These considerations have come up recently in connection with the Ethical Society. [99][Pause]

_____: I went to see Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* adapted for the stage and, in that, one of the Diggers I think it was probably Winstanley, is being questioned by the Magistrate and as soon as this person realised that they really did want to change things, then they really started taking them more seriously and started to do something about it.

S: If they think you're just a lot of young idealists who don't really know what you're doing and you're not really going to make any difference to anything, well, they just leave you alone, but as soon as they realise you really mean business and things **are** going to be changed and have started changing, that might well be a different matter.[Pause]

So it's as though the truly positive community also acknowledges the possibility and even the desirability of change, in itself, from time to time. [Pause]

So, going back to Trungpa, one could say that the animal realm of the six realms is not really the animal realm of biology - in a sense cannot be, because it represents a possibility for human beings, or at least members of the genus *homo sapiens*, yes? And there cannot be a possibility, or certain possibilities within that particular range cannot be possibilities for actual animals. In outlook, man himself, total, is not an actual animal, if you see what I mean. There is a difference, broadly speaking. He is..., even a human being in the conventional sense, is different from an animal. So if you regard the six realms as representing psychological states of human beings, well, the state which is symbolised by the animal realm is not a state which is accessible actually to biological animals as such, that is who are not human beings. In other words, the animal realm symbolises something which actual animals never experience. Of course, if you look at it in the more traditional way as representing a possibility of rebirth of someone who is now a human being, well, that rather alters the situation, doesn't it? So, in a sense, a human being [100] can never become like an animal, but he can become, as it were, **worse** than an animal, he can become a sort of distorted animal - an animal distorted by a self-consciousness which has gone wrong - in other words, which has become to a degree alienated. But as I said at the beginning, Trungpa seems to neglect entirely this aspect of the animal state symbolising a preoccupation with sense experience, he seems to play that down altogether. So that the animal state seems to represent the state of a person who, in a sense, almost deliberately shuts himself out from any higher possibilities. It's not that you even do that in full and clear consciousness, but virtually you do shut yourself off. Those possibilities are there, but you refuse to recognise them, you refuse to take any interest in them, you don't want to go beyond your present narrow realm. In the case of the animal, it's not that he doesn't want to go beyond his animal existence, he is just not aware of any other possibility, he's not even aware of his animal existence, in a reflexive sense.

But the human being doesn't want, the animal human being, so to speak, doesn't want to go beyond. He is very, very dimly aware of some possibility beyond, more often than not, but he just does not want to go beyond his present comfortable, solid, secure round. He, in a sense, **deliberately** closes his eyes to any other possibility. He **could** open them, he could see more if he wanted to, but he won't. So it's as though the animal cannot develop, but it's more that the human being refuses to develop. It's in that sense that a human being is not, and cannot be, an animal.

So the animal realm is the realm or the society when all the individuals or all the persons comprising it, or all the people comprising it, are of that nature - when the institutions are of that nature and when the whole ethos and the whole tradition, so to speak, is of that nature. [101]

Sagaramati: The characteristic of the animal realm, human realm, is no faith.

S: Yes, you could say no faith. Yes, yes, no faith. And in the picture of the Wheel of Life, the Buddha appears in the animal world with a book. It is usually said that that represents knowledge, which the animals don't have. You could say it represents the scripture, representing faith which the animals, the animal human being, doesn't have. You could also say that the animal realm was the realm without culture. The uncultured realm. You see what I mean? Taking culture as sort of intermediate between, say, the pagan and the religious or the spiritual.

Virabhadra: I got a real sort of feeling of that when in the last year in my course I got sent away to various places and the worst one was Basingstoke and that's just exactly like that - there is no culture at all in Basingstoke! [laughs]

S: There is no higher cultural manifestation than a fish and chip shop.

Virabhadra: Right. There's just an animal realm. There's people who are quite well off and very comfortable, but there is just nothing else.

S: Well, perhaps within the context of the positive group it is the arts, the arts, as it were, based implicitly on spiritual ideals which do represent that opening in the direction of something higher more than anything else. The group which is not a positive group, in the full sense, which is closed against any higher possibility, is more often than not a very philistine sort of group, to use Matthew Arnold's term. A sort of entrenched Philistinism, a comfortable Philistinism.

Devamitra: Well, they're opposed to culture as much as to religion. [102]

S: In a sense, yes, yes. Sometimes even more, because you can get people who are sort of tenuously religious, conformistly religious, who go along perhaps to church for the social significance of the thing once a week or so, but who would be absolutely against any **cultural** manifestation.

_____: Culture is quite often seen as just being a waste of time.

S: A waste of time, a sort of luxury. Something for the idle rich, at best or at worst, yes. It's not related to the direct business of living and earning money and making a profit.

_____: Well, quite often, cultural activities themselves don't have this sort of... they're not looked on as a means of raising one's consciousness.

S: By the people involved with them you mean, yes. Because the arts have become dissociated from any sort of spiritual ideal or aspiration.

_____: Quite often it's just a sort of social activity, the done thing, or whatever.

S: Well, when you do get, say, public money being used to finance an art object, if you can call it that, which is - I believe it was a couple of men carrying a plank from one place to another, well, you can then understand the ordinary sort of citizen becoming a bit bewildered by it all [*Laughter*] and perhaps thinking that his hard earned money is being wasted by being given as a grant to finance that sort of activity in the name of the arts. One must admit there's a lot wrong in the camp of art itself.

Devamitra: But I mean even in genuine artistic achievements, I know, for instance, in the case of my parents, once or twice they came to see me play in Shakespeare and I remember when they came to see King Lear, my mother got really depressed because she said that it's so serious and that was the attitude of their whole social circle. It's too serious and it's morbid usually, they are the main criticisms that I've heard. [103]

S: Well, the arts are identified, perhaps, with just sort of light entertainment, yes. [*Laughter*] But when you consider - I know someone mentioned ancient Greece - that the whole population of Athens used to go and take part in these marathon dramatic festivals, well, they were religious festivals actually, and sit through several Greek tragedies a day, for several days, and would be watching, appreciating and judging, also, people like Socrates and Euripides.

Kuladeva: But would that just have been the free citizens?

S: It would have been, but then the free citizens were in the majority.

Devamitra: But you had a similar situation in a way with the Elizabethans, because I mean Shakespeare ...

S: [*interrupting*] In a way you did ...

Devamitra: Shakespeare didn't write for all ...

S: Well, it was in London and, a few tens of thousands of people might have seen his plays, yes, that does suggest quite a high level of culture.

Sagaramati: In Greece it was the people who actually wanted it.

S: Yes, yes.

Kuladeva: I mean, I - its really only since I've been involved with the Friends I've developed any appreciation in culture. My family's quite sort of that way inclined, but as far as I was concerned it was entirely sort of conventional - just part of the scenery sort of attitude which I had.

S: Also I think a lot of people who've been professionally concerned with culture don't really care for culture at all, in any real sense. But I certainly have noticed - in fact it's one of the things I have encouraged within the Friends - an interest in culture, because I've seen it sometimes as an alternative almost for the devotional, for those who can't get into the devotional, but also stimulating the imagination, giving inspiration [104] in many cases. One can't really separate the so-called secular from the so-called religious as strictly as sometimes people seem to think. But quite a few people I know are in the position of having started, say, reading Shelley or even seeing Shakespeare only after getting involved with the Friends; they would not perhaps have thought of doing any of those things before. I think this is quite significant. And the people, especially people connected with Universities, who are supposed to be preserving and expounding and helping us to appreciate our cultural heritage, do **no such thing!** They are, more often than not, occupied with trivialities. **Appreciation** of, say, Shakespeare or Milton or Byron or Keats, is about the **last** thing that they're concerned with. They would consider it unutterably unsophisticated and naïve, the majority of them. Actually to enjoy any of those poets is a sort of sign of naïvety. It's a great pity, isn't it? And I'm sure some of them, if they knew about the Friends, would consider us all very naïve in our approach to these things. Well, that's good that we are so naïve.

Devamitra: That is actually the attitude of our friends from the University of East Anglia. I mean the people who actually teach there, I've got quite a few contacts there.

S: This is where, say, the humour comes in, the so-called humour, the alleged humour, the jocularity. They wouldn't - if they were, for instance, to change from say the English Department to the Philosophy Department - take Plato seriously. You know, in the sense of really trying to understand what Plato was getting at, if they felt that it was true, really trying to put it into practice, putting it into operation, they would regard that as a bit of a joke, to take up that sort of attitude. Their attitude would be sort of one of some jocularity, they try to distance Plato with their jocularity so they don't have to get too close, don't have to experience it, don't have to take it seriously. [105] And the British academic tends to do this all the time. His counterpart in America is often much more naïve, and therefore much more interesting. Often he's actually enthusiastic about his subject, which the British academic will consider as very unprofessional, almost *infra dig*. I mean, understandable in these naïve childish Americans, but, from the mature sophisticated British, you expect something better than that. It's all very blasé, or so much of it. Sort of cynical and that's a great shame.

So I think Trungpa's famous humour here is not a characteristic of the animal realm in any sort of real sense, it's characteristic of the, well, the alienated, pseudo-human being.

Virabhadra: I was quite struck in India by the lack of culture associated with universities in general and the education system.

S: Well, it's very sterile and scholastic.

Virabhadra: Like in Poona, for instance, there is a very large university, but there doesn't seem to be any culture there, sort of going on, which one would expect in, say, a university in this country.

S: Well, in India, I mean education generally and higher education especially, perhaps, is just concerned with qualifications which are required for one to get employment. So you've no time when you're at university to waste on cultural fripperies, even if you're interested, your main concern is to pass your examinations and to become qualified, which is difficult enough anyway. And very often the teachers have not gone into it because of love of the subject but because that's also their career, that's their profession. Medicine is the case in point which you must have seen. I mean most doctors don't become doctors out of any reasons of an idealistic nature, it's good business, not to say big business, even.

I must say, here and there - I've certainly found this in Bengal connected with the University of Calcutta - I've met Bengali professors who had a **real** love of English literature and a real appreciation for it, who really did teach it, I gather, in a very [106] interesting and inspiring way, but I think that is relatively exceptional. The Bengalis are perhaps somewhat more cultured, or at least care for culture, more than people in some other parts of India. I have known personally Bengali professors who are really enthusiastic about English literature and who seem really to appreciate it and enjoy it. There must be others in other parts of India too, but that is not the sort of predominant note that is sounded by the Indian educational system. Philosophy, especially, is taught in a dry, academic sort of way. You're given a routine tour of the six systems of Indian philosophy, etcetera, etcetera.

So what does the animal realm then really consist in? Let's try to sort of summarise. What constitutes the animal realm as one of the six realms?

_____ : The cultureless realm from which there is no possibility of higher development.

S: It's a cultureless realm, a realm from which there is no possibility of higher development. A realm that does not **wish** to recognise the possibility of any higher development, which deliberately closes itself against any such possibility, which is concerned more with the senses and their satisfaction. Which means, eating, drinking,

housing, clothing, reproduction, job, economic life and not really anything much beyond that. There's sport, of course, that's another rather, often rather hideous, feature of this, the not so positive group in Britain.

_____ : It depends what's happening if you appreciate it!

Sagaramati: That's the *asura*.

S: Yes, we'll be getting on to that shortly. Well, the only good thing I can see about a lot of most sport, is it provides an outlet for people who might otherwise be actually fighting. *[Laughter]* Nowadays they tend to spill over and actually fight *[Laughter]* after the games, don't they? - especially in the case of the football fiends. [107]

Devamitra: I remember you saying on one Seminar, Bhante, in connection with the Tibetans debating you said at one point it was spiritually as much use as football *[laughs]* so, you know, football by implication is at least as spiritually as useful as those debates that the Tibetans used to have.

S: You **slightly** misquoted but I'll let that pass! *[Laughter]*

And there's also this aspect about the animal realm that it does include a distorted animality, or it represents the possibility of a distorted animality; an animality distorted by a self-consciousness which has become slightly alienated and manipulative. *[Pause]*

It's noticeable that Trungpa has not so much to say about the animal realm as about the hungry ghost realm or the realm of hell and that he'll have even **less** to say about the human realm. I don't know whether there is any significance in this. Let's have our morning tea or coffee now and then go on to the human realm afterwards.

Subhuti: Can we just clear up something of the animal realm? Something people have **always** asked me when we go through the Wheel of Life, is can you ...

S: *[interrupting]* Can you be reborn as an animal? Well, can you? *[Laughter]*

Subhuti: It seems unlikely.

S: In the minds of a lot of people there seems to be a strong resistance to this. Evans-Wentz argues against it very strongly, against this possibility. The Theosophists generally - and of course Evans-Wentz was a Theosophist - are strongly opposed to the idea that a human being can be reborn as an animal. One can look at it from various points of view.

First of all, the traditional Buddhist attitude. The main sort of evidence in this connection is said of course to be the Jataka stories where the Buddha himself, or rather the Bodhisattva himself, is represented as being reborn as an animal in between births as a human being. But, if one looks at the matter more critically, one sees [108] that the Jataka stories as such are not canonical, only the **verses** are canonical. If you examine the thirty-two so-called **canonical** Jatakas, that is to say Jataka stories which are actually embodied in, say, the *Nikayas*, you find that in these Jataka stories, in these birth stories, the Bodhisattva, that is to say the Buddha in his previous lives, is always represented either as a wise ruler or as a sage; he's never represented as being anything else. So actually, you cannot take the Jataka stories, critically examined, as evidence of the fact that Buddhism teaches that a human being can be reborn as an animal. A great deal of popular teaching does, of course, speak as though that was a possibility, but if you actually go to the earliest texts and if you look at the Jataka stories embedded in those texts, which were afterwards collected and enlarged and folk material brought into it to swell the number as it were, you find that it was not apparently taught by the Buddha himself that a human being could be reborn as an animal. As far as I can recollect, that is the position.

So therefore one can say that it is a popular Buddhist belief but that it does not seem to have been the actual teaching of the Buddha. But something which I also have said is what is rebirth and how does it take place? It would seem that you are reborn in accordance with the predominant mental state which you enjoyed during your life, so I have sometimes said in the past - I used to say this in India - that, if you die having lived a predominantly animal sort of life, there seems to me to be no logical reason why you shouldn't be **reborn** as an animal, that is to say, why your body should not correspond with your mental state. But perhaps there should be some sort of qualification made in view of what I was saying this morning about it not really being possible for a human being, even in the conventional sense, to be actually an animal. At best or at worst, he is a sort of **distorted** animal, but not an animal in the strict biological sense. He's a spoiled animal rather than a human being. So a spoiled animal cannot be reborn as an animal, you could say; he can only be reborn as a spoiled animal, i.e. as a conventional human being, what is conventionally regarded **as** being a human [109] being. Whether there is any sort of empirical evidence in the way of alleged recollections of previous existence to support the belief that one can be reborn as an animal I don't know - I'm not aware of any such evidence. In the few books on the subject that I have seen, to the best of my recollection, there was no actual instance of anyone remembering having been an animal, or having been **reborn** as an animal; it wouldn't be enough to

remember that you were an animal before, because that would be an instance of an animal being reborn as a human being which, within the evolutionary process, is quite acceptable. What **we** want is a recollection of at least two lives, in the first of which you were a human being and in the second of which you were an animal. The present one, the third, of course being again your human rebirth presumably, you see what I mean?

So I think that even though popular Buddhism speaks quite a lot in terms of one being reborn as an animal, I think probably one is safe in saying that is not actually a part of Buddhist teaching. You see what I mean? Though admittedly the whole subject requires further, fuller, deeper investigation. I wouldn't like to exclude the possibility altogether. I wouldn't like to be dogmatic about it and say that no, it cannot possibly happen, but it doesn't seem to be actually the Buddhist teaching when one goes back to the canonical sources. It certainly doesn't seem to have been the Buddha's teaching so far as that teaching is reflected in, say, the Pali *Nikayas*. And the Jataka stories themselves actually, when closely examined, turn out not to support the belief that early Buddhism or the Buddha himself did in fact teach that a human being could be reborn as an animal. This is not to say that people don't dislike the idea of being reborn as an animal or a human being being reborn as an animal for the wrong sort of reasons. You might raise the question, well, **why** are you so concerned that a human being should not be reborn as an animal, that it should not be possible and that Buddhism should not teach this; why are you so concerned about that? You could even say 'Don't you think it's quite natural that people who lead animal lives should be reborn as animals, who don't make use of their [110] human opportunities, who waste them, who throw them away, who disregard them; why should they not be reborn as animals? Perhaps they'd be better off as animals.'

Looking at it in another way, we could say that in the human being, the as it were conventionally human being, consciousness has been individualised to a certain extent, whereas in the case of the animal, it would seem that consciousness has not been individualised. The animal seems to share in - I don't want to indulge in sort of Jungian mythology here - but in a sort of collective consciousness, so there is this rather sort of radical difference between the animal state and the human state, so it is a question whether, having as it were developed this at least somewhat individualised consciousness, it can lapse, or whether in a sense there is even anything for it to lapse back into in the strict sense, but that, however maimed or distorted it may be, it will continue as an individualised consciousness, i.e. as the consciousness of a human being. Again, this needs fuller investigation.

Subhuti: He talks about the necessary conditions for human conception, the sperm, ovum, and the *samskaras*.

S: Yes, the *gandharva* mythologically or the *vijnana*.

Subhuti: So what are the corresponding conditions for an animal's conception?

S: Well, one would say the **non**-individualised consciousness.

Subhuti: But sort of how does that ...

S: How does that work? How does the **individualised** consciousness work? Perhaps one should look more closely at one's language, what is one actually saying? It's not always very easy to make **that** out when one speaks in terms of these three elements. Also, of course, there is the assumption that there is, say, a non-material, as **distinct** from a material aspect. One has already made that sort of distinction. Is one justified in making that? I mean, the framework of discussion is dualistic, so should it, or need it, be? This also needs to be gone into. [111]

But it's as though the statement which is found, of course, in the Pali texts and is repeated elsewhere, that, for conception to take place, you need the presence of what we would call the spermatozoon plus the ovum, from the male and female parents respectively and the consciousness the *vijnana*, mythologically described as the *gandharva* and only when these three things coincide does conception take place. This would appear to be a way of saying that human life, and therefore the origination of any **new** human existence, cannot be accounted for in, as it were, mechanistically material terms.

Perhaps we should not take these three separate elements, certainly not as regards the consciousness, too literally, do you see what I mean? It's almost as though there is an aspect of the process which is not material in that mechanistically materialistic sense. Buddhist philosophy, strictly speaking, is not dualistic in the sense of positing a dualism of mind and matter. So therefore you can't really draw a hard and fast distinction between the *vijnana* on the one hand, the incipient as it were reincarnating consciousness on the one hand and the physical organism supplied by the spermatozoon and ovum on the other. There were not, as it were, two processes - a material and mental - going on side by side. There's not a sort of Cartesian dualism, strictly speaking.

So it really means the whole question has to be reformulated in non-dualistic terms and then, how will one do that? But it is as though the purely mechanistic material, or mechanistically materialistic interpretation, not only of the process of conception but of life itself, is inadequate. So it isn't a question so much as at what stage is

life injected into the material process, it isn't really that at all. This issue comes up very much in connection with the whole abortion discussion, doesn't it? At what stage is the foetus to be considered a human being and a person? Even in a sense a juridical person. So the Buddhist answer is from the instant of conception. [Pause] [112]

Sagaramati: What then is the difference between, say, a newly-born baby and an animal? I mean, in terms of what actually manifests as a baby is definitely an animal. You can't say there's any human consciousness there.

S: People differ about this. I would say, functionally speaking, that the newly-born child is an animal. Functionally speaking. He doesn't seem to have self-consciousness, just as an animal doesn't, that does seem to develop as a result of the interplay between the parents, for instance, and the newly-born child. But the animal doesn't develop that, however much attention you may give it.

So it's clearly a potential is present in the newly-born child which is not present in the animal, yes? So therefore that potential is present, presumably, from the beginning, i.e. from the instant of conception, so there is a sense in which the human is a human being from the instant of conception. Of course, you can say, well, it's only **potentially** a human being and a potential human being is not a human being; I think that rests on a false distinction. I would say a potential human being is a human being if the potential is what I call a **concrete** potential and not an abstract potential. You see what I mean? That is to say, a sort of reasonable expectation and there's a reasonable expectation that the potential will be realised if the process is left to work itself out in a natural way, yes?

Subhuti: But you couldn't say that about a chimpanzee, but in the course of evolution you might.

S: No, not that individual chimpanzee, because its consciousness, so to speak, is part of a collective consciousness. So actually, the instant that conception takes place you have, in fact, got a human being on your hands or in your womb, so to speak. Well, in your hands so to speak and in your womb literally, if you're a woman that is. So it is for this reason that Buddhism has always considered abortion as being equivalent to murder in the sense of the destruction of a human life. This is where we part company with women's lib for instance and a lot of other, say, 'liberal-minded', inverted commas, people. I mean, women's lib discusses the issue entirely [113] in terms of freedom of the woman to do what she likes with her own body, etc., etc. No, I don't think that can be sustained.

Sagaramati: I think in the *Survey* you mentioned about the parallel processes of the biological evolution and the spiritual devolution and sort of seeing the human being as being a meeting of the two. Whereas with the animal life its life is just the biological evolution.

S: Yes, one can look at it like that, but even that would sort of presuppose not an absolute dichotomy between the so-called material and the so-called mental, because if one looks at it in terms of, say, Buddhist traditional thought, the mental is not the nirvanic, so to speak, if you see what I mean, that is a category apart; and the material and the mental evolve equally from the residual 'matter', inverted commas, which is neither material nor mental, which is, as it were, left over from the previous world period. Do you see what I mean? So there is a sort of separation within that 'matter', inverted commas; it develops into a grosser portion and a more refined portion. The grosser portion is what comes to be called matter and the more refined portion is what comes to be called mind, do you see what I mean? And then each goes its own way, as it were. This is the traditional Buddhist view. The grosser goes its own way and produces the elements and eventually the whole process of organic evolution. The higher produces, so to speak, beings which descend eventually, or some of whom descend. This is roughly what seems to be the position. So you don't have an absolute dichotomy here between mind and matter, you don't have a Cartesian dualism. You do have a descending line of devolution coming into contact with an ascending line of evolution at a certain point. Whether all these sort of ends can be tied together and, as it were, articulated within a common self-consistent structure, it's difficult to say, I haven't had time to get around to even thinking about this yet, but do you see what I mean?

[114] But what is certain is that the evolutionary process, life itself, cannot be accounted for in nineteenth-century mechanistically material terms. We have to have, as it were, a common term for the material and the mental - we could call it 'mind-stuff' if we wanted to. That's why when we flog as it were or we attack the Marxists for their materialism, it's all beside the point. I mean, what they speak of as matter is very often just not matter at all, it's got nothing to do with - well, they in fact say that their materialism is not mechanical materialism, it is dialectical materialism, though of course the dialectical bit itself is sometimes obscure, but it is interesting that they do very explicitly repudiate mechanical materialism. So in a sense, to fight with the Marxists as being materialist and saying we, of course, are not materialist, is really dragging a red herring across the trail. I think one should ignore that whole area in a sense in discussing things with Marxists.

So we want a common term which we can use in a more refined way as standing for mind and in a less refined way as standing for matter, the two being poles of the same thing rather than two different things. So in traditional Buddhist thought, mind and matter are polarities within the same reality for want of a better term, not two separate things.

_____ : The language of the Stupa.

S: The dualism in Buddhism, that is to say, in the Hinayana, is between the conditioned and the Unconditioned. Mind and matter as we have known them in the West are both within the conditioned. Mind is not identified with the Unconditioned. Certainly not in the Hinayana. There's a certain ambiguity in the Yogacara where mind, of course in a sense, seems to be identified with the Unconditioned, but I think the Madhyamika would not probably agree with that, that the unconditioned can be described in terms of mind, however refined, it is completely transcendental, it is completely *lokuttara*, the *loka* including mind as well as matter, as we call them. Also, this all ties up with the famous [115] subject/object distinction. It is as though matter is the, what shall I say, the objective content of the perceptual situation and mind is the, as it were, subjective content of the perceptual situation. Or maybe objective correlate would be better, and subjective correlate, of the perceptual situation. In other words, you have an experience and within that you, as it were - you're already sort of alienated - and you sort of distinguish an objective content and a subjective content from within that which is essentially one experience, which is actually free from that differentiation. But you do that because you are already an alienated subject, i.e. an ego. Anyway, perhaps we are getting a bit off the track, I mean, you two are leading me astray [*Laughter*] along the road of philosophy.

Subhuti: One does feel that whenever you talk about the Wheel of Life, you are sort of treading with rather flat feet over all sorts of philosophical (**S:** Yes, indeed.) questions. It's just fortunate people are more philosophically naïve than one is and if there's any kind of inkling...

S: Right, right. I think it has to be gone into systematically at some time or other. I was even thinking that, if I do feel so inclined, a future series of lectures on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and its implications, that would be very useful. I mean, not just on the factual content of the book, but the various implications, which are quite far-reaching, quite extensive. There's the whole issue of rebirth, the whole issue of Karma, the whole issue of consciousness, the whole issue of subject and object. All these things arise out of this consideration of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, actually, and they need to be considered systematically. And Trungpa, if I may say so, he's an absolute amateur in this field, isn't he? He probably knows the factual content of the text, but as for giving any real account of it, well, he's not even naïve, he's just muddled. [116] I am a bit surprised, actually, because it's as though the Americans also, judging by this material, are pretty naïve.

Subhuti: And muddled.

S: And muddled.

Subhuti: I find this quite surprising, because I would have thought they would have been naïvely searching, you know, that they wouldn't take things just as they were laid out.

S: I think perhaps they tend to be a bit over-awed by the 'Rimpoche mystique', as we may call it. Not to speak of the Vajra Guards. I have been told that if you get too argumentative, the Vajra Guards just throw you out. [*Laughter*]

Subhuti: You'd better not go there!

S: I don't need any Vajra Guards! [*Laughter*]

Sagaramati: But you might get thrown out.

S: Well, we'd see, wouldn't we? [*much laughter*]

S: It could be rather amusing. [*Laughter*]

_____ : We'd see who had the sense of humour!

S: Yes indeed. [*Laughter*]

S: You see, even the idea of Vajra Guards makes one laugh. I don't think anyone with a sense of humour, actually, if I may say so, could have surrounded himself with Vajra Guards. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, let's go on to the Human Realm.

THE HUMAN REALM

The human realm brings out another kind of situation which is not quite the same as the animal realm of surviving and living life. The human realm is based on passion, the tendency to explore and enjoy; it is the area of research and development, constantly trying to enrich. One could say that the human realm is closer psychologically to the hungry ghost quality of striving

for something, but it also has some element of the animal realm, of putting everything into action [117] predictably. And there is something extra connected with the human realm, a very strange kind of suspicion which comes with passion, and which makes human beings more cunning, shifty and slippery. They can invent all sorts of tools and accentuate them in all sorts of sophisticated ways so as to catch another slippery person, and the other slippery person develops his or her own equipment of anti-tools. So we build up our world with tremendous success and achievement but this escalation of building up tools and anti-tools develops constantly, and introduces more sources of passion and intrigue. Finally we are unable to accomplish such a big undertaking. We are subject to birth and death. The experience can be born, but it can also die; our discoveries may be impermanent and temporary.

S: Trungpa seems to be talking here, really, more about the *asuras*, I would have thought.

Devamitra: It's just that he's got no experience of humanity, actually.

S: So all right, in the light of what was said about the animal realm, in what does the human realm actually consist? He does sort of get a little close to it when he speaks in terms of inventing all sorts of tools, because, well, that could be regarded as an aspect, an elementary aspect, of culture. The human beings are distinguished by transmission systems, do you see what I mean?

_____: Yes, I was going to say that one element that seems to be lacking from this description is the element of communication.

S: Yes indeed. So the human being is able to store information in a way that the animal is not. It stores information, it stores experience, in fact, through language and later on through writing and then printing etc., etc. and then information retrieval systems and so on. So that the information, the experience of one person is made available to all, so there is an accumulation of **collective** experience and this is at the basis, of course, of our material progress and technological progress, which of course is an aspect of our culture. It's also an aspect of our higher culture, because language and literature make possible the preservation of human insights and understanding and so on. [118]

Sagaramati: In technology you can feel - I've often found, say, being an engineer - there's a definite unsatisfactoriness in that you can never, as it were, go back to the beginning of something and follow it all the way through because you'd have to go back so far in history and you'd spend your life, the rest of your life, finding out how you ended up with, say, something like a logic circuit or a computer - there's so much development behind it that you've got to take so much for granted and just get on with what you've got in hand.

S: Yes. So in a sense what he says is correct here, that 'the tendency to explore and enjoy... is in the area of research and development, constantly trying to enrich.' You cannot go back, you have to go forwards, so in that sense, yes, there is a sort of hungry ghost quality to it all, as he says. But actually, of course, it is not hungry ghost-like, in the sense that what is accumulated and what is carried forward and added to all the time is actually available to and can be enjoyed and used by all human beings who have access to it.

So again, this is an aspect of the sort of self-consciousness, the self-awareness, the reflexive awareness, in a more healthy and positive sense, a non-alienated sense: that it is able to transmit and it is able to experience through transmission systems what has been experienced by others before. It is able to experience what is not its **own** experience or is able to make the experience of others its own experience and therefore to enrich its own life, just as now we can read Aristotle or we can read Euripides or read the Buddhist scriptures, which is the sort of thing that animals are not able to do; the animal is confined entirely to the circle of his own personal experience. We are not so confined, and that makes possible the development of culture or at least of certain forms or aspects of culture, because you can build upon what has been done before, you can **learn** from what has been done before. So this makes possible a sort of speeding up of the process of individual development. The human individual does not in every respect have to start from the beginning. So the evolutionary process has been speeded up. [119]

So the distinctively human realm is the realm of culture. Because what is culture? It means the preserved remains of what other individuals before you have achieved, experienced, discovered; which you, by appreciating, by understanding, by appropriating, can enrich your own life and contribute to your own development, even perhaps without adding very much of your own. You can sort of support yourself, so to speak, on previous achievements of the human race. I mean, **we** don't have to work out, say, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path all for ourselves; it's been done for us, so to speak. We can read about it. And then, having read about it, we can perhaps understand it and assimilate it, which perhaps we couldn't have done if left to our own devices.

Of course, again, there is a possibility of alienation, because you can merely appropriate in a very external way, but then that is one of the risks you take as a human being, one of the risks you take when you have a culture. You can be a rich man possessing hundreds of magnificent paintings, but be totally unable to appreciate them

as paintings - to you they're just possessions which have got a certain value. It's like the art collections which some of the trade unions are building up, which presumably the majority of their members don't appreciate as works of art - they're probably not even interested in seeing them, probably locked away in the bank anyway where **nobody** sees them. They're just objects having a certain value and representing a financial investment.

Devamitra: I hadn't realised they did that, God, that's awful.

S: Yes. Tens of millions. There's been a certain amount of discussion about it in trade union circles, I mean, some trade unionists have got a sturdy suspicion of that sort of thing as smacking too much of capitalism and the luxuries of the idle rich and all that, i.e. the works of art. But anyway, the point has been argued by the officials making the purchases and making the investments that the value of a work of art appreciates, that is increases, more than practically anything else in the world. So some of these sturdy trade unionists have been rather converted by that argument, so that the whole thing has been allowed to go through and they're apparently spending more and more [120] on works of art and I gather that a few more unions are going into this now. I forget, it was, I think it was one of the railways -

Subhuti: The British Railways Pension Fund.

S: Yes, Pension Fund. They sort of were the pioneers in this particular field and I think some quite sort of well-known works of art have now been bought up by the trade unions in this sort of way and the argument which seems to have clinched the matter was that they could be sold at any time and, as and when they were sold, they would make a lot of money and make a big profit, a greater profit than you could have got in any other way. So everybody seems to have been satisfied with this argument, that you could sort of dispose of them more or less instantly and get the money, in fact a lot more money. The ethics or the aesthetics, even, of the whole process seem not to have been considered at all, that this would have an educating influence and maybe the union could have bits of an art gallery, oh no, this wasn't even mentioned. They either leave them in existing galleries because they don't have to pay for overheads then, or if they buy them from a private person, apparently this goes straight into the Bank and of course no one will see them then.

But anyway, leaving that aside, this is a bit alienated. So there is always the possibility of alienation when you have these sort of transmission systems. I mean, possessing books which you don't actually read is a very crude example of this sort of thing, but you can have it in much subtler and more dangerous ways.

So this characterises human beings, or rather human societies, it doesn't characterise individual human beings, you need a human society to preserve the discoveries and the understanding and visions of previous generations of human beings. So you could say that societies, primitive societies to begin with, are so organised as to preserve for future generations the experience of the individual, so this certainly distinguishes human beings from animals and this is why, for human beings, our evolutionary process has been speeded up. In the case of animals, you're used to speaking in the usual Darwinian terms, for any change or development to take place, they have to [121] rely upon natural selection and all that sort of thing, but in the case of human beings, we don't have to rely upon all that. We **can** change ourselves consciously and we're helped to do that by the fact that we can preserve and learn from and build upon the experiences of the individuals who've lived before us.

Sagaramati: But even surely animals can do that on a lower level? It's like you mentioned about the birds that developed a longer beak so that they can get into milk bottles.

S: Yes, but that is by virtue of natural selection. I mean, the bird doesn't write his autobiography and say, 'Well, I've found a longer beak useful in getting at the necks, you'd better develop a longer beak and stretch your beak artificially if necessary', no; the birds with shorter beaks are eliminated gradually in the process of the workings of natural selection, the birds with longer beaks survive and in that way ...

Sagaramati: *[interrupting]* Say a bird with a shorter beak and the same species of bird actually develops a longer beak so that there's something transmitted in the species.

S: Well, the question of where one species ends and another begins is a rather debated one.

Sagaramati: But I mean if it was a pigeon - if pigeons suddenly grew long beaks.

S: Yes. Well, it would be a new species. *[Laughter]*. You can say a long-beaked or billed pigeon is an unusual sort of thing.

Sagaramati: What I mean is, there was something being transmitted from one pigeon to the other.

S: Well, you're raising here the whole question of the heritability of acquired characteristics, which is a very debatable field among biologists.

Subhuti: Sort of almost a political question, I mean...

S: Yes, well, perhaps we'd better not go into that. **Indicate** the minefield. *[Laughter]* Well, you can see the broad general point that for human beings the process is speeded up because human [122] beings have developed self-consciousness and also have developed a means of preserving their experiences and handing them down from one generation to the next.

So this characterises the human realm as distinct from the animal realm. This is the knowledge, so to speak, the book, that the Buddha in the animal world offers the animals, **which they don't have**. You see what I mean? The book, you could say, represents culture, represents the information and transmission system. Probably you could say that these two things characterise the human world, really. Self-consciousness as distinct from simple consciousness, yes? And the ability to transmit information, either in time or in space, in fact.

Sagaramati: One is dependent on the other anyway.

S: Yes. Right, yes. The second is dependent upon the first. The ability to transmit information, whether in space or in time is dependent upon self-consciousness, on reflexive consciousness. If you have only simple consciousness, you cannot conceive of a different space or a different time to transmit to, because you cannot imagine yourself, so to speak, **in** that other space or that other time. You cannot do that because you cannot see yourself as though you were another person, i.e. you do not have reflexive consciousness.

Anandajyoti: You seem to be looking here, Bhante, at the human realm very much in terms of the biological human. In a sense you could say that perhaps *devas* and *asuras* would have the same sort of reflexive consciousness, or would they? What would make the human realm particularly human over and above that aspect of self-consciousness that the *asuras* and also ...

S: *[interrupting]* Well, it's the possession of the gross physical body which the *devas* do not have. The *asuras* seem to be, in this respect, a sort of *deva*, they do not possess gross physical bodies. But what about the *asura*-like human being and the *deva*-like human being? Well, the *asura*-like human being is simply the more combative human being. You can even have a combative or more combative culture. You have to distinguish [123] between the *devas* and *asuras* and so on as parts of Buddhist or Indian mythology and *devas* and *asuras* as actually representing types of human beings or particular psychological states. The *asura* of mythology has no physical body, but the *asura*-like human being, or the human being who is in a *asura*-like mental state, does have a physical body, which of course makes a big difference.

Anandajyoti: Could we not say that the human being is the individual, whereas the *asura* isn't, in a sense? His activities are dependent on the group around him. You could have a human being who is just in a sense ...

S: I'm not so sure about that. Perhaps you **can** have *asuras*, even in the mythological sense, who do take the initiative. The *asuras* have their *asura* kings and leaders according to mythology. So perhaps you could say that the *asuras* are as much group-oriented as human beings are - and as little. I mean, the majority, yes, in either case they follow a group, they follow the herd, but there are some outstanding individuals, so to speak, both among human beings and among *asuras* in the mythological sense. So it would **seem** that *asuras* whether mythological, or conceived of as representing certain mental states, are not necessarily more group-like or group-oriented than are human beings. *[Pause]*

Except, perhaps, to a **limited** extent, inasmuch as you need, for war, to be highly organised, you see what I mean? An army has to be much more highly organised, other factors being equal, than does the peace-time society or peace-time economy.

Sagaramati: That seems to be the difference between Sparta and Athens. I mean, culture arose in Athens, but Sparta had such a strict military regime, there was no room for...

S: Yes. *[Long pause]*

I notice in describing the human realm, Trungpa doesn't say anything about that luminous space - he seems to have forgotten about that, he's sort of dropped it. *[Pause]*

So, how would you **describe** a human being then? [124]

I mean, a human being is one who is self-conscious or self-aware, primarily, and who shares in, or takes advantage of, or uses, the cultural heritage of humanity or that section of it which is available or accessible to him. So one could say it's really a great pity that the average person, in perhaps **any** country, shares in the cultural heritage even of his own particular society, to the limited extent that he does, that he does not share in it much **more** than he does - that would seem to be a great pity. I mean, far from not going on further, he doesn't even get as far as tens of thousands of people have got in the past. In the case of some societies and some cultures, a lot is embodied in tradition with which you are in contact in your ordinary day-to-day life, as for instance when there are big religious festivals, let's say, or just big festivals which in some way or other

manage to put something across or to convey something, communicate something. More sterile societies, modern secular societies, don't even have that sort of thing.

But when you think how pitiable it is that, say, in a country like England, people grow up, individuals grow up, they know how to drive a car and might even know how to tinker about with the engine a bit. They know how to switch on the TV and they know how to switch on the radio and they know how to switch on the electric light, but they are not acquainted with the works of, say, Keats or Shelley or Shakespeare - perhaps they've never even **heard** of them, except at school under duress, and even if they go to University and **study** these subjects, as sometimes happens, they're not taught them in the way that they should be taught, nor do they very often learn to appreciate these poets and their poetry in the way that they should. So they're not entering into, so to speak, their own heritage. And then, of course, look at the purely spiritual tradition of humanity, though in a sense - this is something we won't go into now - the spiritual cannot be a cultural tradition, but in a manner of speaking. So, how little of our cultural heritage, especially if you're thinking in global terms, does the individual human being avail himself of? which seems really pitiable. He has more **opportunities** now than ever before in history, perhaps. This is really an extraordinary [125] development even within this century, even within, well, say, my lifetime. If you think of things like records. If you'd lived 100 years ago, if you had not been well-to-do and moving in the best and wealthiest circles, would you have been able to hear, say, the music of Mozart or Beethoven? If you'd lived in a remote village or even in a small market town, almost anywhere in Britain, could you ever have heard music of that sort? No. But now you've got it in your own bed-sitter, you can play it on your own record player any time that you please. You don't even have to **buy** the records, you can borrow them from the local library. Yes? You can play not only the whole Western classical repertoire, from - well, let's not go too far back - from Purcell right down to Mahler, let's say, and enjoy it all, but you can get records of Indian classical music, Chinese classical music, Japanese classical music, primitive music, all the rest of it. All that is available and accessible to you in a way that it was not before, well, it simply was not before. Even if you were a wealthy person a hundred years ago in Britain, could you ever listen to Indian music? - it was impossible, you'd have to go to India to do that. But everything virtually of any real value has been translated now; we can read all, or practically all, the important Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist scriptures. It's all available, and no doubt there are lots and lots of people, the majority of people don't avail themselves of any part of this. But many more do than ever before in history and this is one of the more encouraging things, we might say, one of the more hopeful signs, as regards the age in which we live. It is not an age of Aquarius, but at least more is available to those who wish to avail themselves of it. The opportunities are there.

Devamitra: The other side of that, though, is that there's a greater sort of mass availability of a really debased kind of culture, through the media.

S: There is that too, but in a sense, does that matter?

Devamitra: Well, it's just really difficult to get people out of that. [126]

S: But none the less, more people have a genuine appreciation and a wider appreciation of what **has** been achieved culturally by humanity so far than at any other time in history, I think. This is so far as the West is concerned. I mean, it's not quite the same in, say, the Communist countries. But it's interesting that it's beginning to be a little bit like that in China, where they're opening up to Western music for instance.

Devamitra: Football as well, actually! *[Laughter]*

S: Well, never mind! We'll forgive them the football if they get into the Bach and Beethoven. But it's interesting to me that Beethoven is so popular, more, say, than Bach and Mozart apparently.

Devamitra: Why do you think that should be?

S: I don't know.

Devamitra: Not even got any inclination?

S: I think maybe because it's a bit heroic. It's also secular for the most part. Well, Mozart is for that matter, so perhaps that isn't the very real point. *[Pause]*

So, it means that, if you are not availing yourself to the best of your ability of the cultural treasures of humanity, you are not really being fully a human being. It means that too, doesn't it? It doesn't mean that you must go on a course of intensive reading, it is a matter really of availing yourself of and utilising, in such a way that it contributes to your development as an individual, which might mean that you just read a selection of things, but you take them really seriously. You're not indiscriminate, you don't try to get through everything, which is impossible. But that you are not blind to these things, you are aware of their existence and you selectively make use of them in a very intense and real way.

_____: I think that, for a lot of people, culture is sort of seen as an icing, a sort of very -well, you can take it or leave it - on the cake of life, which may be quite hard. [127]

S: [interrupting] Well, perhaps it's usually regarded as sort of entertainment or a sort of luxury extra.

_____: And it's not seen as part of the fabric of what goes to make a healthy human person.

S: Well, this is because people don't usually have any conception of what is a healthy human person and no conception of human development, of evolution, or the **higher** evolution.

_____: It definitely seemed that in classical Greece, it was very much part of the fabric of ...

S: Yes. As it is with all more 'primitive', inverted commas, societies.

_____: I remember a quote from a speech where, I think it might have been Pericles, was saying that, 'We like the arts, but it doesn't make us soft'. That's another opinion or view which people have of the arts is that you become a bit soft if you're ...

S: Well, there's some justification in practice for this. Because, if you look at the sort of people who usually go to art college, they take what they consider the soft option. You see what I mean? They're not tough-minded enough for the sciences, for any sort of really hard solid study, they take up the arts in an airy-fairy sort of way, because that will enable them to get away with it. They don't take up the arts very very seriously, the arts have got the reputation of being a soft option in our society. The fine arts perhaps more than, say, graphics or design. You can just spend an extra year or two.... It means you postpone the awful business of getting a job for another few years. You just mess around art school and send out a few tiddly drawings or something like that, or little pictures. Well, this is what usually happens, isn't it? We've all got quite a few friends of this sort. They don't achieve very much. Well, because it's art, it's very difficult to check your objective progress or even your work. Whereas, if you're studying one of the sciences, engineering or medicine or something like that, it's rather a different sort of state of affairs. Your progress can be measured at every step, there's something very solid and objective and verifiable about it. [128]

_____: I feel that there's often a similar thing with, in fact with meditation, people coming to classes. There's no immediate apparent way that they can see whether or not anything's happening, there are no immediately apparent objective criteria.

S: I think in a sense there are. For instance, you should become more relaxed, you should become more concentrated, more integrated, more emotionally positive, at least, not perhaps immediately, but certainly over a period of time. I would say two years was a reasonable period for the average person. Though in some cases you can see tangible changes in a few months. Do you see this, I mean, those of you who are running classes, taking classes at centres, do you think that there are objective criteria of any kind?

Devamitra: Well, of the sort you described. You can see people changing.

_____: I think what I was trying to get at was more that I think there are those criteria, but it's a bit more difficult to say to someone, well, you aren't really getting a bit more relaxed, you aren't really becoming more positive, even though perhaps you can see it in the same way as perhaps if, well, if someone was going to judo classes for instance, it would become immediately obvious to them that they weren't putting in the required effort or the required practice.

S: Well, there is a reason, I think, for that, because in the case of, say, judo, it is a question of **doing** something, whereas in the case of meditation it is more a question of **being** something. So it's more easy to see in a way whether someone is doing something or not than it is to see whether they are **being** somehow or not. And also, if you criticise someone for not doing something as well as he might, it's not so much a criticism as when you criticise someone for being or not being - you're then attacking them really quite directly, so they are in a way more defensive and they make it more difficult for you to put them in that sort of position. You see what I mean?

_____: Yes.

S: You can say to a judo person, 'You didn't do that very...

Tape 7 [129]

...well', you are not criticising him. But if you say to someone, 'You've been meditating for a year now but you're not in the least bit more emotionally positive than you were when you started', that is a very direct, frontal criticism. It's almost an attack, or could be taken as an attack on him as a person, and he of course will usually resist that. So it's not so much that there are not objective criteria, but that psychologically it is more

- or should I say not so much psychologically but, what shall I say? - pastorally speaking it is more difficult to apply them.

I mean, someone who is doing judo, and after a year has not managed to do a certain thing, they would be feeling a bit of a fool. But not so much a person who had been meditating, doing the Metta Bhavana for a year but hadn't actually managed to feel more *metta*-ful. You wouldn't think that he was a fool. You would be more likely to think that maybe there isn't anything in it and 'He's OK, yes, he likes people a lot, who says he hasn't developed metta?' You'd be more likely to develop that sort of attitude. 'After all I don't hate anybody', I have heard this statement quite a number of times, 'I don't **need** to develop metta, I've got it already'. The judo person can't get away with saying, 'I've no need to show you, I know that I know how to do it', he's got to come out there on the floor and do it.

Sagaramati: Progress in terms of being seems a lot slower. It's much harder to see.

S: Oh yes. And especially it's harder for those people to see who are in regular contact with that person. Only someone who sees them after a few months, or a year or two, will see a much greater change, or see it more easily.

Sagaramati: We had someone say the other day that they'd been doing the Metta Bhavana for eight years and they were wondering whether ..

S: Wondering what?

Sagaramati: Whether it had any effect. It's like they expected a hell of a lot more than...

S: Well, if they'd really been doing it for eight years, almost regardless of the sort of temperament they started off with they would have been changed to some extent.

Sagaramati: It would be hard to see a change looking back over eight years, on yourself. I mean it would be very difficult to see a change, I would imagine.

S: No, I wouldn't say that, especially not if you are young. Oh no, I would say in a six or seven year period, even a three or four year period you could look back **yourself** and see a great change in yourself, I am sure, in many cases. I think as you get older the **rate** of change, in any case, becomes slower, so the longer the time span you need to look back over to see any real change. I am sure that some very young people can look back and see a tremendous change as having taken place within the course of the last year. I know some of our very young friends do say that. Within a year there have been [130] very big changes, very drastic changes. And not just external changes but changes within themselves. Do you actually notice this, that the younger people are the more rapidly they change, especially when they do get involved in something like the Friends, or meditation? You don't? Not in all cases of course, but in some.

Devamitra: The most dramatic changes are always with young people.

Sagaramati: Usually changes in attitude rather than... the first thing that I see is a change in attitude, taking the spiritual life a bit more seriously. That's where I see the change.

S: Well, that is the beginning of a change of being, isn't it? That's the change in, as it were, the vision aspect as distinct from the transformation aspect. After which the transformation is only a matter of time, so to speak.
[Pause]

Sagaramati: The way I see it, at the beginning there does tend to be a definite perceptible change, then after that it is very very difficult to see anything.

Devamitra: I was thinking about this quite a bit, because you mentioned this on the last seminar, about a year ago. That you saw hardly any change in people over a long period of time.

Sagaramati: Not as much as I would expect, even in myself.

Devamitra: I think that I have experienced in myself that you find the sort of foundation of your own individuality, say, and having established that, somehow, it's like it's a more subtle kind of change which is taking place. It's less obvious externally, I think.

Sagaramati: Yes, that's right.

S: Especially if the change involves any change in the whole way of life, as when people leave home and go and live in a community. Well, you can only do that **once**, as it were, you can only leave home once, you can't leave home every week. So it's as though when you do these external things for the first time the change is very

big and very evident, but after you've done all those external, rather dramatic, things, the changes cannot but be more subtle and less perceptible.

Devamitra: Can I get back to the point that you made about when you are younger the rate of change is more rapid? Are you actually implying that one grows spiritually more when one is younger?

S: I think there is an analogy with the biological process. Even if you go back to the rate of the division, and therefore multiplication, of the initial cell. I'm not quite sure if I have got the details right, but broadly what happens is that the spermatozoon and the ovum coalesce to form the initial cell, that divides and subdivides at a terrific rate until it reaches a sort of maximum, but that maximum is reached, as far as I recollect, before birth actually takes place. After that cells multiply at a declining rate all through your life, so [131] that you have already, really, begun to die before you are born. So much the same sort of thing happens in your early life. You learn at a terrific rate, the rate at which a baby learns is tremendous, the rate at which a child learns is tremendous. But as you get older the learning process slows down. The growing process also slows down. So I think much the same sort of thing happens even in spiritual life, as you get older. Unless of course you are so much into spiritual life that it is no longer affected by the ordinary mental and physical processes. It doesn't **have** to slow down but usually it does.

Sagaramati: I must admit that I've been a bit disappointed in people, to be quite honest. I expected to see a lot more than actually happened.

S: In some ways younger people have it very easy, don't they? But, anyway, we don't want to get into that vein, it might just bore the younger people generally. They might totally disagree even though they don't say anything. Of course one of the things they might say is that the older ones are always standing in the way, and if only they would go away and leave us to get on with it and run things ourselves then we'd really show them!

Sagaramati: Oh good, I'd be glad. *[Laughter]*

S: Well, you have got, of course, to leave the **right** people behind.

Sagaramati: Yes, right.

S: Not just anybody.

Anyway, anything more to say about the human realm? *[Pause]* Perhaps just to underline that yet again what I have often said, that we just have to wake up to the fact we aren't yet, in most cases, fully human. That humanity is something to be achieved as a solid basis for an even higher what we call spiritual development.

Subhuti: Is reflexive consciousness uniformly a characteristic of *homo sapiens*? Is it possible to be ...

S: There are certainly degrees. (**Subhuti:** Yes.) I don't think it is ever entirely absent. I am sure that in the case of the higher animals you do see at least the very faint beginnings of that. I think this has been experimentally demonstrated in the case of chimpanzees.

Subhuti: It seems to suggest that self-consciousness is a biological characteristic, or it comes about as a result of biological development.

S: It depends what one means by biological development. Something that develops in the course of the process of the general **non-individual** evolutionary process? (**Subhuti:** Yes.) Well yes and no, because there is never any, as far as we know, absolute jump. It's not as though something suddenly appears. It is in a way a very mysterious thing, how the individual appears in the midst of the non-individual. You could even argue that the individual was there all along. Well, the whole idea of rebirth points in that sort of direction. But where did the individual come from in the beginning, and were there **always** individuals? Maybe we [132] should think in terms of first beginnings in this respect. It's the old problem of the continuous and the discrete, c-r-e-t-e of course, that's just an artificial problem. Perhaps one has to allow for a certain amount of overlapping, so to speak, between the human and the animal. Apparently it used to be thought even by evolutionists that there was a very distinct break, but they are not so sure of that now, it seems. At least some of them are not so sure of that, in view of what has been learned, say, about chimpanzees, about porpoises and some other creatures.

So it isn't a question so much of the general having produced the individual, as much as it's more that the individual, the characteristics of the individual, have emerged at an earlier point in the overall evolutionary process than we had hitherto supposed.

It's much the same in the case of the human being who moves from the group to being a True Individual. Well, is the group responsible for that? In a **sense** the group provides some of the conditions. For instance, the group provides the books, let us say, the individual reads the book, or the proto-individual, and becomes more aware **as** an individual. So is the group **responsible** for that? It's that sort of question, perhaps. In a way it is an unreal

question. It's not cause and effect, it's in dependence on such-and-such conditions, such and such other condition arises.

Anyway, perhaps we should leave it there and tomorrow we will go on to the realm of the jealous gods.

Next Session

All right, the realm of the jealous gods. If you'd like to start reading, just that first paragraph.

THE REALM OF THE JEALOUS GODS

The realm of the *asuras* or jealous gods is the highest realm as far as communication goes, it is a very intelligent situation. When you are suddenly separated from the luminosity there is a feeling of bewilderment, as though someone had dropped you in the middle of a wilderness; there is a tendency to look back and suspect your own shadow, whether it is a real shadow or someone's strategy. Paranoia is a kind of radar system, the most efficient radar system the ego could have. It picks up all sorts of faint and tiny objects, suspecting each one of them, and every experience in life is regarded as something threatening.

S: I'm not quite sure what Trungpa means by saying that 'the realm of the *asuras* or the jealous gods is the highest realm as far as **communication** goes'. Has anybody got any idea what he might mean by that?

Sagaramati: I think he means that it is the realm in which you pick up on things. Say somebody was trying to hide something from you, you would pick up on it.

S: But isn't that true of other realms?

Sagaramati: But I think what he is saying is the paranoia is like a sort of force in which you can pick up subtle sort of changes in your environment, that sort of thing.

S: I can't say that I am really satisfied by this. It might be what he means but I can't say that I am really satisfied by [133] what he means. Paranoia, yes, is a kind of radar system, as he says, 'the most efficient radar system the ego could have', except that radar, of course, does pick up something that is actually there, whereas paranoia by very definition doesn't. 'It picks up all sorts of faint and tiny objects, suspecting each one of them, and every experience in life is regarded as something threatening.' It seems to me that the *asura* type of mentality, the warlike, the aggressive, the competitive mentality is not necessarily explainable, or to be explained in terms of **paranoia**. Even taking that word in the very loose sense in which Trungpa seems to use it. It's almost like an over-flying aggressiveness that is looking for an object. Perhaps we should recall the *mythologen* - I think it's called - of the *asura* himself, the figure of the *asura*. Maybe it would be a good idea to read on and finish this section, there is only one more chapter, and then discuss the whole thing more generally, recurring first to the figure of the *asura*, as it were. So perhaps we could have the next section, or the next paragraph, straight away.

This is known as the realm of jealousy or envy, but it is not envy or jealousy as we generally think of them. It is something extremely fundamental, based on survival and winning. Unlike the human or animal realm, the purpose of this realm of the jealous gods is purely to function within the realm of intrigue; that is all there is, it is both occupation and entertainment. It is as if a person were born as a diplomat, raised as a diplomat, and died as a diplomat. Intrigue and relationship are his life-style and his whole livelihood. This intrigue could be based on any kind of relationship, an emotional relationship, or the relationship between friends, or the relationship of teacher and student, whatever there may be.

S: That seems a trifle weak to me, if I may say so. So let us recur, as I suggested, to this figure of the *asura*. What is conjured up for you by this term *asura*, from your acquaintance with Buddhist literature, Buddhists texts maybe with illustrations, pictures of the Wheel of Life? What sort of figure?

Devamitra: A powerful figure.

S: A powerful figure, what else?

Sagaramati: A warrior.

_____: A samurai figure, almost.

S: A warrior, a samurai figure almost.

Devamitra: Someone in a way embodying the heroic virtues but maybe not for a very noble end.

S: Yes. What do the *asuras* look like? [134]

Sagaramati: Ugly.

S: Ugly, yes. That is quite important, isn't it. They are ugly. And what else, what do they wear, for instance?

_____: Armour.

S: They usually wear armour. And what sort of colour are they, usually? [Pause] As far as I remember they are greys and greens and browns, those sort of colours. They are not fair or rosy or anything of that sort. But yes, they are **ugly**. Do you think that their ugliness has any sort of special significance? What do you think it means?

Sagaramati: I think their energy tends to be rather angry and hateful, and I think it does come out in your face over a period of time.

S: Yes. You probably remember that in one of the Pali *suttas* it is said that the karmic result of anger is that you are born, or reborn, looking ugly, because anger disfigures the features, and if you have an angry mind that will tend to produce ugly features. So there **is** a sort of connection here. What is said about the *asura* women?

Sagaramati: They are really beautiful.

S: Yes, but in what way? This is said, perhaps, about *rakshasa* women in general, *asuras* are usually or often regarded as a species of *rakshasa*. There is some confusion about their exact place in Indian, Buddhist-Hindu or Hindu-Buddhist mythology. But anyway, they roughly belong to the same category, so what is said about *rakshasa* women applies, no doubt to *asura* women. So yes, they are said to be extremely beautiful, but in what way? [Pause] In a refined way?

Devamitra: Well, I can only really think it would be a purely sensual beauty.

S: Yes, a purely sensual beauty, yes, this is true. And also there are many stories about the *rakshasa* women, the *rakshasis*, which describe them as being not only beautiful in a sensuous sort of way but as very dangerous, and even cannibalistic. Do you see what I mean? So isn't it rather interesting that you have got these two figures, the male and the female *asura*? The male figure warrior-like, aggressive, violently competitive, all that sort of thing, and also ugly. And the female, sensuous, seductive, voluptuous, dangerous, devouring. So what does this suggest?

Devamitra: Actually it reminds me incredibly of a novel I have just read which is Stenhal's (*La Chartreuse de Parme*?) which has as its central figures, well two of the central figures a very beautiful woman who is an incredible intriguer at court, and the prime minister who's an older man, very capable, obviously not a very attractive man himself, not a physically attractive man. So maybe it's suggesting political intrigue and that sort of thing, that kind of activity.

S: Well Trungpa uses the word intrigue, I think this is quite weak, this is a much more refined quality, as it were. Diplomatic [135] intrigue is almost like a sort of game, you don't take it very seriously, but the *asuras* seem to take their battles with the gods very seriously indeed. They are fighting, by the way, for the possession of the tree of immortality, aren't they, according to mythology. They are fighting for the fruits of the tree of immortality, they are fighting, in a way, for immortality. They think that is the way to **get** immortality, by fighting for it, they want to **seize** upon this tree, plunder it, strip it of its fruit, devour the fruit and be immortal, like the gods, or like they think the gods are.

But if you see the male and the female *asura* side by side, as it were, in imagination, what does it suggest to you, that they represent, in a way?

Subhuti: Alienated masculinity and alienated femininity.

S: Exactly, alienated masculinity and alienated femininity. It's not in a way, even, masculinity and femininity, it's in a way cruder and grosser than that. Alienated maleness, if you can have such a thing, and alienated femaleness. One-sided and alienated.

So what are these masculine qualities, or male qualities? Consider that first and then you can consider their exaggerated and alienated form. What do you think are the distinctively masculine qualities, or male qualities? [Pause] Speak up, you should all know.

Sagaramati: Vigour.

S: Vigour, yes, the *asuras* are vigorous, certainly.

_____: Courage, yes, the *asuras* are courageous, they have the courage to fight at least.

Devamitra: Physical strength.

S: Physical strength, they have that. They are depicted with stout muscular bodies.

_____: Determination.

S: Determination. They keep on fighting the gods, they don't give up.

_____: Loyal.

S: They are loyal to their leader, though I think also a certain amount of intrigue goes on, because they are competitive among themselves and they fight among themselves too.

_____: I thought we were talking about ideal male qualities.

S: No, we're not talking about the ideal. We are talking the **actual** first.

Sagaramati: The ability to respond to an ideal.

S: No I wouldn't say it was that, it's not an ideal, they're just activated by greed, they want to beat the gods. [136]

Sagaramati: That's an ideal!

S: No, that isn't an ideal because the gods, in a way, stand for the ideal. It's as though they want to defeat the ideal itself.

Maybe that's enough. So suppose you imagine these masculine or even male qualities in a very extreme, one-sided, exaggerated, even distorted form, alienated from their corresponding qualities of, say, patience, tolerance, consideration, caring, friendliness. You would have almost Orc-like characters, in the sense of *The Lord of the Rings*, Orcs. Do you know what I mean? So it seems to me that the *asura* almost represents man, that is the male of the human species, at his most one-sided and in a way at his worst. Do you see what I mean? Well you can meet people like this can't you. Isn't this called machismo or something like that, that represents something of that nature?

Subhuti: Sounds just like a Western to me, a bad Western. (**S:** Yes.) A super-cool hero and a voluptuous heroine.

S: Right, yes. [Pause] So when you get these sort of qualities not only in a one-sided exaggerated form, but even in a distorted form, what do you get? You get the extreme of aggressiveness and hostility and competitiveness and fighting, all for its own sake, as it were. Admittedly the *asuras* are fighting for the possession of the wish-fulfilling tree, it is not the Tree of Immortality, exactly, but the wish-fulfilling Tree which will grant all their desires. But actually it is as though they enjoy the fighting, they are competitive by nature, they love to compete with the gods.

So what is this due to? I mean, they are trying to get away from the gods what the gods possess. They envy the gods the possession of the Wish-Granting Tree, or the Wish-Fulfilling Tree, don't they? They would like to possess it themselves. So what is the difference between wanting to benefit from something and just wanting to possess that thing because somebody else has got it?

John Wakeman: Alienation.

S: It is alienation, yes, but maybe we can look at it more specifically than that.

Sagaramati: It might be what that thing represents, sort of value.

S: Well, clearly if you are of a worldly nature and you want this and you want that, the thing to get hold of if you possibly can is the Wish-Fulfilling Tree, that which will give you **whatever** you wish for. So in a way the Wish-Fulfilling or Wish-Granting Tree stands for anything you could possibly desire, even **everything** that you could possibly desire. The gods, in a way, have gone the right way about it, so far as the worldly point of view is concerned, because how is it that they have been born or reborn as gods? By the performance of *punyas*, of good deeds, virtuous deeds. Therefore they have been reborn as gods, and therefore as part of their life as gods they enjoy the possession of the Wish-Fulfilling Trees. Do you see what I mean? The *asuras*, as it were, don't realise that if you want to gain possession of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree you must be a god, in other words you must perform virtuous deeds, you must create *punya*. They want just to grab [137] the fruit of the Wish-

Fulfilling Tree without being really qualified to enjoy that fruit. Do you see what I mean? So what is their attitude, basically?

_____ : Resentment.

S: No, their attitude is basically one of envy or jealousy rather than resentment, though resentment may be incurred.

_____ : Appropriation.

S: Appropriation. For instance, you see people enjoying the fruit of certain activities; you would like to enjoy those fruits but you do not wish to undertake the activities which naturally **lead** to the enjoyment of those fruits. You see people only as possessing, you see them as having got a particular thing, **not** as having developed to a particular level, and you want to appropriate that thing which you imagine they possess. Do you see what I mean? I have discussed this in something I have written recently for *Shabda* in connection with Ordination. Because at one point in my tour of New Zealand I got the impression, I told Order Members there, that some of the Friends there were under the impression that I arrived in New Zealand with a thing called ordination in my luggage. And there were Friends and even a few Mitras around who wanted at all costs to get hold of this thing called ordination which I had brought with me. They didn't see it is the natural, in a sense inevitable fruit of a certain course of action, a certain way of life; they saw it as something that certain people had been quite arbitrarily given, and which they had possession of, and which I had in my luggage, and which they could also gain possession of if they went the right way about it, pulled the right strings, put sufficient pressure on the right people, and so on. So those who weren't ordained, in a few cases, actually envied those who were ordained, thinking of the ordination as a sort of possession, not as representing a certain level to which those people had grown. So they wanted to grab this thing called ordination. It is much the same with the *asuras*.

So you envy someone what you think they possess, but before you can envy, in this sort of context, you must see those people's enjoyment of a certain state not as representing a state of their own being but something objective which they possess and which therefore could be possessed by anybody, because it's an object which could be handed around, as it were, and why haven't **you** got it, why hasn't it been given to you, why shouldn't you have it? This is what the *asuras* think. So the envy and jealousy come in because you see somebody's stage of development as a **thing** which they have come into possession of. So you envy them the possession, you don't see why they shouldn't have that too, not seeing that it is a **fruit** of their development but seeing it as something that has been added to them as a sort of external or extraneous item, and then of course you start fighting for the possession of that thing, which brings in your competitiveness, and your warlikeness, and all the rest of it.

So the *asuras* represent this sort of attitude. It's also an attitude of impatience, and there is, yes, alienation, blindness and all the rest of it there, involved too.

Subhuti: I suppose it could be rationalised in terms of rights. [138]

S: Yes, why should only the gods be enjoying the fruit of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree? Everybody has got a right to it, yes.

So alienation is suggested by the one-sidedness of the development itself, this sort of pseudo-masculine, or one-sidedly masculine, attitude is quite alienated in the sense of quite divorced from its own feminine, or female, counterpart, and sees it as entirely different and entirely other.

It is said - I do not know with what truth - that the one-sidedly masculine men are in fact attracted by voluptuous and sensual one-sidedly female women. As in, perhaps, the case of the Western film that you mentioned. [Pause] And the polarisation between the two is therefore correspondingly strong and violent, and extreme.

Devamitra: I can't actually see why one-sided femaleness should be dangerous. I mean it just strikes me as being something quite weak, actually, whereas the other is much more overbearing and strong.

S: Well basically the feminine, or the female, represents some other aspect of yourself. But if there is too great a differentiation between what you consciously are and what you see the other person - in this case the person of the opposite sex - as it means you are all the more out of touch with that corresponding aspect of yourself **within** yourself. And therefore you are less able to see that you are in fact projecting something of your own on to that other person, therefore you are all the more at the mercy of what it represents; in other words more at the mercy of your own unconscious contents. So it is dangerous because it activates those, or acts upon them, or gets at you through them. You don't realise what is happening. You are so unconscious that you have a repressed femininity that you just have to get all your femininity from the outside and therefore the outside female becomes more and more important, and since she also is alienated from her, as it were, masculine side, you become all the more important to her, you become more necessary to her. Therefore she goes to extreme

lengths to ensure that element for herself as you do to ensure that element for yourself, and therefore you both become extremely dangerous to each other. The dangerousness isn't one-sided. And a highly sort of manipulative situation results.

Devamitra: Actually I thought something a bit stronger was intimidated. I can see what you are saying but...

S: I am not saying that there is just a cut and dried definition. These are symbols, they are multi-faceted, they have all sorts of meanings at all sorts of levels.

_____: *Femme fatale.*

S: Yes, right. *[Pause]*

The greater the degree of alienation from anything that is unconscious within you the greater the extent to which you are the victim of that content when it is projected. Because you are less able to recognise it as anything of your own, or as having anything to do with you. It doesn't remind you of anything that is there within yourself too, it appears as something completely other and you are **dependent** upon that other, hence the dangerousness of the situation.

Devamitra: Sorry, I've lost what you said [139] originally about the greater the degree of alienation of something unconscious within..., what was the danger, what happens when it becomes rejected?

Sagaramati: The more you are a victim to that thing when it's projected on to you.

S: Yes, the more you become the victim of that thing when it is actually projected.

_____: And the more you see it as other.

S: Yes. *[Pause]* If you were to tell the 100% masculine he-man that he had a feminine side he would just laugh at you if he didn't sock you in the jaw. Men are men, women are women, the two are completely different. Mutually exclusive. And therefore dangerously attracted to each other.

So from a certain point of view, yes, the *asura* realm does represent the realm of one-sided and exaggerated and possibly even distorted, alienated masculinity. We do find a lot of that around in our modern world, don't we?

But imagine a *femme fatale* turning up at one of our Centres, she would be rather out of place, wouldn't she? She probably wouldn't know what to do or how to operate. Because there wouldn't be any of these *asura*-like men, hopefully, *[Laughter]* around to succumb to her. Do you see what I mean? *[Long Pause]*

Perhaps we ought to give more attention to this question of appropriation and even competitiveness. We often say that the modern world is a highly competitive world. In spiritual circles, especially in those spiritual, or perhaps I should say pseudo-spiritual, circles with sort of hippie connections, competitiveness - competition - is really a dirty word, isn't it. I think we have to give a second look at this. I think we have to distinguish two kinds of competition or competitiveness. One healthy and the other not so healthy, or maybe not at all healthy. Do you see what I'm getting at? So what would you say was a healthy competitiveness?

_____: Competitiveness born of inspiration.

S: Yes, but how would that manifest?

Subhuti: You'd try to develop qualities that you recognise in *[unclear]* as it were (**S:** Yes.) You would try to come up to his level, or her level.

S: But isn't the essence of competitiveness that you are trying to do better, whether healthy or unhealthy, you are trying to do better than somebody else? Doesn't it seem to be a natural tendency, not only human tendency, animal tendency, this competitiveness? Well, it is said that one finds it with animals, with horses, it is said to be natural to them. [140] I am not personally sure about this but it is said that horses don't like to be overtaken by other horses, and this is quite apart from the training which they have been given by their human owners. They don't like to be overtaken. And if they feel another horse beginning to overtake them they will quicken their pace. It seems to be quite a deep seated sort of thing. And certainly you find this with men. They enjoy overtaking one another, which means they don't like being overtaken. So there is this in-built, sort of competitive tendency. The tendency to do better than somebody else. Not objectively because you want to attain that degree of excellence in itself, but that you want to do better than somebody else.

So it seems to me that this is quite, in a way, healthy, if you as it were play fair, and in your efforts to do better than the other person you don't try to do better than him or be better than him by doing him down. For instance,

supposing two people are running a race, are trying to get to the winning post first, one before the other, if you give your fellow competitor a push as you happen to draw abreast of him so that he is knocked sprawling and falls out of the way, and you reach the winning post first, have you really won? You haven't, you've cheated. So what satisfaction is it that you get, what sort of satisfaction do you get in winning by cheating?

_____ : You've prevented someone else from winning.

S: But why do you get satisfaction out of that?

Sagaramati: The fact that he isn't in a position to put you down. He won't make you feel inferior.

S: Yes, but it is the same sort of misunderstanding that we discussed before. You are thinking of the winning as a **thing** rather than as a state of your own being or mode of your own activity. Winning is **not** a thing, even though that finishing post is there. So what you really do when you compete is to use this natural competitiveness, which human beings have, which men have, to force yourself to give of your best. What you are really concerned with is doing the best that you can. For instance, you want to run as fast as you can, but just running by yourself is no fun at all, but trying to run faster than somebody else is fun, because you enlist the co-operation, as it were, of your natural competitiveness. So you use your natural competitiveness to make yourself do, and to give of, your best. This is healthy use of competitiveness.

But when it becomes unhealthy, even neurotic, you want to win at all costs because winning has become a thing which is important for its own sake, **regardless** of the actual effort on your part, involved. You want the applause, you want the recognition, you want the trophy. You want **these** things, you don't want a particular degree of personal excellence. So the *asura* represents more that sort of ..., he doesn't want the degree of excellence by the god, the natural corollary of which is the Wish-Fulfilling Tree, no. He wants to just **appropriate** the Wish-Fulfilling Tree, gain possession of it forcibly, which he thinks is possible. But you don't win the race by running away with the finishing post. This is the sort of thing that the *asura* mentality tries to do. You get this in politics. When things become nationally sponsored and when winning becomes a matter of national prestige they go to all sorts of lengths, even cheating, even using drugs, to win at all costs. This has become unhealthy, neurotic [141] and alienated, then. This is not healthy competitiveness. But I think you cannot exclude from human activity, especially from the activity of men, the element of healthy competitiveness. Some people are afraid to compete healthily and unwilling to compete healthily because they are afraid of losing.

That is the obverse. One is so concerned with winning that he is prepared even to cheat, the other is so concerned with failure that he even refuses to take part. These are equally bad. So a person who abstains from competition is not necessarily a more highly developed person spiritually. He may, perhaps, be the opposite. Do you see what I mean? winning may be so important to him that he doesn't run the risk of failing.

Devamitra: They're very useful energies to engage, aren't they? (**S:** Oh yes.) I don't think we'd have got very far in the Movement without them, actually.

S: Oh, in what way? Please tell me.

Devamitra: I've been talking with Sagaramati a bit about this. It just strikes me that ...

S: In what way does it show itself, this competitiveness? We don't have centre football teams or anything like that.

Devamitra: No. I think we are egged on a bit in some cases to try and emulate each other's qualities.

S: It's emulation, perhaps emulation is a good word rather than competition. And it isn't usually remembered that competition, or contest, or emulation played a very important part in **Greek** culture. There were the games, the Olympic games and others, which were held under religious auspices. And of course there were, again as part of a religious festival, the dramas, the tragedies, where dramatists competed against one another and strove to give of their best. They didn't play dirty by stealing the other chap's manuscript before the performance, or bribing his chorus to run away, or anything like that, no. They were incited by the prospects of this festival, the prospect of winning, to actually give of their best. It's a sort of mechanism, almost a sort of trick, or technique rather, to almost compel you to give of your best. You really are incited to do the very best you can by thinking in terms of doing even better than the other chap. You don't want to do him down, you rejoice in his merits, but you just want to produce some more merits still.

This seems to be essentially, even quintessentially, masculine. Women seem not to be competitive and find it difficult to understand masculine competitiveness. Am I correct here, is this borne out by other people's observations? You do get competitive women but I think it is in a different way .

Virabhadra: There is the cliché situation of the wife who is competitive for her husband.

S: For her husband.

Virabhadra: Yes, who eggs her husband on. [142]

S: Yes.

John Wakeman: 'Behind every good man there is a woman.'

S: But this is partly because the woman's status in society very often depends upon that of the man. So if she wants to get on she has to egg **him** on, so that she can bask in his reflected glory, or something like that. In modern society very often the woman can get on on her own account, but in many societies in the past a woman could only achieve position through the men that she was associated with.

Virabhadra: I've come across quite a few competitive women, my student colleagues can be competitive.

Buddhadasa: Yes, I've always understood them to be quite competitive, especially in the field of fashion.

S: But among themselves?

Buddhadasa: Among themselves. They are always trying to do each other down as far as fashion is concerned.

S: Ah, I'm talking about genuine, healthy competitiveness. Doing each other down, yes, but that isn't competitiveness in the positive sense. For instance, could you imagine women competing with one another positively as to who was the most beautiful? Could you? [Pause]

_____: Well could you see men, to see which one was the most handsome?

S: Well, strongest, yes. In every form of sport this is really what it amounts to, strongest and most skilful. According to the different sport strength is more important or skill, or a combination of the two is more important.

It would seem, so far as my observation goes, that the women are more co-operative - they are co-operative rather than competitive. Perhaps it isn't quite so clear-cut as that. Men co-operate competitively. And that is the essence of the team. The team is the structure which makes both competition **and** co-operation possible. Do you see what I mean? Because a team is hierarchically organised, you have the captain etc., etc. So that gives you the competition, because there is competition to **be** captain, to **be** top-dog. But on the other hand in order to function as a team, even though the captain is captain, you have to co-operate. So you get competitiveness and co-operation within the team, and of course at the same time the team is competing with another team, perhaps if it's a sport, but also in another sense it is co-operating in the sense that both teams are observing the same rules. There is an agreement, i.e. a co-operation, in observing those rules. And if they don't observe them, if they cheat or they play dirty, well, if they do it beyond a certain point the game, as such, comes to an end.

Virabhadra: Doesn't the difference between the men and the women tend to depend on the actual thing that they are engaged in? Certainly from my observations of women in medicine they seem to compete and co-operate just as effectively as the men. Traditionally they had to compete harder because it was more difficult for them. Probably these days... [143]

S: But **achievement** is not competing, if you see what I mean. If the thought of doing better than somebody eggs you on, that is competitiveness, but if you simply achieve better you are just better at it, you are not necessarily being competitive, or **enjoyed** the competition. Women, I think, often compete because they have to, to get to achieve, but I question whether they **enjoy** the competitiveness in the same way, or enjoy having to compete in the same way that men do. Women may be concerned with achievement in the same way that a man is, but it's as though she's not so much concerned with competitiveness in the sense of being naturally into that and naturally enjoying that. She'd rather just not have to bother about the competitiveness and just have the achievement, as it were. In fact from what I gather from women it's as though they regard masculine competitiveness as rather silly and childish. That would seem to be their general attitude.

Well yes, actually. This is one of the reasons, I gather, that they think that men never really grow up, they remain little boys and always play silly games and regard these silly games as so important. But anyway, be that as it may. Nowadays any question which involves consideration of attitudes of the two sexes is a little controversial. But I don't think it's a controversial distinction, the distinction between a healthy competitiveness and what one might call a neurotic or compulsive competitiveness. In the one you use your natural competitiveness as a technique of ensuring a higher degree of personal excellence, in fact the highest possible degree of personal excellence, in a particular field or in a particular respect, and in the other you are solely concerned with achievement in the sense of procreation regardless of the state or level of your own individual being.

Devamitra: I would have thought - maybe it's just personal - but I don't think I could have achieved very much without the competitive spirit. I think, maybe just in my case, maybe I'm a particularly competitive person, but it's such a strong drive. In a way it is probably one of my main sources of energy, actually.

S: But who are you trying to do better than?

Devamitra: I mean just always trying to do better.

S: Ah, well, if you are just trying to do better, as it were competing with yourself, that's not competitiveness in the ordinary sense.

Devamitra: Well, other people who I can see are developing certain qualities that I lack. I try to bring myself up to par, as it were.

S: It would seem, though, that competitiveness has to be mutual. If you are trying to do better than somebody who has done something in a certain line and he doesn't even know that you are trying to do better than he is, it would seem that that is not real competitiveness.

Devamitra: Well, what is it then? [144]

S: Well, there are two of you, at least, and you go a little bit further ahead and he thinks, 'You have gone a bit further', so he puts on an extra spurt. You **see** he's putting on this extra spurt so you think, 'He is trying to get ahead of me, no, I am not going to let him' so you put on a further spurt. There is this sort of interplay between you, this would seem to be competitiveness. Not that he remains oblivious of your existence, even, and you are just trying to do better than he has done. You egg or spur each other on to give of your best until one of you just drops out or gives up and it is clear that the other is better. But it doesn't matter that one is better than the other, each has done his best, or has given of his best, and that is, as it were, the true sporting spirit. Do you see what mean? You are satisfied that each has done his best. Unless **he** does his best **you** cannot be spurred on to do your best, under the natural conditions of competitiveness, or conditions of natural competitiveness. So you **want** him to try to beat you, you are happy; it is a friendly gesture on his part to go all out to beat you. And it's a friendly gesture on **your** part to go all out to beat him, because in that way both of you, each of you, will achieve the highest degree of excellence in that respect that you are each capable of. So you should be grateful to each other. You are not trying to do each other down, that doesn't come into healthy competitiveness. You are not just trying to reach a certain fixed point, objectively speaking. You are not trying to secure a certain trophy or recognition, you are simply each trying, by means of the technique of the competition, to achieve the highest that you possibly can in a particular sphere. But there is not too much of that sort of competitive spirit around nowadays.

Anandajyoti: Perhaps a slightly related point is that if that competitiveness has to remain healthy what you compete in has to remain fairly simple without too much specialisation. For example, in the Greek games the actual things they competed in were fairly straightforward, they didn't have specialised professional ping-pong players who devoted all their lives to really ...

S: I believe there were no professionals at all, anyone competed. I mean people did have trainers, but I don't think there were any professional sportsmen, to the best of my recollection.

Anandajyoti: When something becomes a bit professional, when it becomes over-specialised it's as though it's becoming a bit one-sided, then.

S: Yes. Even some of the ancient Greeks didn't appreciate this. Apparently Euripides was rather down on competitiveness and he rather ridiculed the very little things they were going all out for. Just a garland of leaves, all that trouble, all that sweat, just for a garland of leaves. I'll see if I can find the extract, this is from an introduction to a translation of the Odes of Pindar. These, of course, were all written on the occasion of victories in games. I will see if I can just find this. [Pause]

Pindar's peculiar excellence seems to have lain in the composition of victory odes. They may well have been his favourite form. The modern reader will always wonder why. There are several considerations: in the first case the games [145] were occasions of high sanctity, held in holy places and protected by a truce of god invoked to secure free competition. That is all wars were temporarily suspended so that competitors could travel safely from different states. It will be seen that every Epinician ode wears in one place or another the attributes of a hymn. Further, success meant a demonstration of wealth and power, particularly in the chariot races, or of superb physical prowess shown through peaceful and harmless means. The very uselessness of these triumphs which arouse the contemptuous anger of Xenophanes and Euripides attracted Pindar. A victory meant that time, expense and hard work

had been lavished on an achievement which brought no calculable advantage, only honour and beauty. This may sound somewhat romantic but competition symbolised an idea of nobility which meant much to Pindar and in the exultation of victory he seemed sometimes to see a kind of transfiguration briefly making radiant a world which most of the time seemed, to him as to his contemporaries, dark and brutal.

This was very much the Greek attitude, and it extended also, as I mentioned, to the drama. [Pause]

So what do you think is the place of competitiveness in the spiritual life? You can see its place in the healthy human life, but what about the spiritual life, perhaps we should be a bit more careful there. Should you go all out to see who can sit longest? [Laughter] Would that be very healthy? I tend to think it wouldn't be. I have heard that occasionally people tend to do that, but that's in passing, as a little joke perhaps.

Virabhadra: I find it very useful in the sphere of work.

S: In the sphere of work it's useful, yes. If you are each cutting down a tree, provided it is the same size of tree, why not have a friendly contest, who can get it done quicker. It is a good way of getting work done quickly.

Subhuti: Phil Miller commented on that, that very few English people he worked with, if you're loading up a skip or something like that, in America automatically people would start to make it into a little competition and just see who could hump the most...

S: Well, the explanation is simple, in Britain the unions don't allow that sort of thing. If you work quicker than anybody else you are stopped, not to speak of making a game of it and somebody else trying to work even quicker than you, that's the **last** thing the unions want.

Sagaramati: There seem to be two things. What Devamitra mentioned, it's almost like..., its not competitiveness but you want to prove yourself, and you can use someone who is not in competition with you to prove yourself.

S: What do you mean by **proving** yourself, this is an expression we often hear, what exactly do you think it means? Has it got a healthy **and** an unhealthy form or is it only unhealthy?

Sagaramati: I think it can be healthy, I think it can be healthy or unhealthy for the same reason as competitiveness.

Devamitra: I just see it as harnessing a certain kind of energy [146] which I have to do otherwise I wouldn't achieve very much.

S: Do you think **Centres** should compete? Would that be healthy, that Centres were a bit competitive?

Virabhadra: It might depend on who was actually involved. I could imagine that it would just make some people feel very uncomfortable that they ...

S: Yes, because competitors must be relatively, or reasonably, evenly matched, otherwise it becomes ridiculous. You don't have a race between a hare and a tortoise - or do you? Or **do** you? Do you see what I mean, not between a healthy man and a cripple unless the healthy man is given a handicap.

Sagaramati: I've known of competition about who can get most Mitras. I've picked that up. So people are going out to get Mitras.

_____: Here, I'll give you a fiver! [Laughter]

Sagaramati: Well, I think we could even be competitive to get people ordained. This Centre gets more people ordained than any other Centre. (**S:** Yes, right.) Which I don't think is very healthy because it isn't really like that. Well, it could ...

S: Well, if it spurs them on to do their best.

Subhuti: As long as they don't cheat! [Laughter]

S: That would be neurotic, wouldn't it?

_____: Sending people around twice! [Laughter]

Sagaramati: That'd be a good one.

S: Competing in terms of achievement. I remember when I was in India and associated with the Ramakrishna mission, I was told once there was quite an intense competitiveness among their different branches to bring out the most beautifully printed and best produced annual report. Which seemed pretty harmless, as between the different branches of a religious organisation. But this was quite interesting, they were Indians, a bit Westernised, some of them, but then Indians aren't all that competitive, in a way I think. But these monks - it was all monks, Hindu Swamis, who were involved - but there was this very definitely friendly competition at the end of each financial year to bring out your printed report. I know about it because I was once or twice roped in to help with the English, because there were various things they took into consideration; the actual quality of the paper used, the thickness of the report, the printing, they were all in English nearly, so the standard of the English - this was quite apart from the actual topics reported. It was more the quality of the report as such, as a book, so to speak. It was just a pleasant little joke, almost, among the monks themselves, it didn't concern anybody else and when all these started coming out they would be comparing them in a quite interested way, whose was best. And certainly each one would try to produce the best report. So it did ensure quite a high standard, actually. [147]

Sagaramati: There seems to be this quality of excellence, that's what's missing. (**S:** Yes.) There is no feeling for excellence in the West today at all.

S: Well, if your competitiveness is neurotic and you only care about winning at **all** costs, you automatically have ceased to care about excellence. There cannot be any real, genuine, competitiveness without a sense of excellence, so perhaps it is this that we need to work on first. Putting the horse before the cart.

Think in terms of having a beautiful Centre before you start thinking in terms of having the **most** beautiful Centre.

Sagaramati: Think in terms of having a Centre before you ... [Laughter]

Virabhadra: Architects go in for competitions quite a lot, it's an accepted way if there is a building to be built then ...

S: There are poetry competitions, there are several reported in this little poetry magazine that I was sent today. It does seem to have a healthy effect. It gets people not only writing poems but improving them and polishing them and trying to make them as good as possible.

Devamitra: The Welsh National Eisteddfod is based on competition.

S: Yes, right. They didn't award the Bardic chair again this year, did they? No, they didn't. Apparently for the second year running they didn't consider any of the submissions sufficiently good. So they took, I gather it was the unprecedented step, of refusing to award the Bardic chair for the second year in succession. It means that a standard of excellence is being maintained. They said why. A few points were made with regard to some of the poems which were submitted. Several of them had strayed from the rules set, for instance, and this was pointed out. So if you say that nobody has won, well, yes, there is a definite standard implied, a definite standard of excellence.

Sagaramati: What's the Greek for that, is it *arete*?

S: *Arete*, which also means virtue, but it means excellence. We often translate it as virtue but it is said to mean literally excellence.

So you could conceive of virtue as excellence, this is a bit by the way but it is quite important, because we think in terms of virtue and being virtuous, which despite the etymology of the term, suggests being good because you are obedient and obey certain rules, rules laid down by God, within the Christian context. But the Greek *arete*, excellence, has got nothing to do with virtue in the sense of goodness in **that** sense. Excellence means being as good as you can of your kind. So excellence for a man consists in being a human being to the highest degree that he possibly can. This is excellence, this is virtue, this is goodness. What a different conception. To be as intelligent as you can, as emotionally positive as you can, as responsible as you can, because these are human qualities. Because then you will be most fully yourself. Not behaving in that sort of way or making that sort of effort because somebody has said you should do this or not do that and if you do you'll be [148] rewarded and if you don't you'll be punished. You see how different the Greek, the classical conception was.

There are different theological explanations of what virtue consists in, but for the ordinary run-of-the-mill Christian virtue means obedience to commands, the commandments in fact.

_____: So the classical conception of virtue went well beyond just the moral realm, it went into the intellectual realm and also the spiritual realm.

S: Yes indeed, it extended in **both** directions, as it were. This morning we touched upon the importance of the development of the physical side of one's being.

Sagaramati: The Greeks had an idea of physical excellence.

S: Yes, physical excellence, mental excellence, emotional excellence. Or we might even say spiritual excellence. Or of human excellence, essentially.

So to help them achieve the highest possible degree and pitch of excellence they utilise man's natural competitiveness. And I think in pseudo-spiritual circles in the West today, certainly some of those with which we are in touch or perhaps to which even we are considered to belong, really have an unnecessarily unfavourable view of healthy competitiveness. Sometimes for quite negative, even neurotic, reasons, as I suggested earlier. You are afraid to compete, you don't want to compete because you are afraid of losing, of not winning. But haven't you found this almost, what shall I say? - ban almost on competitiveness is very common in these pseudo-spiritual circles?

Devamitra: It's sort of symptomatic of the general feel of emasculation that they have, actually.

Sagaramati: It's rationalised as being egotistical, competitiveness as being egotistical and that means being non-spiritual.

S: Well, perhaps it is, but it's as though you need to have a relatively strong and healthy ego first before you can negate it, or before the negation of it has any real significance.

What do you say of the sort of competitiveness we usually have in society, in social and economic life? Would you say that that was healthy, or unhealthy, or perhaps mixed?

Sagaramati: Mostly unhealthy.

S: Mostly unhealthy. In what way, or for what reasons?

Sagaramati: Through the competitiveness nobody seems to develop.

S: Are you sure of that? What about, say, two different salesmen working for the same firm, each one trying to sell more?

Sagaramati: They start off from the wrong premise, i.e. they are both usually liars and swindlers and they become better liars and swindlers. I mean you would have to have a very healthy occupation as a basis.

S: Yes, and be working at that in a healthy way.

_____: I think there is quite a bit of healthy [149] competition in society. I think farmers trying to breed the best cow possible, or produce the best sort of motor cars - if you accept motor cars as being positive items.

S: Norfolk, I believe, has the largest carrot in the world, and the heaviest. *[Laughter]*

_____: Little flower shows are competitions.

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: But I am talking about excellence of beings, not of things.

S: But if you are trying to produce, say, the most beautiful rose, that cannot be completely unconnected with your character. Maybe in an obscure way there is a sort of projection of some part of yourself on to the rose, even.

Subhuti: Yes, there's an **idea** of excellence.

S: Yes, there is an idea or ideal of excellence. It's almost like trying to write the most beautiful poem, in a way.

Subhuti: They do usually tend to come down to weight and size, though.

S: Yes. Well, I must confess that I am rather loading my own argument by saying rose. If I was to say pumpkin it probably wouldn't sound so convincing. And it does very often tend to come down to size and weight, which is a great pity, you really do come down to earth then.

Devamitra: I think there is certainly a hell of a lot of competitiveness in the theatre. But I think that actually is quite mixed, I think there is a certain amount of healthy competition there but for the most part it's incredibly unhealthy. (S: Yes.)

Subhuti: It does initially imply quite a degree of self confidence.

S: Yes. I think the rot sets in when you try to cheat. For instance, when you don't try to act better than somebody else, you try to spoil his performance, as they did in the eighteenth century, you hired a couple of hundred people to go and hiss him.

Devamitra: It still happens today, they just do it in more subtle ways.

S: Yes. Or the critics set to work and do a really good hatchet job for reasons that have got nothing to do with the arts.

Kuladeva: A lot of the academic examinations are competitive. On the one hand that seems quite good in the sense that people do tend to excel themselves.

S: But there are two kinds of competitive examination. I forget what the technical terms are. One is when you have to get above a certain percentage and the other when it is, say, the twenty [150] top candidates who are selected. I think the second is more genuinely competitive, isn't it?

Kuladeva: But for instance with O levels and A levels, they give grades but at the same time the grades are related to the number of..., there are a number of people who are allowed to pass so they give a certain number of grade A's, a certain number of grade B's.

S: Yes. When I was at Yale there was a big discussion going on in the University as to whether grades should be given at all and the general feeling among the faculty was that they should not be given. In fact at Yale anyway you automatically passed, you always graduated unless you absented yourself for long periods. But to graduate from Yale without honours is apparently considered of very little value, you might just as well have not gone to Yale at all. It's taken for granted if you get to Yale you are good enough to gain your degree but much more than that is expected of a Yale man. This is what I was told.

But there was a joke about this non-competitiveness, that it had been proposed that every American citizen should be declared an MA on his birth. [Laughter] Because I think this is a trend in modern pedagogy, modern educational theory, to discount competitiveness, to try to eliminate competition from the educational system. It is said to be bad and harmful. It's that people who don't do so well, who don't win, who don't pass first, don't get the prizes, feel bad, and you don't want them to feel bad so therefore you eliminate the element of competition. This seems to be the argument, or the approach, or attitude. Isn't that so? (_____: Yes.) In so-called progressive educational theory.

John Wakeman: It's very much the idea in the lower school, for younger children, the attitude that the children will be harmed if they fail.

S: Right, yes. But perhaps it's because the emphasis is not sufficiently on the competition helping everyone to do his best and that what is important is that each one does his best. Whereas people seem to be saying you are all equally good, you are all doing equally well even though none of you make any effort. Competitiveness says once you have gone all out to do your very best to win, well, you have all equally done your best and that is good. But here it's that you have all done your best before you have even made any effort. So nobody is stretched, and to the extent that progress depends on competitiveness, no one progresses.

Sagaramati: But how do you get people to give of their best without making some people feel inferior and some people superior?

S: Well, it must be accepted that some people are not so good as others. Again this is part of the democratic ideology, so to speak, that everybody is as good as everybody else in every respect. But it is a fact that some people can run faster than others. So you could say that some are **better** at running than others, maybe perhaps you shouldn't put it like that, simply say that some run faster than others. But then if you have the concept of excellence you can hardly avoid speaking in terms of good, better and best. [151]

John Wakeman: I think the whole thing is mixed up with the ideas of social advantage. And if competition was going to lead to some sort of tangible advantage then others will be failing in respect of that. And that's where the whole thing becomes unhealthy.

S: Yes. So it does seem to me, though, in their effort not to be unhealthy they become unhealthier still.

Virabhadra: Sometimes success in a particular field is associated with... or one is meant to feel, say if you fail an exam or something it reflects on you as a person, you are no good as a person. So rather than it's just that you are not very good at doing at that particular thing.

S: But is there not a connection?

Virabhadra: Well, there might be.

S: Because there is this attitude that everybody is equally good as a person, but does that really mean anything? Are they equally persons, one could ask, or are they equally individuals? Are they equally **good** as persons or as individuals. It's not as though 'personal' or 'individual' represented something static that everybody equally was, but surely it suggests a degree of development. And if there are **degrees** of development some are more developed than others, some are better persons or better as persons than are others. Or better as individuals. Surely all that can be expected is that everybody should be encouraged to grow, that no one should ever be discouraged, or made to feel that he cannot grow at all. But not encouraged to feel that everybody is as good as everybody else in every respect.

If you say that everybody is as good as everybody else **as a person**, and that nobody must defeat anybody else in an examination because the defeated person might think that he is less good as a person, this all seems to be based on..., there seems to be a confusion. It's as though your value consists in the effort that you make, from whatsoever level. If you've done your best, well, there can be no criticism of you. And it does seem that competition does help people, at least some people or a lot of people, especially men, under certain circumstances or in certain connections, to give of their best and to achieve their best, and to **be** their best.

It reminds me of what the Buddha says in one of the discourses where he ran through the whole Sangha, at least all the more intimate disciples, declaring who was best at what. And it's as though they were all the best at something or other. One was the best preacher - the most eminent among the preachers, one was the best at meditation, one was the best at going for alms and collecting food. *[Laughter]* Everybody was the best at something or other, so the Buddha didn't repudiate the concept of comparative excellence, he didn't encourage them to compete, as far as I know, but he did recognise degrees of excellence. He didn't say who was the best bhikkhu or who was the most spiritual, but he certainly said who was best at this and who was best at that. So I think this is also something that one needs to consider. You may not win this particular game or this particular match but there are other circumstances under which, other games at which, you may be better and which you may win. You may be better [152] in certain other respects where competition is not appropriate or where it is not involved. But the fact that you **are** really good at something or other, even to the extent of being better than most other people, or even **all** other people, is an aspect of your individuality, your personality, as it were.

Devamitra: Do you think there would be any value, within the context of the Movement, of instituting a competition along the lines of the sort of thing that the Greeks did, in certain fields?

S: Perhaps for certain fields. For instance I would be quite happy to give a prize every year for the best poem. It wouldn't be a copy of my own poems! *[Laughter]* The prize could be that it was read aloud at a certain function, this poem, that the person concerned could be crowned with Bodhi leaves or something like that. It might not be inappropriate in certain, as it were relatively harmless fields, if you see what I mean.

_____: The most Mitra medal! *[Laughter]*

Sagaramati: Bringing this into the context of, say, with the women, from what we have been talking about it seems to be..., this is - what could you call it - almost like an instinct which is more predominant in the male.

S: It would seem to me to be so.

Sagaramati: I just wondered if there is any...

S: For instance, one does find in let us say primitive societies or traditional societies that there can be a certain amount of competition between women in certain strictly defined areas. For instance the number of children she has. But does this represent an actual achievement in the personal sense? Actually, in for instance a country like India, sometimes, a woman will pride herself, certainly under the traditional system, in having ten children and may well feel that she is superior to the woman who only has two, and certainly to the woman who hasn't succeeded in having any. But this doesn't represent so much a personal achievement on her part, it's just the result of a natural process.

Kuladeva: Could not the same thing be said about, say, being good at running, in the same way?

S: Not if you have to go into training, and devote time and energy and thought, and mindfulness to develop your skill, to develop your strength. You start off with a pair of legs, nature gives you those but then you do something with them yourself. You develop them.

So it's as though the competitiveness that one finds between women is not a sort of natural competitiveness. That it is to say it is not based upon personal exertion and achievement, but on, as it were, rate of natural productivity, which just happens. There may be a **bit** of competition about who can cook better but even that doesn't seem to go to any length.

Anyway, what were you going to go on to say?

Tape 8

Sagaramati: I just wondered about the spiritual consequences of that instinct. I mean in the sense that women seem to find it more difficult to get to the spiritual life, and seeing that lack as the reason. [153]

S: Well I think it's not maybe quite that. I think it is more a question of their getting into it in a different way, a way perhaps that isn't recognised sufficiently. I mean, leave aside the spiritual life in the higher sense, but I think in the individual development of men, certainly, say, within the positive group and maybe a **bit** beyond that, competitiveness in the healthy sense plays, or can play, quite an important part. So, all right, if women do not have that natural competitiveness and are not therefore able to enlist that competitiveness in the interest of their spiritual development, what is it that they **are** able to enlist? And I think they **have** got something which men comparatively do not have, and that is the spirit of service. And I think this is greatly discounted in the modern world, even among women - well, the modern Western world - you do not see that it is discounted in the East, in India, and I think women very often grow and develop as individuals by harnessing to the spiritual life itself their natural tendency to serve and to minister. Now this will be anathema to, say, the women's lib, but I think actually that this is so. So you could almost say that a woman's instinct to serve, to minister to, to nurture, to support, corresponds to the man's tendency to be competitive. Men don't seem to have that natural tendency to serve. Do you see what I mean? A man who is able to serve in the way that a woman does, or can, is either a feminine man or else he is someone who has reached a relatively high degree of emotional integration and spiritual development, and is able to serve if circumstances require someone to serve. The average male, I think, finds serving another person, another human being, rather difficult, not so fulfilling as a woman finds it.

So I think just as masculine competitiveness should not be discouraged but should be harnessed to the requirements of individual development, so a woman's natural tendency to serve and to support should not be discouraged in the name of a **pseudo**-individualism, or **pseudo**-independence, but should be encouraged, she should be encouraged to enlist that in the interest of **her** individual development. Do you see what I mean? [Pause]

I think that the natural thing, in a way, and the thing that would help women more,⁴ is not to compete with men as some of them try to do, and that is I think not very natural, but to serve and to support, as they do in India, without any feeling of inferiority or anything of that sort, as **their** technique of individual development.

Sagaramati: In concrete examples what would that serving entail? Would it mean making the tea and -

S: Well, it could be. That doesn't mean that a man is incapable of making tea, but very often women get actual **pleasure** out of doing these things.

Sagaramati: You mean they fulfil something within themselves?

S: They fulfil something within themselves. They might equally get pleasure out of being supportive and ministrant, so to speak, by doing the typing. Men, broadly speaking, find typing boring, especially copy typing. Women don't seem to get bored so easily as men, so they could very well take on, in a spirit of service, more of these sort of jobs. [Pause]

And I know this goes against the grain, as I said earlier, of the women's liberation movement and all that, though I think it would be [154] very much in accordance with the more genuine needs of the great majority of women and would be welcomed by them. I think quite a few women, even those who are in contact with the movement, are looking for an opportunity to be of service, and would genuinely welcome that. Especially if a sort of dignity was attached to being of service, and it wasn't looked down upon, as it shouldn't be. [Pause]

So when I said that women were co-operative rather than competitive, perhaps I should correct that somewhat and say that I don't think that they are particularly co-operative in a way, it's more that they are serviceable and I think, very often, though I mustn't over-generalise, they prefer to be of service to one person.

Sagaramati: So loyalty would be -

S: Loyalty. Women can be very loyal in a very sort of personal way. Women, perhaps, again to generalise, are more loyal to persons and men are more loyal to ideals. A woman would quite happily sacrifice loyalty to an ideal to loyalty to a person, but a man will very often sacrifice the person to the ideal. [Pause]

Anyway, anything more about the *asuras* and competitiveness? I think we've covered this field, this realm, pretty well, haven't we, pretty thoroughly? I don't think we've ever quite discussed it in this way before. But is there anything that we haven't touched upon that perhaps we ought to touch upon? [Pause]

_____ : What is it that the Buddha who enters the realm of the jealous gods offers to them?

S: Isn't it a sword? Is it not the sword of wisdom, that's very significant, isn't it? I think it's the flaming sword of wisdom. So it's as though he is saying 'sublimate your aggressiveness, don't fight with the gods, fight with ignorance.' Because if you take the *asuras* as activated, say, by hatred, though perhaps that pertains more to - no, maybe it's not exactly hatred, it's aggressiveness - if you take them more as motivated by aggressiveness which is trying to break down and break through and overcome, this has a certain analogy with wisdom, which breaks through ignorance, which breaks through the conditioned, which pierces into ultimate reality. So the Buddha who enters the realm of the *asuras*, or descends into the realm of the *asuras*, offers the sword of wisdom, the flaming sword of wisdom, as if to say, 'Give up your mundane fighting, take up the Transcendental fight, or the spiritual fight. Use the sword of wisdom.' Sword of wisdom, (*pannabudhayna?*) is a term, or 'with the sword of wisdom', is a term or expression occurring in the *Dhammapada* itself. 'With the sword of wisdom defeat the forces of Mara.' So it's as though this Buddha is saying to the *asuras*, 'Don't fight with the gods with ordinary weapons, fight Mara, fight the hosts of Mara with the sword of wisdom.'

Sagaramati: In our terms that would be developing healthy competitiveness and getting rid of the unhealthy. Trying to develop excellence rather than sort of going for goals or prizes, or things like that.

S: Right, yes.

[Tea Break]

Subhuti: ... the Titans in Greek mythology. [155]

S: I think it probably is, distantly, because they have got the same Indo-Aryan source. In fact some translators render *asuras* as Titans. *asura* is often explained in India as A-sura, not sura, not-god, or anti-god, again it is translated. The Tibetans seem to understand it like that, but that is, it seems, etymologically not correct, that *asura* corresponds to Ahura in (farsi?) and Ahura is just another term for God.

In Persia the Ahura became God and the deva became devil, whereas in India the God became God, the goodie, and the *asura* became the *asura*, the baddie.

_____ : The bad god.

S: The bad god, yes.

_____ : So that's why it is quite often five or six realms. They are quite closely linked, the ...

S: Yes, they are quite closely linked. That also is quite interesting, that sort of - what do you call it - that see-saw relationship that they have.

Just a minute. Let's get back a little bit, something we haven't dealt with. We did enquire whether competitiveness could not extend even into the spiritual life, that is to say a healthy competitiveness, and it appears that it could in a very marginal way. But there is the question of unhealthy competitiveness within the spiritual life in a way that is quite out of place. Trungpa speaks of 'this intrigue', perhaps we should say competitiveness, 'could be based on any kind of relationship, an emotional relationship or the relationship between friends, or the relationship of teacher and student, whatever there may be.' You do sometimes get disciples competing for precedence among themselves in an unhealthy way. This is referred to by Milarepa in one of his songs, that when you assemble for initiation there is no sort of struggle for precedence, 'let me be initiated first', that sort of thing. So that sort of competitiveness has no place in the spiritual life.

You could say, in a manner of speaking, if you are competing as to who can be most **ready** for initiation, that's one thing, but competing to actually get it first as a thing, this can only be unhealthy. And sometimes you do find of course that disciples compete with the Guru. I will say this can have a healthy form as well as an unhealthy form. How would you distinguish between the two?

_____ : With the healthy form, perhaps the disciple really wants to know, so he really is challenging and asking as much as he can.

S: Yes. It's as though, formally, he is trying to get the better of the Guru. In a sense he is, he is going all out to see if he can beat him, maybe it's his way of testing the Guru, in a sense, even in a healthy way. And the Guru, perhaps he doesn't have to go all out to, as it were defeat the disciple, but the disciple doesn't mind being defeated, because, one, he has learned something more, he's been stretched, and also his faith in the Guru is

increased. Just because the Guru has defeated him he is quite **happy** to be defeated, he knows he **deserves** to be defeated. But what is the unhealthy competitiveness with the Guru? Perhaps I should [156] say with **a** Guru, because a real disciple doesn't do this, but sometimes you get people coming from outside and trying to compete with a Guru, or even with a disciple, come to that. What does this represent, what does this mean?

_____: Is it seeing the Guru as a power figure and resenting them?

S: Seeing as a power figure, yes. And trying to compete with him on that sort of basis, trying to defeat him, because you resent the fact that he is a more powerful figure than you. That is to say you see him as a more powerful figure, a more authoritative figure, you resent that and you try, from your point of view, to defeat him. So your questions are not genuine spiritual questions but are designed as attacks upon, or represent efforts to undermine, the power, the authority of that particular person, or what you see as such. So your questions are not honest questions, not real questions. You merely express your resentment of that person's power and authority, as they appear in your eyes.

So that is not conducive to any kind of learning, it doesn't represent any kind of receptivity. In fact it represents a very unreceptive attitude. The only response that one can make is simply to defeat that person; he asks for defeat, all right, defeat him. Sooner or later he **may** come to respect you as stronger than he is and that may give him a sort of healthy respect for you in a quite ordinary way. And that **may** lead him to be a bit more receptive later on, even spiritually receptive.

But sometimes one feels that fighting with people in this way is a bit of a drag, a bit of a bore, a waste of time. You get quite tired of it after a while if you get too much of it.

Virabhadra: What would happen if you didn't beat them?

S: They would probably become worse, they'd become more resentful and more angry. *[Pause]*

They come wanting to fight, if you won't fight they find that as very frustrating and therefore become more angry, more resentful. On the other hand, if they are not **too** bad, the fact that you won't fight can under some circumstances, with some people, have a very positive effect. Provided it really gets across to them that you are not fighting not because you can't because or because you are afraid to fight them but that you just don't want to, it just doesn't matter, it doesn't mean anything to you, you just don't care; you are too secure within yourself in a positive **spiritual** way, that you are not refusing to fight just out of arrogance.

Devamitra: The whole Samurai tradition seems to emphasise this quite a bit.

S: Yes, right.

Virabhadra: They would have to have a bit of receptivity to be able to see that, anyway.

S: Yes, they would have to have a bit, at least. I mean, somebody came to me some time ago and said 'I've been to so many teachers with a question, none of them have been able to answer it, now I've come to you to ask you my question'. I forget what their question was, *[Laughter]* but anyway the great point was that thirty or forty different teachers had not been able to answer [157] this question. It was no doubt meant as a compliment that he had even come to ask you this question. Because it almost implied that there was a remote chance that you might be able to answer it, and even for him to think that there was a remote chance of your being able to answer it was to be taken as a compliment.

All right. Let's read about the realm of the gods then. Read that first paragraph.

THE REALM OF THE GODS

The final stage is the realm of the gods, deva-loka. Again, when the person awakes from or steps out of the luminosity, there is some kind of unexpected pleasure, and one wants to maintain that pleasure. Instead of completely dissolving into neutral ground one suddenly begins to realise one's individuality, and individuality brings a sense of responsibility, of maintaining oneself. That maintaining oneself is the state of samadhi, perpetually living in a state of absorption and peace; it is the realm of the gods, which is known as the realm of pride. Pride in the sense of building one's own centralised body, preserving one's own health; in other words, it is intoxication with the existence of ego. You begin to feel thankful to have such confirmation that you are something after all, instead of the luminosity which is no man's land. And because you are something, you have to maintain yourself, which brings a natural state of comfort and pleasure, complete absorption into oneself.

S: So Trungpa gets back to the luminosity, but in the case of this particular description, the description of the realm of the gods, he does seem quite a bit closer to the actual facts. 'When the person awakes from or steps

out of the luminosity there is some kind of unexpected pleasure'. This reminded me of what happens sometimes when you wake up in the morning. I mentioned, again I am not sure if it was this group or the other group, about the importance of doing what you want to do - it was the other group. Doing what you want to do, but anyway you all know what I mean by that. The importance, the satisfaction that you get out of doing what you really want to do in a very deep, basic, total sense; not just following your own whims and fancies. All right, so what happens? Supposing you wake up in the morning, I am assuming you are one of those sort of people who wake up pretty instantly, you don't remain in a very drowsy state for an hour or two, but you wake up and you are awake. So for an instant or two, maybe even for a minute or two in the case of some people, the mind is not working; there is just a complete sense of well being, you are physically rested, you are refreshed, you are comfortable, you just feel happy, and you wake up and the mind has not yet started working, the discursive mind. So you don't think about the day, you don't think about anything that has to be done, what you have to do, that thought hasn't as yet occurred, you just enjoy that - well, you could say that intermediate state of unalloyed happiness, almost. Or at least of unalloyed well being. And **then** you start thinking. It may be just a few seconds later or even a few minutes later, you start thinking. Supposing that it then occurs to you that today is the day when you are going to do something, or to be able to do something that you very much look forward to doing. How do you feel? You feel intensely happy and expectant, and joyful, even more so than before. That is like the heaven state.[158]

This is why, if you can live in such a way that you are always doing just what you want to do, what you deeply and totally want to do, that is heaven, and this is the way the *devas* live. 'Again, when the person awakes from or steps out of the luminosity, there is some kind of unexpected pleasure, and one wants to maintain that pleasure. Instead of completely dissolving into neutral ground one suddenly begins to realise one's individuality' - which means doing what one really wants to do - 'and individuality brings a sense of responsibility, of maintaining oneself. That maintaining oneself is the state of samadhi,' which is of course total unification of energies, absorption, and this is what happens when you are doing what you want to do. 'Perpetually living in a state of absorption and peace, it is the realm of the gods which is also known as the realm of pride.' We'll come to that in a minute.

So you see what the deva state represents, a sort of happy, joyful state, in which you are always able to do what you really want to do, when every morning you wake up and as soon as you start thinking you realise that you've got something to do that day that you really want to do, or to continue doing if you have been doing it over a period of a number of days. That is the deva-like state. It's as though it's a state of complete personal fulfilment, on a sort of ego level. I am using the word ego here quite neutrally, we don't have a better one, not in a condemnatory sort of sense. Or perhaps I should say complete self-fulfilment, personal fulfilment on the level of mundane individuality. This is really what the deva-like state means.

There is also another interesting aspect of the deva-like state which I would really like to go into some time. Some of the *devalokas*, according to Hindu-Buddhist mythology, belong to the *kamaloka*, don't they? Others belong to the *rupaloka* and others belong to the *arupaloka*. Let's concentrate on the *kamaloka* and the *rupaloka* for the moment. The distinction between the *devas* of the *kamaloka* and the *devas* of the *rupaloka*. What is at least one important difference between them?

Sagaramati: Sense experience.

S: Sense experience, yes. In what respect?

Sagaramati: The pleasures experienced in the *kamaloka* are definitely to do with the physical senses.

S: In a subtle form, as it were, yes. But another difference, connected with this in a way.

Devamitra: They have more subtle bodies.

S: More subtle bodies, yes.

Sagaramati: Desire.

Subhuti: There's the means of sex, sexual fulfilment.

S: Ah, right, yes. The *kamaloka devas* are distinguished according to sex, the *rupa* and *arupaloka devas* are not. Now what does that suggest? The *asuras* are definitely distinguished by sex, they are immediately adjacent, as it were, to the lowest realms of the gods, they are immediately adjacent to the *kamaloka devas*, under Indra. And among these *kamaloka devas*, yes, there is a distinction of gender, but there is no [159] distinction of gender between the *devas* of the *rupaloka*, and of course of the *arupaloka*. What does that suggest or imply?

Sagaramati: A certain amount of unintegration at the lower level.

S: Yes. Govinda has made this point that the higher you go in the dhyanic realms the higher the level of integration, and he suggests that this is illustrated by the fact that in the series of the dhyanas, the ascending series of the dhyanas, fewer and fewer mental factors are involved, according to the Abhidharma. And this, he suggests implies, an increasing unification and integration, and therefore simplification. So it is as though as you go higher and higher you integrate more and more these masculine and feminine aspects in yourself. Because you begin, say, by being either the one or the other, then the opposite, as it were, comes a little bit into play, and maybe perhaps they both are there at even higher levels, maybe come into play, each of them, in different situations. Maybe it's sometimes both come into play, in some situations. At an even higher level they are completely integrated and you become an androgynous being, in fact. You become an angelic being. Do you see what I mean?

So there is an interesting distinction between the deva and the angel. The angel, you could say, is a kind of deva. The angel is the androgynous *deva*. Now again it's interesting, we have got this concept of angel in the West, haven't we? We've got it in the Christian theology and Christian tradition even more than Christian theology, we've even got it in modern Western literature. Rilke developed the concept of the angel in his own way. In England, in Victorian England, all we had was the 'Angel in the House', and you know who the angel in the house is, don't you? (_____: No.) It's your wife, but anyway that is just a little aside [Laughter] - there's a long poem of that name by Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, celebrating the angelic nature of wifedom. But anyway, what does the angel represent in Christian thought, in Christian tradition, let's say? What is an angel, in the broadest sense?

_____: It's a sinless being.

S: It's a sinless being, yes, a being who has not sinned, not a being who is incapable of sin; being a created being, and angels are created beings, they are capable of sin, but they have not sinned. That is to say, the **unfallen** angels have not sinned. There are fallen angels who have sinned and who therefore are fallen. When one speaks of the angels one usually means the good angels, not the bad angels, that is to say those who have not fallen and therefore, yes, who have not sinned. They are sinless beings. What else are they, how are they represented, what do they look like?

Subhuti: They are usually androgynous, neither male nor female.

S: Yes. Strictly speaking they are neither male nor female.

_____: They tend to be young.

S: They are **always** represented as young, as far as I know. If anything they are represented more as masculine than as feminine, though as subtly feminine at the same time. Like Bodhisattvas. Why do you think this is, by the way, why do you [160] think even though, in a sense, they are equally male and female they are represented as more male than female?

Sagaramati: I think that angelic quality is seen more in, say, a young man than in a woman, basically.

S: It could be that but it could also be that the masculine and the feminine are not, as it were, complementary in a horizontal way but in a vertical way. Do you see what I mean? This is an extremely important point.

_____: Sorry, what was that, the masculine and the feminine?

S: The masculine and the feminine are not complementary in a horizontal way, but in a vertical way. In other words, in a sense, even though the feminine is integrated with the masculine, the feminine is **subordinate** to the masculine. Do you see what I mean? It is the masculine element or factor which takes the lead, so to speak, in the process of integration.

Devamitra: It's like the masculinity incorporates the femininity?

S: It is in a way more like that. So this seems to be the reason why even though angels are androgynous they seem, in a way, more masculine than feminine. And the same with the Bodhisattvas. Yes, they are in fact said to be young princes, not young princesses, though they have such feminine features, as though they have absorbed into their masculine personality the feminine qualities. So it doesn't mean an equal amalgamation of both.

Subhuti: Also in the representations of the *yab-yum*. The Buddha is sitting down with the female counterpart.

S: Yes indeed, and the female figure is always much smaller than the male figure, that probably has much the same significance. But what is the more general significance of this sort of figure, in a way, or this particular feature, that it is androgynous, what does that really mean?

Devamitra: Completely balanced.

S: Completely balanced. In a way complete in itself, having no polar opposite to which it is irresistibly attracted in a projective and dependent sort of way. Now we come to something else. Again in the Christian tradition the monastic life is very often spoken of as the angelic life, that monks are supposed to live like angels. Now why is that? It is not simply that monks abstain from sex, though it is often taken like that. The angel does not abstain from sex, that statement has no **meaning** in relation to an angel, because an angel is, as it were, **both** sexes. So in a way you could say the angel is in **constant** enjoyment of sex, within himself. This is the significance, also, of the *yab-yum* figure, there is constant enjoyment of union within oneself. This is the *yuganatha* state in the Tantric sense.

So the angel is both male and female, masculine and feminine, and is in a state of constant enjoyment within himself. He needs no external partner, his partner is, as it were, within himself. So when it is said that the monk is leading an angelic life, [161] it doesn't mean that he, being a man, abstains from sex and has got nothing to do with women, this is absurd, this is a travesty of monastic life, strictly speaking. What **does** it mean, and what should it mean?

Virabhadra: It means he has developed, hopefully, those feminine qualities within himself.

S: Exactly. In much the same way, here we come back to India, we have the concept of *brahmacharya* - living like brahma. The brahmas are gods of the *arupaloka*, so what does that mean, what are the brahmas like? They are androgynous. So the *brahmacharya* is **not** the life of celibacy - it is the **androgynous** life. *Brahmacharya* often means, in modern Indian parlance it means celibacy, or celibacy in the sense of chastity. But that is not the real meaning, not that you being a member of one sex, and identifying yourself with that particular sex, have no sexual contact with members of the opposite sex. It means that you are complete within yourself. This is what is meant by *brahmacharya*, the brahma-like life, it is the androgynous life, the **angelic** life. Not, as it were, enforced and reluctant celibacy. [Laughter]

So this is what must be aimed at by one means or another. Not abstention from sex but the enjoyment of sex as it were within yourself. Because you have fully developed these two polar aspects of your being and they are in complete harmony and in complete mutual contact - which means enjoyment, your enjoyment is within. Which doesn't exclude a contact with others, **possibly** even a sexual contact, but then it would be a contact between two wholes, not the coming together of two halves to make a whole, in some uneasy sort of way. Do you see what I mean?

Milton makes the point in *Paradise Lost*; there is an interesting description which some literary critics have found rather odd. He raises the question of whether angels love, or even I think **make** love. And he says there, or suggests - his language is quite refined - that their making love is a complete interpenetration of each other, which is quite interesting. This has analogies with general Buddhist thought about the mutual interpenetration of all things. The interpenetration being not one part of oneself entering into another vacant part of the other person, no, but a complete interfusion of the total being in all respects, as though you were both transparent, like two beams of light crossing, it is more like that.

So one speaks here of realising one's individuality, so that individuality which is androgynous is of a much higher and more developed nature than that which is non-androgynous. This is very clear, isn't it? **But**, whether the individuality is androgynous or non-androgynous, so long as it is merely a mundane individuality, then there is pride. 'Pride in the sense of building one's own centralised body, preserving one's own health; in other words it is intoxication with the existence of ego. You begin to feel thankful to have such confirmation that you **are** something after all,' etc. So the weakness of the gods is, as it were, a sort of complacency with themselves as they are, with their individuality as it is, **even** with their as it were androgynous individuality.

So complacency, which leads to pride, in a way, is the besetting sin, so to speak, of the gods. You have reached a certain point, your individuality has developed, but it is still mundane and it sort of solidifies and you want to hang on to that. You aren't open to further and higher dimensions of being, further and higher reaches of individual development [162] which must now take you, of course, not only higher in the mundane, but up into the Transcendental. You are not ready to face that, you want to hang on to what you already have. You want to be a healthy, happy human being, even a healthy happy god, even a healthy happy angel. You even meet, sometimes, young people who are really angels, but they don't want to be anything more than an angel. Do you see what I mean? They just want to stay and be angels, they are quite happy being angels, they don't want to develop any further than that. It's a beautiful thing to be an angel. For many people being an angel represents quite a high level of development, they are not anywhere near that yet, but for those who are happily or luckily born as angels or who grow up as angels, well it's something already achieved and they shouldn't hang on to that and want to just be that. They ought to be striving for something further, something higher, something farther on.

Sagaramati: Are you saying, then, that some people could be born as mundane individuals?

S: Well not quite born as, but when you encounter them perhaps by the time they have reached their teens they sometimes seem very much like that. They are healthy and happy and with a touch of the angelic. Perhaps they haven't as yet come into contact with the opposite sex. It's as though the two elements are there within them.

Sagaramati: There doesn't seem to be the consciousness of that.

S: Sometimes there is a measure of non-awareness, as it were.

Sagaramati: Naïvety.

S: Yes, naïvety. Perhaps it isn't a fully angelic state, perhaps it has got something of the quality of the angelic, you could say.

So you can see that being a monk, being an angel, being an androgynous being, it isn't being a monk in the ordinary ascetic, ecclesiastical sort of sense, is it?

_____: Well isn't it, because monks don't have sexual relations? It's almost as though there is an ascetic element in sexual relations.

S: Yes, but it isn't that they can't have but there is no **compulsion** to have because there is no need to complement or **complete** anything within oneself. The great mistake that is made traditionally, both in Buddhism sometimes and in Christianity very often, that the angelic state is one almost essentially of forcible **abstention** from sex, and deliberate avoidance of the company of the opposite sex. That is at best very, very preliminary; a disciplinary step which may be necessary but which is not the angelic state itself.

_____: No, I wasn't suggesting that it was, I was suggesting that a preliminary state of abstention ...

S: Yes, this may be necessary, yes indeed. I'm not suggesting that it doesn't. This is why one has single-sex communities. Because it is not that the people in the single-sex communities have already risen, say, to the angelic life, but they are [163] trying to contact the complementary, either masculine or feminine as the case may be, aspect within themselves. So as to ensure that they don't, say, immediately project that on to someone of the opposite sex and are able to contact it within themselves, independently of members of the opposite sex, they temporarily or provisionally separate themselves from members of the opposite sex - in other words live in a single-sex community as a means to - this is what I said earlier on - you attain to this angelic state by one means or another. And for most people, yes, this is probably an indispensable step.

So here, yes, the element of asceticism does come in. But asceticism is not in itself the angelic state. This is all that I am saying. So you may have people who are quite sincerely leading ascetic lives and quite sincerely avoiding the opposite sex but in a way they have forgotten the meaning and purpose of it all. It is as though that is sufficient or they are doing it just because it's good to do it, it's a virtue, or it has been commanded, or the opposite has been forbidden. Not that that is their way of contacting the complementary masculine or feminine element within themselves so that they may eventually become androgynous, spiritual, angelic beings.

So therefore I see a sort of hierarchy - I might as well mention this while we are about it and it's going to give great offence to some people - I see a hierarchy of Woman, Man, Angel, Bodhisattva and Buddha. Do you see what I mean? You can see the significance of this now, which perhaps you wouldn't have been able to do before.

_____: This brings light on one of the sayings in *Peace is a Fire*.

S: That's right, yes. This is why I haven't given a proper explanation, that's why, I have been asked that several times but I have not given a complete answer because it would have involved my going into all these matters. But now you can begin to see the significance of it.

_____: I can't quite remember it exactly but I think the saying was (?)

_____: You remember it, Bhante?

S: I don't remember it.

Subhuti: It was women are to men as men are to angels.

_____: That's right.

S: Because they are more human and therefore more divine, yes. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: Can I ask a question? It's not entirely related to this, but if it's the masculine which incorporates the feminine - one can see quite easily how a man goes about that but what is the process for a woman?

S: She allows herself to be incorporated, as it were. [*Laughter*] Devotionally. Let's take the case of Catholic nuns. It does seem to me sometimes that Christianity is better adapted to the needs of women than Buddhism is, or certain forms of Buddhism - especially the [164] Theravada. Christian nuns are symbolically married to Christ, when they become nuns. They wear a wedding ring, they devote themselves to Christ as a wife devotes herself to a husband. They allow themselves to be **absorbed** by Christ. Do you see what I mean? And this does seem, in many cases, to represent the path of spiritual development for them. In the Hindu tradition a woman is a sort of *gopi*, devotes herself to Krishna. We don't quite have that in Buddhism, except in the case say of the *dakini*, who really devotes herself to the Guru. You have that. But it's almost as though in Buddhism not quite sufficient provision is made for the spiritual needs of women, I sometimes think. Maybe for historical reasons, the Buddha left Yashodara, even after she also took up the spiritual life, even became Enlightened, she lived quite separate from him. She didn't stay around and become the chief disciple, it seems that she had very little to do with him after she became a bhikkhuni.

Sagaramati: But it is always a difficulty, I think, for a man, or a chairman at a Centre, dealing with women, because usually you just feel ...

S: Well it's very often because you are uncertain of yourself. In relation to women, as it were. You are not in the position to accept their devotion, even if they are willing to give it. Sometimes they aren't willing to give it for ideological reasons, or because they have been misled by women's lib, let us say.

But even those women who sincerely and heartily wish to give their devotion, you might find it difficult to accept. It can be quite a strong thing, even in some ways a slightly demanding thing. Because as in the case of men, the motivation is not always pure, you see. You may have to separate out the pure from the impure, the genuine devotion from the possessiveness. So one has to be a fairly strong and solid person to be able to accept a woman's devotion, just as on the ordinary human level you have to be, so to speak, a real man, for it to be possible for a real woman actually to devote herself to you. You have to be able to stand it. So it's much the same on the spiritual plane.

Sagaramati: What you have just said has given an indication of the way a woman can go. Until then I've had no idea of what a woman should do.

S: Well, I don't want to over-generalise. There is not just woman, as an absolute stereotype, no. Just as in the case of men, there is a whole range of female, or feminine possibilities. Some women, some who are sort of technically women, they are in their outlook and attitude quite masculine. And to that extent can approximate to masculine approaches in the spiritual life, and progress thereby. There may be at the other end of the scale, in the case of men, men who though in a sense are technically men, are more sort of feminine and need in a way to be treated as such. It's a mistake trying to treat them as men, they are not in the full sense. They perhaps, too, have to be allowed to be more devoted and more supportive. Do you see what I mean? So in the same way there are women who will take initiative, sort of technically they are women, physiologically they are women, but their outlook is in a way masculine and they are able to take the lead, to take initiative, to take responsibility, even accept devotion. [165] So they must be allowed to develop in the way that is the way of development for them. But I think the majority of women will tend to be supportive and devoted, just as the majority of men will tend to take initiative. And I think hitherto, perhaps, we haven't given sufficient scope or opportunity to the **majority** of women, who naturally tend to be more supportive. We have tended, perhaps, indiscriminately, to encourage them to become independent, which is for many of them just not the way.

Devamitra: I think it is very difficult, though, to see, say, in the case of individual women, whether they are as it were naturally masculine, or whether they have got a sort of false masculinity which they have imbibed through women's lib. I quite honestly can't see ...

S: I think that women's lib provides a convenient outlet for quite a number of women who are genuinely masculine, but unfortunately they regard themselves as the norm for all women and regard themselves as liberated; and feminine women, who are just simply feminine, as being unliberated, which is really ridiculous. They are not more liberated, they are just different. But admittedly, yes, there are social conditionings and cultural conditionings overlaying everybody. And we also have to dig a little beneath those to get at the real person, whether male or female. And try to understand what is really best for them as individuals despite whatever social or cultural conditioning they might have been subject to.

But you see the characteristic weakness of the deva realm. The reluctance to break up an achieved level of individuality, even though it is quite genuine and positive, but it is still mundane. Yet one is unwilling to, as it were, break it up, so that it may give way to or develop into something higher. Hence the self-satisfaction, the egotism, in a way, the complacency, the false content, of the deva realm. And yes, certainly one finds this sort of realm within, as it were, the human realm. People can get into this sort of state of complacency and self-

satisfaction. Especially those who are relatively healthy and successful, whether in a mundane way or in a so-called spiritual way. *[Pause]*

Sagaramati: Do you think that single-sex communities would... well I wouldn't say automatically, but somehow bring about this, the men integrating their femininity?

S: I don't think automatically. I don't think any particular structure automatically brings about anything. You have to use it intelligently. And you must **want** to use it. Not just reluctantly accept the single-sex community as part of the deal. This is said by Catholics about the Catholic priests in many cases, they reluctantly accept celibacy as part of the deal. They know quite well it is only a disciplinary requirement, and it has got nothing to do with Catholic theology. They know quite well that priests have not always been required to be celibate, only from, I think, the eleventh century, which is not so very long ago.

But I think if you **are** living in a men's community, or a women's community if you are a woman, you should be making a definite effort to take advantage of that opportunity to develop the complementary side of yourself. To develop your more feminine side, in the case of men, or those qualities [166] which are usually regarded as being feminine, and to integrate them with your masculine qualities. Also, yes, go on developing your masculine qualities. In some of the hippie circles you almost get the impression that men want to deny or to repudiate their masculine qualities, and to develop just feminine qualities. This is quite mistaken. The fact that you develop your feminine qualities doesn't mean that you're one little bit the less of a man. In fact you will become, in the best sense, all the more a man. Your masculine qualities will in a way be nourished by your feminine qualities, and vice versa, they will gradually interpenetrate each other.

Devamitra: There is one point about the men's community, if you ever happen to be chairman of a Centre and a community, in a way you do function more in a masculine sort of way in that situation. I must say that I have found that in the sense that I have had to look elsewhere to develop, or begin to develop the more feminine qualities.

S: Well, fair enough. One has to recognise that and see that that is the case and make provision accordingly.

Devamitra: It seems in fact, really, you can only develop those qualities at least with your - what's the word I want? (_____: Peers.) Peers, yes.

S: Yes. But there is also the fact that one can adopt, as it were, to complement, a more as it were feminine attitude towards the spiritual ideal itself. This is why, perhaps, it's quite important for chairmen especially, to do things like the Tara practice. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: Instead of Manjughosa!

S: Just to complement their unusually well-developed aggressiveness, masculinity, and all the rest of it, all those qualities which they show in their dealings with the rest of the Centre or the community. I think that does help to provide a very healthy balance, that in your spiritual practice you adopt a sort of feminine attitude. There are practices in which you identify yourself, say, with the White Tara, and feel devotion towards the Red Buddha Amitabha, and experience yourself as united with him. These sort of practices, perhaps, could be very useful to the chairman, or any of those who are having, most of the time, to take initiative, and as it were adopt what is usually regarded as a masculine attitude. *[Pause]*

Sagaramati: The arts would come under the feminine, in a sense, wouldn't they?

S: In a way.

Sagaramati: In the sense that you are passive to these, you are trying to open yourself up.

S: Yes, you are passive to your inspiration, as it were. Sometimes you may feel that you are a sort of channel for something that is flowing through you and seeking expression through you. Even the reading of poetry may put you in touch with a gentler, more tender, more sensitive side of yourself. Maybe this is why Chairmen do read so much poetry and listen [167] to so many records. Depending on what they listen to, of course. It shouldn't be Beethoven, it should be Debussy or someone like that, perhaps.

Sagaramati: I think people listen to the wrong things of Beethoven.

Devamitra: Do you actually think Beethoven has **any** merit?

S: Oh yes, indeed.

Devamitra: I sometimes get the impression that you...

[break in recording]

S: ... loka as symbolizing a certain state of mind, a certain mental attitude.

_____: I quite like the emphasis on being responsible for oneself here. I'm not quite sure whether that's particularly the *devaloka*, one of the qualities attributed to a deva.

S: Well, it does in a way represent that, because in the case of the actual realm of the gods one is born there, or reborn there, as a result of one's actions. That is to say one's **virtuous** actions. So one has taken responsibility; one has taken responsibility for one's own ethical future, as it were. Or one has taken ethical responsibility for oneself, hence one is reborn as a *deva*. So in a more positive sense one lives in the *deva* realm when one takes ethical responsibility for oneself. Ethics is not the same thing as the spiritual life, but it is an important stepping stone to it. [Pause]

Virabhadra: A lot of the *devaloka* is being related to your circumstances, like for instance coming back from India I thought we are relatively in a *devaloka* compared to the Indians, we have got loads of material opportunities which they haven't got and this does seem to lead to a *deva*-like complacency.

S: They are much more in hell, aren't they? We grumble very often because we don't have **more** facilities. Most Indians would regard our centres and communities as palaces, wouldn't they? Even the scruffiest of them, whichever that may be. [Laughter]

I did hear someone speak of the black hole of Manchester. [Laughter]

Sagaramati: He must have been in a hell state.

Virabhadra: In a way it's quite good, because if you can just realise what you've got, and you've still got it and you can make use of it (?) through realising that you don't lose all your opportunities.

S: There is also this very important point, 'That maintaining oneself is the state of samadhi, perpetually living in a state of absorption and peace;' This is a very important statement, actually, isn't it? That the samadhi state, the *jhana* state is a state, in fact, of intense individuality. Do you see what I mean? Because it is a state of concentratedness and integration, which is what individuality is, and it's also what samadhi is, *ekagata*, one-pointedness, which has been explained as, or compared [168] with, the way in which the roof runs up into a point, into a peak, that is to say the gable. [Pause]

So when you are meditating, that is to say meditating successfully, when you are experiencing *dhyana* states, you are more of an individual, you are more of an angel, you are of a more androgynous nature. Because everybody knows, I think, that when you are deeply into meditation it's not that you are not distracted or not disturbed; there's no, as it were, polar opposite, say in the form of your sexual counterpart to which you are attracted, or to which you could feel at that moment attracted, even if it was there before you when you opened your eyes, because you feel so complete and integrated within yourself. And in the course of meditation you have contacted those more, as it were tender, more delicate, as it were feminine feelings and emotions. [Pause]

But let's look a little bit more, just to conclude, at the single-sex communities. I did say that if you live in a single-sex community it's an opportunity, and it is really quite important that you actively make use of that opportunity in this particular respect. Otherwise in a way you are leading a pseudo *deva*-like life, a life of **pseudo**-content. You are just satisfied with that particular set-up in a very narrow, conventional sort of way. It's almost enforced celibacy, not an opportunity to become an angelic being, as it were. And certainly, technically living in a men's community but making quite sure that you have always got some little woman tucked away round the corner outside, that you can visit at any time, that is not really living in a men's community. I am not saying that a little woman round the corner can be **completely** ruled out, if you see what I mean, but not that there should be that sort of balance as it were, in that sort of way, or that you are able to live in a men's community and put up with the company of men all the time simply because you **have** got free access to a woman whenever you want it. That is not a very genuine way of living in a men's spiritual community. It's OK as a convenient arrangement in many ways but it doesn't amount to living in a men's spiritual community in the most positive and creative way. There's nothing immoral about it, no, please don't think I am saying that; it can be a completely moral arrangement as well as convenient, but it isn't in the best interests of your spiritual development, if you are capable of rising to that higher and further stage.

Devamitra: Actually I think it's not been emphasised sufficiently - that that is the purpose of a men's community, to develop those qualities.

S: Perhaps it hasn't.

Devamitra: I think it has been seen in far too negative a light.

S: An ascetic sort of way, keeping away from temptation, as it were.

Devamitra: I think it would probably be far more acceptable if it was more widely known in that sort of way.

S: Well, perhaps one of you should write a little article making use of all this material.

_____: Give a talk.

S: Yes, 'The Angelic Life'. [169]

_____: A symposium.

S: Well, maybe when we have the event, those of you who are going to talk about self and others could take up, one or two of you take up, this sort of aspect. Have you all got your topics. (**Voices:** No.) People who haven't been able to think, are supposed, according to the minutes of the Chairmen's meeting, to approach me. Only Devamitra has so far done that. I take it therefore you all **have** topics.

Sagaramati: I'm not actually doing one.

S: You're not actually doing one, who else is doing one?

Subhuti: I am.

S: Have you got your topic?

Subhuti: Almost, but if you've got another idea.

S: Well no, I was only thinking that if anyone was looking for an idea it could be within this area, say the function of a men's spiritual community.

Devamitra: Actually I would like to do that, I'd like to switch over from the one that ...

S: The one that you had, OK. The one that you had was 'The Parental Image', by the way, in case anyone else wants to deal with parents.

_____: Yes.

S: You could take this one. 'The Function of the Spiritual Community'. There you are. The self and others are clearly oneself and other men in the context of the spiritual community. But it would be a pity if one looked at it only negatively in a pseudo-ascetic way as simply skulking in some safe corner away from the temptations, not even maybe temptations, away from the 'devouring jaws' of members of the opposite sex. As though one is a poor little mouse cowering in a corner avoiding all the cats. You may sometimes feel like that, but you shouldn't.

_____: I thought, but I am not quite sure of the truth of this, that single-sex communities won't really work effectively until there's a hierarchy of age, which we don't really seem to have at the moment.

S: In what way?

_____: Most of the people in single-sex communities seem to be very much of a muchness in age, but if there was a distinction between age, between various members of that community, there'd be much more chance, or ease let's say, of developing that receptivity to someone who is older than you.

S: That's true. It's quite difficult in a way to be receptive to someone in your own peer group, receptive in a really vertical sort of way, even if they **were** actually more developed [170] than you. Someone down at Sukhavati mentioned to me apropos of his taking classes and all that, he really wished he was ten years older. One of our younger Order Members.

Sagaramati: So that means, that really, for the older people in the spiritual community it's even **harder** to develop their feminine side, doesn't it? In the sense that they ...

S: They should have done it. [Laughter] They should be **models** for the younger ones.

Sagaramati: But we didn't **know** about these things until (?) [Laughter]

S: Until you read Plato. [Pause]

It will be quite interesting when there is, later on, a community covering, as you say, the different age groups, with the older members of the community as having achieved that. Being really psychologically and spiritually 'androgynous' (inverted commas) people or individuals. Which has got nothing to do with hermaphroditism, of course.

Sagaramati: In fact, you can't really have a proper spiritual community until somebody in the community is actually like that.

S: In a way yes, that is true. Or at least you can't have a proper single-sex spiritual community in the fullest way from this particular point of view unless you have got somebody in that community who is very definitely heading in that direction. *[Pause for aeroplane to pass overhead]*

Anyway, any further point, otherwise time is up? Any final point about the realm of the gods or about the angelic life, or about single-sex communities?

In a way, even the expression 'single-sex community' isn't very appropriate because it suggests a certain one-sidedness or even exclusiveness, which is not really the point of the whole venture. They should really be called 'angelic communities'.

_____: 'Androgynous communities'.

S: That might be misunderstood. *[Laughter]*

Virabhadra: Angelic communities might as well - you can imagine rows of choir boys.

S: Yes, right.

_____: That would be nice. *[Laughter]*

S: Or cherubs. *[Laughter]* Well, little choir boys are well known to be little devils on the quiet.

Perhaps we should think of some other term, in all seriousness, than 'single-sex communities'. Perhaps the use of the word sex is really not quite appropriate. It suggests you keep the stallions in this stall and the mares in that. Or perhaps I should say the bulls in that field and the cows in that. It's really much more positive and creative than that.

Sagaramati: Bringing in the idea of projection again, because you do seem to get a transference of projection. Say the man usually projecting on to the woman, you now get men projecting on to one another in a similar way. [171]

S: I'm not so sure about that. Or maybe I should qualify that, I think perhaps that happens only to the extent that the other male approximates to the feminine type. If you see what I mean.

Sagaramati: What, if the other male is a bit female, feminine? (**S:** Yes.) And is a vehicle for that projection?

S: And **can be** a vehicle or a hook for that projection. This is why in Greek Orthodox monasteries they did not allow anybody to live or to stay who did not have a beard. In a way you can see the point of that. If you were beardless you couldn't live there.

_____: A sudden rush of beards appears. *[Laughter]*

S: I should say that is a rather literalistic way of dealing with the matter, a rather **external** way of dealing with the matter, not to say extraneous way of dealing with it. Though there is a certain psychology of the growing of beards at the different stages of one's career, I am sure. You see people suddenly appearing with beards and then you see them without a beard - it surely has some meaning, maybe not unconnected with the sort of thing we have been discussing, i.e. masculinity and femininity perhaps.

It does occur to me, apropos of the difficulties of chairmen that perhaps the chairmen should make a point, sometimes, of doing certain things within the community that conventionally are done by women. Say cooking; that he should occasionally have a turn at the cooking. I remember seeing Subhuti in the kitchen quite recently, I must confess it really seemed quite odd, almost shocking, to see Subhuti in the kitchen, but that must be because Subhuti as chairman had been so associated with one particular mode of functioning, as it were, that it seemed in a way quite inappropriate to see him in the kitchen. One almost felt sorry for him! *[Laughter]*

_____: Subhuti felt sorry for himself! *[Laughter]*

Subhuti: On reflection one thought that that was an extremely sensible thing for him to do.

Devamitra: I don't know about that, I remember the time he once baked the bread board.

S: It must have been in a fit of absent-mindedness, he must have been planning and scheming in his head at the same time. But you see what I mean, Subhuti seemed, if I may say so, almost forlorn in the kitchen.

Subhuti: I didn't quite know what to do! *[Laughter]*

S: You looked a little lost. You probably hadn't been in there for such a long time. But did it actually feel as though you were coming into contact with some submerged portion of your psyche?

Subhuti: In a way, yes.

S: In a way, yes, I can imagine that.

Subhuti: It was good just serving people. [172]

S: Yes, right, exactly.

Sagaramati: Well, I cook more than anybody in *[name of place]*

S: I think that is a very positive sign indeed, and which should be thoroughly encouraged.

Sagaramati: I'm trying to get out of it! *[Laughter]*

S: Perhaps we should leave it there for today. Tomorrow we are going to come on to the bardo of *dharmata* and before that the last paragraph of the present section, the realm of the gods, which in fact seems to introduce the following section on the Bardo of the *dharmata*.

It occurs to me that a couple of years ago while on my way to Wales I was suddenly taken a bit ill, I think it was the driving and the fumes and all that sort of thing, so I stopped and rested by the roadside, Andy and myself. I think we were on the way to Dharmadasa, and for some reason or other I had a whole series of reflections about angels which I dictated to Andy, and as far as I know he has still got his notes of my remarks upon angels, and several pages of notes on the subject. Perhaps I will have to ask him to copy them and see what's there. For no apparent reason these reflections floated into my mind, quite strongly and vividly under those rather odd circumstances. I hadn't, as far as I remember been thinking about angels before that. I followed it up a little bit since in London. In the flat I have got an interesting little booklet of angels in Russian Orthodox iconic art, and Rilke, as I mentioned, developed this idea of the angel in the *Duino Elegies*. It's almost as though that represents the next stage of development. The Bodhisattva is in a way too far on, a bit too remote still, but the angel, duly refurbished in Buddhistic style, is a sort of intelligible next step on, after which comes the Bodhisattva, so to speak. It is probably more creative thinking in terms of man, angel, Bodhisattva than say man, god, Bodhisattva, or man, Arhant, Bodhisattva even.

John Wakeman: Are you making a distinction between god and angel here, or were you referring to the same thing?

S: I think the word angel as we have been using it is somewhat different from *deva*. Maybe because the word *deva* belongs to Indian mythology, which isn't quite so familiar or intimate to us. Angel has all sorts of resonances which the word *deva* just doesn't have for us.

_____: So we'll talk about the realm of the angels from now on.

S: Yes, we could. And of course *devas* are of two kinds anyway, the *kamaloka devas* and the *rupa* and *arupaloka devas*, the angel corresponding more to the latter, the *kamaloka deva* being more a glorified ordinary man.

And please, let's try to find a more positive term for single-sex community, or even men's community. It is more than that, a community of men in the ordinary sense.

Devamitra: Why not *vihara*?

S: But *vihara* of what, *vihara* means abode or dwelling [173] place, so abode or dwelling place of what or of whom?

Devamitra: But there's certain associations with the *vihara*.

S: Well no, the associations are more of a more ascetic nature, surely.

Subhuti: Part of the problem is that the English language doesn't have gender in the word that you use. You have to say men or women if you wish to distinguish. (**S:** Yes.) Because presumably you could say Brahma-farer and in Sanskrit it would be just ...

S: No it would be *brahmachari* or *brahmacharini* - the feminine gender.

_____: Kulas?

S: Or perhaps just *devaloka*. *The Wanstead Devaloka* [Laughter] or *rupaloka*, *rupa* also means beauty.

_____: Sounds a bit like the [unclear]

_____: You'll have to get rid of your vultures! [Laughter]

S: There's the bald-pated old vultures as well, that would seem very one-sidedly masculine. I mean baldness being very definitely a secondary sexual characteristic of the male.

Sagaramati: I'm still reacting against my hippie phase, that's all.

S: Good for you. Maybe it's nice to think that you are old enough to have had a hippie phase.

To me it's really quite amazing how quickly the whole hippie thing has become out of date. It's amazing, it's all in the last two years.

Virabhadra: Did you hear that Bob Dylan has become a born-again Christian?

S: I **did** hear that.

Virabhadra: That seems to be the final blow.

S: Do you think it will lose him any of his admirers or have they **all** become born-again Christians?

Virabhadra: I don't know.

Kuladeva: Apparently he's just brought out another record and there are a number of references to God and Christianity in the lyrics.

S: Well, perhaps he is in a way representative of a section of his generation. I mean it's interesting, for instance, Elvis Presley refurbished himself and started playing in his forties to people who were then in their forties who had been his fans when he was in his twenties and they were in their twenties. And replaying to them in a refurbished, more successful, prosperous middle-class way. Did you read about that? Of course he [174] is dead now but this is what happened a generation later; he repeated his success with the same generation but in a different way, his own generation. So maybe Bob Dylan is doing something of the same sort.

Sagaramati: I think it's just that people, if they've got rid of God or something like that, after a while they just get very insecure as they get older. If you haven't got anything positive to turn to you just fall back on Christianity.

S: Yes, right. Buddhism isn't yet widespread enough in any form really to catch many of these people, is it, so to speak? Anyway, let's leave it there for the moment.

Tape 10

Next Session

S: We're on the last paragraph of that section on the realm of the gods. Would someone like to read that last paragraph?

These six realms of the world are the source of the whole theme of living in samsara, and also of stepping into the dharmakaya realm. This will help us to understand the significance of the visions described in the book of the bardo of becoming, which is another kind of world. There is a confrontation of these two worlds: the experience of the six realms from the point of view of ego, and from the point of view of transcending ego. These visions could be seen as expressions of neutral energy, rather than as gods to save you from samsara or demons to haunt you.

S: So we begin to make the transition, as it were, from the six realms to the five Buddha families. 'There is a confrontation of these two worlds; the experience of the six realms from the point of view of ego or from the point of view of transcending ego'. Or we could say from the point of view of the reactive mind and the point of view of the creative mind what this implies we shall see a little bit later on. 'These visions could be seen as expressions of neutral energy rather than as gods to save you from samsara or demons to haunt you.' What do you think of that statement, that way of looking at the visions, as expressions of neutral energy? Do you think that is a desirable way, an understandable way, a true way, or do you think there are any dangers in looking at the visions in that way?

_____: It seems as though he is trying to reassure the Americans against something. (**S:** Yes.) But in a rather pseudo way. It is almost as though they have a fear which he is trying to allay, but in fact he is doing wrong, I think.

S: Yes, what do you think that fear is, then?

_____: The fear of the irrational.

S: Could be. 'The visions could be seen as expressions of neutral energy rather than as gods to save you from samsara or demons to haunt you'. What does 'neutral energy' suggest, what sort of term is that?

_____: Scientific. [175]

S: Scientific. And gods and demons, what sort of language is that?

_____: Mythological.

S: Mythological, religious. It's as though he is trying to reassure people by putting things in this nice, safe, acceptable pseudo-scientific language. 'It isn't really a god, it's an energy, and a neutral energy at that, in fact it's just a vibration'. Do you see what I mean? But do you think that this is valid? Don't you think that if you just start talking about gods and demons you will just put people right off? So do you think that is not a valid approach, at least to begin with, to speak in terms of energy, or even neutral energy? It is valid to use this pseudo-scientific language? I call it pseudo-scientific because I think that's just what it is. It is pseudo-scientific in the sense of pretending to be scientific when it isn't scientific. So you are really using scientific language in a non-scientific way, or for non-scientific purposes, and that's where the **pseudo**-scientific comes in.

Subhuti: I think you can give a rational framework without neutralizing so much as he's done here.

Devamitra: It's misleading, isn't it? That's why it's so objectionable. (**S:** Yes.) I mean, you don't have to use these particular terms but ...

Subhuti: It's sterilising it.

S: Yes, indeed.

Devamitra: I would question whether you could really say that the energy was neutral, because it appears to the consciousness as threatening or otherwise. They really **are** demons.

S: What does one mean by 'neutral energy'? It's almost a contradiction in terms.

Sagaramati: He seems to be trying to dissociate an emotional feeling towards this, which in this case would tend to be negative.

S: Yes, because if you speak in scientific terms that sort of does, as Subhuti says, sterilise it, and sterilising implies taking the emotion out of it. And in a way that is just what you don't want to do, because in that way you not only neutralise, you **negate** everything that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* stands for. So without going to that extreme, even if you don't think it possible or acceptable to speak directly in terms of gods and goddesses and leave it at that, or gods and demons and leave it at that, what should you do if you don't want to speak in these pseudo-scientific terms? How **could** you put it across? I think in a way it is staring one in the face.

Devamitra: Projections from your own mind.

S: You could sort of explain it in that way, but you could surely treat it, as it were, poetically, yes? You could say don't take it too literally but this is what the texts say, read it as you would read poetry. But describe the gods, [176] describe the demons in such a way that something of their quality is communicated. Something of their emotional appeal. But otherwise, if you just speak in terms of neutral energy all that is lost.

Sagaramati: Even natural energy is better than neutral energy.

S: Yes, indeed. Supposing in the shrine you had a beautiful *thangka* of the Buddha and you were to say don't take it all literally that is just a pattern of energy. Well, you might just as well not have the *thangka* there.

Sagaramati: Have a photograph of an atom. [Laughter]

S: Well, at least that would be genuine. [Laughter] But I think it is really terrible the way in which science and scientific terminology is used in this mumbo-jumbo sort of way. It's really only mumbo-jumbo - that is all that one can describe it as. I would imagine that Trungpa hadn't the faintest idea what he actually meant himself by energy, especially neutral energy. If cross-examined I doubt very much if he would be able to say, especially say in what sense the gods and demons were energy rather than just gods and demons, and how that related to the energy with which science deals, or the energy with which psychology deals, I think he would find it very difficult to say. I think energy itself is a bit of a myth. Is there such a **thing** as energy, scientifically? I rather doubt it. Not as a thing. It's an entity which is postulated, in a way, to explain certain happenings. Something happens and you say there is energy behind it making it happen. But that actually tells you nothing at all, that's entirely tautological.

Anyway, perhaps we had better leave that there. But we must find some means, even if we feel that our audience, so to speak, does not, and even cannot, accept the gods and demons of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* at their face value, we must find some means of conveying their numinous character. Not abandon it completely, and not simply speak in terms of neutral energy. One could speak in terms even that they embody **emotional** energies, yes, but **neutral** especially seems really so deplorable.

Subhuti: It seems a bit related to the idea of sense of humour. It has the same sort of function of neutralising.

S: Yes, indeed. But perhaps one can look at it in this way: here is Trungpa, who is a Tibetan Lama, who has been brought up and educated as a Tibetan Lama, he finds the language of gods and demons, let's say, quite intelligible and quite acceptable but he finds himself in this modern Western, modern American world where that sort of language is not intelligible. So what is actually happening is he's not doing his translation job properly, he's not asking himself what do these gods and demons really mean to me, and how can I put that across in corresponding, in equivalent or the nearest corresponding, the nearest equivalent terms to these American people? He's just sort of grasping, almost haphazardly, what seems to be a rough, a very rough sort of equivalent, because in a way he feels, I think, a bit on the defensive about, perhaps, his own - I won't say belief in gods and demons - but perhaps his own use or understanding of that particular language. In order to be able to as it were translate you must have a deep sort of conviction, a deep [177] understanding first of all of what you are trying to translate. But perhaps the fact of being in contact with American culture, let's call it, and civilisation, has made him a little uneasy about his own Tibetan heritage and beliefs as a Tibetan Buddhist. Do you see what I mean? Because perhaps - here I am being a little speculative - but perhaps his Buddhist beliefs were very much tied up with his experience of Tibetan culture and his American experience has very likely shaken that a little bit, and by shaking his cultural allegiance to some extent, shaken also his Buddhist beliefs. So he doesn't find it so easy to translate from one language into another, as it were, because to some extent he has lost his grip on the first language, and in any case, hasn't properly mastered the second language. He's a **little** bit in between, one feels that. One feels a certain uncertainty, a certain hesitation, even a certain defensiveness. I think this might partly explain the feudal set-up which was described in *Harpers* magazine, if you see what I mean. Because that represents a consolidation, as it were, an entrenchment, if you see what I mean - there is another word I am looking for - not only an entrenchment, it's the establishing of oneself in the powerful position for reasons of personal security. It's a bit like that.

Anyway, that is a little by the way. I think language is very revealing. Was it in this group that we were talking about writing as a spiritual discipline? (_____: No.) Well, we were in the other group, then. Perhaps we can touch upon it just for a moment because it is relevant here. It isn't easy to write well. You have to ask yourself, 'What am I trying to say, what do I really think, what do I really feel?' before you can express it. So writing can be an exercise in honesty, it can be a spiritual discipline. So I think you can tell a great deal about a person from the way in which he writes. If a person writes in a slipshod way, if it is because he hasn't considered his language, hasn't considered his terminology, he hasn't thought 'Is this the best word, the **only** word, for what I want to communicate?' then there is something wrong, that slipshodness tells you a great deal about that particular person. So one does get the feeling, going through these sections, that despite the fact that they have no doubt been edited by the publisher's editors there is quite a lot of imprecision and slipshodness which is not just a sort of poetic, deliberate imprecision, but it is due to the fact that certain things have been not sufficiently thought out and felt out.

And there is a lot of this - let's call it 'new age' writing which is of this type. And sometimes they make lavish use of this pseudo-scientific vocabulary in this mumbo-jumbo type of way and it makes also extensive, very free use of pseudo-spiritual language and vocabulary too, in much the same sort of way. And actually it means very little if you look into it. There is a lack of clarity, a lack of precision, a lack of authenticity, a lack of genuine feeling.

Anyway lets go on. [178]

THE BARDO OF DHARMATA

Along with the six realms, we should have some understanding of the basic idea of bardo: 'bar' means in between, and 'do' means island or mark; a sort of landmark which stands between two things. It is rather like an island in the midst of a lake. The concept of bardo is based on the period between sanity and insanity, or the period between confusion and the confusion just about to be transformed into wisdom; and of course it could be said of the experience which stands between death and birth. The past situation has just occurred and the future situation has not yet manifested itself so there is a gap between the two. This is basically the bardo experience.

S: You could say that the bardo therefore represents the phase of transition. The phase in which there is at least the possibility of transition. A bardo is a sort of parting of the ways. It's the point at which you come to a fork in the road and can go either way.

_____: Could it be a hiatus?

S: A hiatus is a little perhaps just too negative. A hiatus is just a simple gap or suspension, or something rubbed out, after which things carry on as before. As you have a hiatus in a manuscript where some words are missing.

Sagaramati: The thing is in the bardo there is a possibility; what you're saying - there is a choice. (**S:** Yes.) So it's not like on the twelve links where you have, I think it's *bhavana* which is a transition between one thing and another but...

S: In the context of the twelve links it's a transition between the *karma* process and the *vipaka* process, or rather *vipaka* process and *karma* process. In other words the result process has come to an end and there is a gap, as it were, before the action process starts up again. So then you have a chance to consider, to choose what sort of action process you are going to set up for the future, whether a positive one or a negative one, a creative one or reactive one. Rebirth in one of the six realms **or** rebirth into as it were the higher spiritual reality, even into the Transcendental, the *dharmata*. So it isn't just a gap, not just a hiatus, it's more than that. It's a space that leaves room for choice. And bardos occur at various times; I mentioned the other day that the retreat period itself could be looked upon as a bardo, but **the** Bardo is the space, the gap, when one life has come to an end and another has not yet started, and when during that interval you have the opportunity of choosing what comes next, whether one or another of the six realms of existence for you, or something higher.

Sagaramati: That seems to imply quite a lot. It means that [179] what's coming is not yet determined.

S: Yes indeed, it implies freedom.

_____: I think the analogy of the retreat is very, very good. Because on retreat you can decide what you're going to do when you get back.

S: A lot of people **do** come to decisions on retreat. On some retreats there are a whole crop of requests for ordination. People decide to move into, or move out of, communities. So certainly it's as though the retreat does provide that free space within which new choices and decisions can be made.

Virabhadra: Although you are still left with you.

S: Well, that is perhaps the advantage, you're left **just** with you. Because to look at it in more general terms, what is the difference between the bardo and the non-bardo situation? Look at it, say, in terms of the retreat. What is the difference, mainly, between the retreat situation, and the non-retreat situation?

_____: You've still got things going on in the non-retreat situation, you're still acting [*unclear*]

S: There are distractions, there are distractions in the way. Whereas on retreat in a sense you are only concerned with yourself. So that is why it is, quite literally, like the after-death state. You are concerned with yourself and your own personal experience. Nothing is being asked of you, you don't have things to do, you don't have responsibilities outside the retreat situation itself. There is nothing to distract you from the consideration of your own self and your own experience, and what is good for you, what will be best for you, what you need. So you can come to certain conclusions about that, and make choices. Or certain things become obvious. The sort of person that you were and the sort of needs that you have, might have become obscured by your life outside the retreat, before the retreat; they now become clear on the retreat because there is nothing else except you, which includes also them.

So yes, the retreat is a very bardo-like situation. The tradition itself says that meditation is a kind of bardo experience. Much the same sort of thing happens just when you are meditating. When you meditate in the morning, meditate in the evening, that is a bardo experience and perhaps the retreat situation is partly a bardo-like state because it does incorporate various periods of meditation. But apart from that it is a bardo-like experience in its own right, in between two periods of worldly activity.

Incidentally, Trungpa says here that *bar* means between and *do* means island or mark. This is not the usual explanation. *Do* means two, usually it is explained as ‘that which is between the two’ i.e. in between, i.e. *antara* in Sanskrit. But no doubt it does or could mean that in Tibetan too.

Anyway, the general idea of bardo is quite clear. So you need to ensure that you are able to experience bardo-like states, otherwise changes of direction, transitions, are very difficult to make. One finds that when one does any writing. Has anyone ever experienced this? You need a bardo-like state, you need to stop doing everything and die, as it were, and be completely [180] open with regard to the future, a sort of empty space within which something new, i.e. something creative, can arise. You cannot really start writing properly from a deeper source of inspiration until you have, or unless you have, died first. I’m sure many of you have done that when you have started trying to prepare a talk, even, with the same mind that you’ve been using all the time. You can’t really do it, you have to allow yourself time sufficient for that mind to stop working, to die, and there has to be an empty space, and then within that empty space some new phase has to start up, some new phase of creativity, which will enable you to prepare the talk or write the article and so on. You can’t just quickly take half an hour off from whatever you are doing just to get on with a bit of writing, that is hardly possible, unless it’s on a relatively superficial level, or unless you possess quite **extraordinary** powers of mental self-control. But even that, even self-control in a way won’t do, you need some other technique.

So one must be careful so to organise one’s life that these in-between periods are possible because they are phases of transition, and they make possible, though of course not inevitable, they make **possible** new creative developments.

Sagaramati: You can even say that even taking a class, before taking a class it’s good to spend a few minutes on your own. (S: Yes.) Because often the energy you have had during the day is not suitable for taking a meditation class. [Pause]

S: Because you don’t take a meditation class with your muscles, do you?

All right, the next paragraph please.

The dharmata bardo is the experience of luminosity. Dharmata means the essence of things as they are, the is-ness quality. So the dharmata bardo is basic, open, neutral ground, and the perception of that ground is dharmakaya, the body of truth or law.

S: *Dharmata*, has anyone any idea what *dharmata* means?

_____: Dharma-ness.

S: Yes, the suffix ‘*ta*’ as ‘*tathata*’ is equivalent to the English or the Anglo-Saxon suffix ‘ness’. It’s the ‘dharma-ness’, the dharma-ness of things. In other words the ultimate reality of things. So the *dharmata* bardo is that intermediate state in which you experience, momentarily, the ultimate reality of things. He says, ‘is the experience of luminosity’. The *dharmata* is conceived of as a kind of light, a light which has no locus, a light which is not coming from anything or falling upon anything, but which is just light, undifferentiated light. What Gampopa calls the non-dual shine, that is the *dharmata*. And momentarily at least, according to the tradition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, you experience this in the intermediate state between death and rebirth. This is the starting point of that whole series of experiences covered by *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

‘So the dharmata bardo is the experience of luminosity. Dharmata means the essence of things as they are, the is-ness quality.’ [181] Not is-ness as opposed to is-not-ness. ‘So the *dharmata* bardo is basic, open, neutral ground’. Trungpa is rather fond of this word ‘neutral’, I think one has to be a bit careful of it, though. ‘And the perception of that ground is *dharmakaya*, the body of truth or law.’ So we have here a distinction between *dharmata* and *dharmakaya*. ‘*Kaya*’ means ‘body’, as when you have for instance *nirmanakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *dharmakaya*, so it’s not body in the sense of body as opposed to mind, it is something more like - though very approximately - personality. The *dharmakaya*, or Trungpa says ‘perception of that ground is *dharmakaya*’, it’s more than just perception, it’s incorporation into your own personal experience. *Dharmata* as **experienced** by somebody, and of course in a sense you can’t have a non-experienced *dharmata*, is *dharmakaya*. It is *dharmata* as incorporated, so to speak, into his personality so that he, or in such a way that he is the embodiment of that. So *dharmakaya* is really embodied *dharmata*, *dharmata* as actually **experienced** by somebody.

So, ‘the dharmata bardo is basic, open, neutral ground and the perception of that ground, or experience of that ground is dharmakaya, the body of truth or law.’ Do you get the sense of the distinction? So inasmuch as you

experience it, you, again at least momentarily, embody it. So strictly speaking one shouldn't say that one experiences the *dharmakaya*, you should say you experience the *dharmata* and by virtue of the fact that you experience *dharmata* you are *dharmakaya*. [Pause]

Subhuti: Everybody who dies experiences the *dharmata*?

S: This seems to be the Nyingmapa teaching or the teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Subhuti: But presumably not in such a way that they become *dharmakaya*?

S: The suggestion seems to be that momentarily you become *dharmakaya*. The suggestion seems to be that. Again that raises difficulties. Because we are concerned with quite profound spiritual, even transcendental, experiences. Language is definitely inadequate, so we have to be careful, one, how we express ourselves, and two, careful however **well** we express ourselves not to take that too literally.

In a sense, yes, you just touch *dharmata*, in a sense you don't become it, but again in a sense you cannot experience it because it is something non-dual, unless you become it. On the other hand if you become it how can you unbecome it, how can you lapse from the *dharmakaya*? So we have to beware of all these logical difficulties. But not be afraid to use some sort of language, but at the same time not to take any of these expressions too literally, or allow ourselves to get involved in purely conceptual, perhaps purely linguistic, difficulties. You could speak in terms of becoming the *dharmakaya* to some extent, but this suggests that it is divisible. How can you become **enlightened** to some extent? We are up against the limitations of language itself here.

Subhuti: You did seem to make a distinction earlier between the luminosity as reality and some lesser kind of luminosity. [182]

S: That was the *akasa*. Because luminosity, again, is a metaphor. It's as though the brightest worldly light that you can imagine, the full light of the sun, even intensified many, many times, is as it were only a shadow of the light of the *akasa*. And that again is only a shadow of the light of the *dharmata*. Perhaps one could think in that sort of way. One of the reasons why there is that difference is, in the case of the light of the *akasa* also, or the *akasa* which **is** light, there is no particular definite point of origin. The same of course with the light of the *dharmata*, the light of the *dharmakaya*. There's no beginning, there's no end, there's no time, there is no space, or as the Buddha says of the Unconditioned in the *Udana* itself. But one cannot help thinking of layers or levels of light, but that is a limitation and the light by its very nature is not limited in that way. But still, one is just trying to gain **some** sort of conception.

John Wakeman: Could it be that there is some experience of the light, the *dharmata*, but the person who experiences it isn't able to support that?

S: Well, this is what is said, but then the question arises as to the nature of the distinction between *dharmata* and *dharmakaya*. *Dharmakaya* is one's **incorporation** of that reality, *dharmata* is that reality itself. The point that Trungpa seems to be making is that you experience the *dharmata*, your experience itself is, at least to some extent, an incorporation, and because it is an incorporation you are then the *dharmakaya*. So there isn't just the question of touching the *dharmata*, it is a question of yourself becoming *Dharmakaya*. If you say it's simply a question of yourself touching *dharmata* it raises difficulties; how can you experience anything, especially on that level, after all the non-dual level, without becoming it? But if you become it how can you **unbecome** it? You could try to solve that by saying you partially experience it and partially become it, but how can such distinctions of more or less hold good of the Absolute itself, or Enlightenment itself, or *dharmata* itself? So you are left with the limitations of language and have to express yourself, or communicate your meaning as best you can in a sort of non-literal way, a sort of what I sometimes call poetic way. But something happens, you have a very profound experience which you, as it were, in a manner of speaking, are not able to retain. The instant you experience it you reject it, the two are - well, perhaps I shouldn't say simultaneous but virtually indistinguishable. They are no doubt two different things but the one follows upon the other so rapidly that you can hardly distinguish them. The instant you experience the *dharmata*, the instant you become *dharmakaya* you reject it, you discard the experience - that is if you are an ordinary person. If you are someone who has meditated much and deeply, and has already some spiritual experience you are able to retain it, as it were, for a longer time. And if you are someone who has lived completely in the spiritual, in the Transcendental, during your lifetime, then you will be able to retain it indefinitely, and that will be your liberation. Or it will be able to retain you indefinitely and that will be your liberation.

Sagaramati: It's like, sometimes in experience you can feel yourself - I have done this when I have smoked a lot of dope - you can feel yourself coming to some experience and you can withdraw. [183]

S: Well, people find this in meditation, don't they? Quite frequently, and it's then, very often, that the experience of fear comes up. It is fear of that experience, or what might happen on account of that experience, or as a result of that experience. That is different from the nameless fear that arises sometimes in meditation.

There is this other fear, which is fear of the larger experience which you feel approaching and threatening to take you over, and from which you withdraw in a sort of panic. Or you just feel yourself going and you don't want to lose control.

So open space opens up opportunities, free space opens up opportunities, but you may recoil from those opportunities. We were talking about this a little while ago on the other retreat, the other retreat which was held here. One of our Order Members mentioned that somebody had left the retreat, and that he couldn't take any more, and he was saying that he had never known this happen on a retreat before, though he had heard stories of it happening in the legendary early days, on the legendary early retreats. And I said, 'Yes, I remember, some days two or three people used to leave, and on some retreats six or seven people all together would leave.' They would be unable to stand it, as it were - two or three hours' meditation and all the rest of it, even a bit of communication exercises! It would be too much for them. So you see what I mean. He was quite intrigued, actually, to witness something of this sort happening, which he hadn't had the opportunity of doing before.

Kuladeva: This was on the summer retreat here?

S: Yes, somebody was telling me. The person left, luckily, fairly happily, but he felt that he had definitely had quite enough and did not wish to stay until the end.

Kuladeva: Yes, I heard about that, he had come along from the London Buddhist Centre. That he had come on the Mitra part of the retreat and I don't think he had even been along to a regulars' class.

S: Well, fair enough, there may be this explanation or that but I'm just giving it as an illustration. I'm not implying any criticism of anyone! *[Laughter]* In the 'good old days' there weren't any Mitra groups or anything like that for them to go on beforehand, they were just plunged straight into a retreat.

Sagaramati: Can I clear up one thing? This talk of light, then, is to be taken metaphorically?

S: Ah! Yes and no. *[Laughter]* In a sense yes. In the sense that it is not - one can't help being a bit self-contradictory here - it is not light in the sense of the light of the sun or the moon, but it is light none the less. At the same time we derive our ideas of light from the light of the sun and the moon, so we are trying to think of that light which is not the light of the sun or the moon, or the sun let's say, in terms of the light of the sun. But it is light none the less. Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: Then the light in the bardo is always the *dharmata* light and not the *akasa* light?

S: It would seem to be nearer to the *akasa* light, except [184] at that crucial moment when one actually experiences the light of the *dharmata*, that light in which, as it were, one sees one's future parents, or one has a vision of one's future sphere of rebirth. That would be the light of the *akasa*, not the light of the *dharmata*. It's as though there is a time when you, in a sense, almost see all. We carry on to this, shortly, when you see the light of the *dharmata*, but veiled as a coloured light, or as a Buddha or a Bodhisattva on the one side and on the other, as you are seeing through the veil, almost, of the light of the *akasa*, you see the world corresponding to that veiled light of the *dharmata*, you see that light coming from the world in which you could be reborn if you make that particular choice.

So you have got those two things, you've got the light of the *dharmata* in a veiled, a coloured form shining on the one side, and the light of that particular realm shining on the other through, as it were, the medium of the light of the *akasa*. In a sense it is almost as though the light of the *akasa* veils both and that you are in the midst of that, and that is the atmosphere through which you perceive both. You are in the light of the *akasa*, that surrounds you. So looking at the light of the *dharmata* through the light of the *akasa* you see it as red or green or blue, and looking at the realm, one or another of the six realms, through the light of the *akasa* you see it as a **dull** red or green or blue. Do you see what I mean? And you have to look from side to side and choose the one or the other. But we are coming on to that, it seems, a bit later.

All right, let's go on to the next paragraph.

When the perceiver or activator begins to dissolve into basic space, then that basic space contains the dharma, contains the truth, but that truth is transmitted in terms of samsara. So the space between samsara and the truth, the space the dharma comes through, provides the basic ground for the details of the five Tathagatas and the peaceful and wrathful visions.

S: Is this clear?

_____: No!

S: Actually it's what I have just been saying. 'When the perceiver or activator begins to dissolve into basic space, then that basic space contains the dharma, contains the truth'. That is clear, isn't it? The basic space, meaning the intermediate state which opens up after death. This is the basic space.

_____ : That's the same as the *akasa*?

S: Not in itself, no. You could say that in that basic space, the intermediate state, yes, you are illumined by the light of the *akasa*. 'And that basic space contains the dharma', in a sense of the *dharmata*, that is, the truth, in the sense that as you enter upon the after-death state, as you enter that intermediate state, that basic space, there is the experience of the *dharmata*, you become, momentarily, so to speak *dharmakaya*. That basic space **contains** the dharma, that is to say contains the possibility [185] of that experience, contains the truth. 'But that truth is transmitted in terms of samsara.' He seems to be going a little ahead here. That is to say he seems not to take into account just at this point the experience of *dharmata* as it is. But as you continue in the intermediate state, as the intermediate state experience is prolonged, and as your own personal samskaras come more and more into play, that light of the *dharmata* is obscured more and more. This is what I call seeing it through the light of the *akasa*. Do you see what I mean? So that you don't see the pure colourless light, you see a red light, a red Buddha, a green light, a green Buddha, and so on. So this is what he seems to mean by 'that truth is transmitted in terms of samsara'. The *akasa*, the light of the *akasa* being, as it were, part of the samsara.

'So the space between samsara and the truth, the space the dharma comes through, provides the basic ground for the details of the five Tathagatas and the peaceful and wrathful visions.' It's as though he is saying that the light of the *Akasa* itself is that basic ground. I would prefer to say not basic ground, but medium through which the experience of the *dharmata* is transmitted. Though it probably comes to the same thing in the end. [Pause]

The space the dharma comes through is the limitations of your own consciousness, your own perception. The *akasa*, the light of the *akasa*, being the medium in which or through which you perceive. It's a little bit confused but if you think about it you can see what these words actually mean. He's gone on ahead a little bit.

Sagaramati: That medium through which you perceive, then, has got something to do with your development? I mean if you were a developed person and you died, your *akasa*, as it were, would be purer than the *akasa* of somebody less developed?

S: Yes, right. It's rather you could have very good sight but whether your sight is good or whether it is bad, it is the light of the sun which enables you to see as well as your own degree of vision. So in the same way it is the light of the *akasa* in the intermediate state that enables you to see at all, but it is the strength or weakness of your own vision, your own subtle vision on that plane, which determines whether you see very clearly and vividly or in a very dull and vague sort of way.

So one can speak of the *akasa* as either ground or medium. I have been speaking of it in terms of medium, Trungpa speaks about it in terms of ground, but it does come to the same thing. So the light is your ground of perception, it makes your perception possible, as well as your own eyesight, so to speak. It is also the medium, inasmuch as it is through the medium of the light that you actually do see **with** your eyes.

Anandajyoti: You are saying then that your actual visions of the Tathagatas and the realms are more or less clear, more or less subtle depending on your actual state of development?

S: Yes. The degree of obscuration or non-obscuration. It seems that first of all, regardless of your state of development, according to the teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, you have an experience of ultimate reality. But since you cannot sustain that, that repeats at lower and lower levels until it [186] comes down finally to the level which is normal for you and stays there, and then you are reborn in accordance with that. In other words your own natural veil comes more and more into operation, your own natural limitations come more and more into operation after the initial experience of reality until you are left seeing things in the way that is normal and natural for you.

One might institute a comparison with the retreat. When you come on retreat, the first day of the retreat, sigh, just how wonderful it is, 'I am completely free from everything, I just don't want to go back into the world at all, I am not going to go back to my job or to my house, even to my community, I am going to spend all my time in solitary retreat, just on my own.' That's your initial experience after one or two days of retreat, but after two or three days you think, 'No, that will be a bit much, I think I'll stay in a really nice community instead. A really meditative community.' So after two or three days more you think, 'No, that will be a bit too much, just an ordinary community will be quite sufficient.' But after a few more days you come down a few more degrees and you think, 'Oh no, I'll go back to my girlfriend, but I really will meditate regularly every day.' [Laughter] And you may stabilise on the level of that particular decision. Do you see what I mean? This is the sort of thing that happens in intermediate states. [Pause]

And yes, you may, as a result of that total experience, end up in your flat as before but actually meditating every day regularly which perhaps you hadn't done before. So there is some gain. Or it may be that you stabilise earlier at a relatively higher level. It depends upon where you actually are in an overall sense.

Virabhadra: So in a way you can only exercise choice to the extent that you are developed in a particular way? (S: Yes.) You couldn't really choose to go and live an entirely meditative life if ...

S: It's a bit like when you start drinking, you can choose to start, but you can gradually, you can progressively - if that is the word - limit your own power of choice. So that if you have been drinking regularly for several years you no longer have the freedom of choice not to drink, you have deprived yourself of it. So then you have to gradually and probably painfully reverse the whole process until you recapture your original freedom.

So, though you are free in an intermediate state it is not an absolute freedom independent of your previous experience. So that is why when you die you have for an instant the experience of absolute freedom but you are not able to sustain it; it comes down, as it were, progressively, and you sustain it at the highest level that you can.

You have the freedom to do not just what is abstractly possible but what is reasonably possible in view of your limitations, but the freedom makes it possible for you just to go at least a step further. For instance you might have the space in which to write, but that doesn't mean that you can immediately toss off a Shakespeare sonnet. There are your previous limitations, even though you have got the time and everything, you have to work your way up to that sort of thing gradually. But the fact that you are now enjoying that free space means that you are free to be a bit more creative than you were before. Just for an instant you may **feel** like [187] Shakespeare but you are not able to sustain it! *[Laughter]*

'So the space between samsara and the truth, the space the dharma comes through, provides the basic ground for the details of the five Tathagatas and the peaceful and wrathful visions.' Yes, that I think is reasonably clear now, isn't it?

Virabhadra: How do you actually choose? One might say why should you choose to develop in that situation? I mean, what chooses?

S: Well **you** choose. Perhaps we are coming a little close to this old - what shall I say - pseudo-problem of the freedom of the will or non-freedom of the will. Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: It's the problem of, if you are a conditioned being how does a conditioned being go beyond its own conditioning? It's like there has to be something *[unclear word]*.

S: Yes. Well, the answer in a way is that you are not a **totally** conditioned being. But the more conditioned you allow yourself to become the less easy it becomes for you not to be conditioned, and you may end up in a state where you cannot, in fact, free yourself from your conditioning without outside help. And this is where, of course, as I mentioned, the Bodhisattvas come in. Just as you may become an alcoholic; at the beginning you were free to drink or not to drink, but you end up not free to drink or not to drink. So then you are in such a state of unfreedom that the only possibility of your extricating yourself from that is for somebody to come and give you a helping hand. Even, perhaps, in a sense forcibly.

Sagaramati: But it does always seem to be something that comes from outside. Even in this, the vision, or even in life if you had a higher vision, it seems to be something that comes from outside...

S: It seems to be but we are told it isn't really like that, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* itself tells us this, and you have to reflect that 'This is my own thought form.' The light of the *dharmata* itself is the light of your own mind, in the deepest and fullest sense.

Subhuti: It's not so much that you get to a position in this bardo state where you say, 'Shall I go up or shall I go down?' (S: No.) In the previous life you have built up a momentum which then manifests as ...

S: Yes, as a natural affinity for the appropriate level.

Virabhadra: This sort of fall reminds me a bit of what we were talking about before, about the devolution of mind and the evolution of matter. (S: Yes.) Like you start off as an essentially pure being and gradually fall into a gross state.

S: You find that with children, don't you? One doesn't want to idealise children in a sentimental sort of way but you can see that as they start growing up they do get involved in a way that they weren't involved before, in life and in the world. It isn't of course simply that they get involved in something external or extraneous through force of circumstances, it also [188] corresponds to a certain process of development within themselves, especially that which sets in at the time of puberty. But still you do get a rough analogy for what

we've been talking about. The child isn't bothered about possessions or responsibility and duty in the way that an adult is.

_____ : He is concerned with himself.

S: Concerned with himself. He has in a way, in a certain sense a much higher measure or higher degree of freedom, even if he isn't in quite the same position, not in the best position to make use of it.

All right, let's go on.

These expressions of the *dharmata* are manifested not in physical or visual terms but in terms of energy, energy which has the quality of the elements, earth, water, fire, air, and space. We are not talking about ordinary substances, the gross level of the elements, but of subtle elements. From the perceiver's point of view, perceiving the five Tathagatas in the visions is not vision and not perception, not quite experience. It is not vision, because if you have vision you have to look, and looking is in itself an extroverted way of separating yourself from the vision. You cannot perceive, because once you begin to perceive you are introducing that experience into your system, which means again a dualistic style of relationship. You cannot even know it, because as long as there is a watcher to tell you that these are your experiences, you are still separating those energies away from you. It is very important to understand this basic principle, for it is really the key point of all the iconographical symbolism in Tantric art. The popular explanation is that these pictures of different divinities are psychological portraits, but there is something more to it than this.

S: Is that clear? There are two areas of discussion here really. The first relates to the elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space. He says 'we are not talking about ordinary substances, the gross level of the elements but of subtle elements. From the perceiver's point of view, perceiving the five Tathagatas in the visions is not vision and not perception, not quite experience.' I mentioned that as the experience comes down, as it comes down from level to level in the intermediate state, you see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of different colours. You also see realms from which different colours, or different coloured lights, come. These colours are associated with the elements. Do you see what I mean? Which means that different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or different Buddha families are associated with different colours and with different elements. So supposing you see - let us say you perceive the yellow Buddha, the fact that you perceive the yellow Buddha means that you are perceiving the pure white light of the *dharmata* as yellow light. You are seeing it through the medium of the *akasa*. The *akasa* consists, as it were, of these five elements. The five elements represent degrees of density of the *akasa*. So when it has become about medium-dense you perceive the white light as it were through a yellow medium, or rather through a medium of medium density as a result of which pure white light is seen as yellow. It's as though the *akasa* consists of these elements with their colours and that they represent varying degrees of density of the [189] *akasa* or medium through which you perceive in that state. Do you see what I mean? This seems to be roughly what Trungpa is getting at.

_____ : There's a subtle counterpart of the elements?

S: No, just think in terms of elements. He's saying you shouldn't think in terms of ordinary elements. When you say fire element it doesn't mean ordinary fire. This is after all the, let's say, the *akasa* level. You are not concerned with ordinary fire or ordinary water but as what he calls energies, but which we could more fittingly perhaps think of as being degrees of density of the *akasa*.

Sagaramati: Is there a correspondence between the degree of density of the *akasa* and our level of perception?

S: Yes, of course, these are all correlated, yes. In a sense they're the same thing. Just as if your own sense of vision in the ordinary sense is weak, the light which you perceive is less bright.

_____ : Is the actual series of levels the same as the order of the days on which the Buddhas appear?

S: Presumably, yes. Because different days are associated, though the scheme is at the same time more complex than that, but broadly speaking the days are associated with different Buddhas and different elements **and** with different lights, or lights of different colours.

Kulananda: It doesn't seem to go in the traditional sequence. The yellow light of Ratnasambhava appears before the green light of Amoghasiddhi.

S: Well, here again, you see, you are concerned with the position of the Buddhas in the mandala and these are not always given in the same order. As Govinda points out, I think, in *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, the correlations are not always exact. I think I have pointed this out myself. One would, perhaps, need to go into it quite thoroughly and systematically and perhaps try to see whether when it isn't exact it is that some other

principle is involved or whether the number of terms and elements and so on and the way they are arranged make complete mathematical exactitude in all cases not possible.

There is also the question of which way **do** you come or go, in the case of the intermediate state in terms of the mandala? Do you go round left to right or right to left? Perhaps we will see that shortly. I touched upon this in my article on *Buddhism and William Blake*.

So he says, 'we are not talking about ordinary substances', that is the elements are not the ordinary gross material elements, the gross level of elements, 'but of subtle elements.' That is degrees of density of the *akasa*s, as I have called them. 'From the perceiver's point of view, perceiving the five Tathagatas in the vision is not vision and not perception, not quite experience.' Perhaps what he is trying to express is much what I was saying a little earlier on in connection with, in order to perceive something you have to become it. But how can you become reality and then not [190] become reality? So this is why he says vision isn't quite appropriate, nor perception, not quite experience either. 'It is not vision, because if you have a vision you have to look, and looking is in itself an extroverted way of separating yourself from the vision.' It is as though he's saying to speak of it in terms of vision is too objective, too external. 'You cannot perceive because once you begin to perceive you are introducing that experience into your system, which means again a dualistic style of relationship.' Perhaps he is referring to the fact that the *dharmata* experience, or the *dharmata* is non-dual, so how can one speak of perceiving it, perception being an essentially dualistic category? 'You cannot even know it, because as long as there is a watcher to tell you that these are your experiences you are still separating those energies away from you. It is very important to understand this basic principle, for it is really the key point of all the iconographical symbolism in Tantric art. The popular explanation is that these pictures of different divinities are psychological portraits, but there is something more to it than this.'

What is this something more, then, do you think, though he's not expressing it very well? It's as though he is trying to give expression to something between subjectivity and objectivity. Like a dream, in a way. So he is saying the Tantric icons are not objective expressions of something which is essentially subjective - that is to misunderstand it. They represent, as it were, something in between. At the same time they don't **represent** because this suggests a dichotomy between subject and object which in the actual experience, though you can't call it an experience, is not actually there. You can see he certainly in a sense knows what he's talking about but he isn't able to put it across or express it very well. Though admittedly it is very difficult.

It's almost as though in the intermediate state, in the bardo state, the subject-object distinction is relaxed, much as it is, as I said, in a dream. It is all subject, or if you like all object. Subject **is** object, object **is** subject; at the same time you haven't really transcended that duality. [Pause]

Talking about the light of the *akasa* it is said in connection with the Pure Land that there is no sun and no moon but a light evenly diffused. This seems to be more like the light of the *akasa*, though of course Sukhavati as a Pure Land is, it is said, neither mundane nor transcendental. It presents a bit of a doctrinal difficulty in a way, if you see what I mean.

Sagaramati: It's listed under the unconditioned elements, isn't it?

S: Pardon?

Sagaramati: Isn't that listed under the unconditioned elements in the Sarvastivadin Pali Canon? *akasa*?

S: I don't recall. Oh *akasa* is unconditioned, yes.

Sagaramati: This is the same *akasa*?

S: Yes. It is unconditioned. This introduces a sort of anomaly. It is unconditioned but I would say not transcendental. It is impartite, not made up of parts, therefore not susceptible to breaking up.

_____: Is there a connection between the *akasa*, then, and [191] the subtle body that we were talking about in our study group...?

S: Yes, the subtle body is, as it were, the one in which you exist so to speak, **in** the *akasa*. Just as the physical body is illumined by the light of the sun so the subtle body is illumined by the *akasa*, the light of the *akasa*, if you like. And I did suggest that the light by which you perceive things in dreams is a sort of shadowy form of the light of the *akasa*.

Sagaramati: That could explain [unclear] explain a bit more.

S: Ah.[Pause]

John Wakeman: I can't quite understand what you mean by something which is unconditioned but not transcendental. What sort of experience does that relate to?

S: Ah, well, perhaps we should translate more literally. The *asamskrta* is the **uncompounded**, not made up of parts. Conditioning means, in a sense, the putting of the parts together. But if a thing is not made up of parts it could never have come together or have been put together, but strictly speaking *asamskrta* is uncompounded, not unconditioned. If you translate it literally perhaps that makes it clearer.

Tape 10

Sagaramati: As if it's beyond analysis?

S: Yes, right, beyond analysis. Analysis is the splitting up of the thing into parts whether real or merely conceptual.

Right, let's go on to the next paragraph then.

One of the most highly advanced and dangerous forms of practice is the bardo retreat, which consists of seven weeks of meditation in utter darkness. There are very simple visualisations, largely based on the principle of the five Tathagatas seen as different types of eyes. The central place of the peaceful Tathagatas is in the heart, so you see the different types of eyes in your heart; and the principle of the wrathful divinities is centralised in the brain, so you see certain types of eyes gazing at each other within your brain. These are not ordinary visualisations, but they arise out of the possibility of insanity and of losing ground altogether to the *dharmata* principle.

S: Trungpa seems perhaps to confuse this 'losing ground altogether to the *dharmata* principle', with insanity. This seems rather odd in a way, I'm not quite sure what that implies.

Anyway, this tradition of the bardo retreat is quite interesting because it makes completely explicit the resemblance between the retreat, the retreat of **any** kind, and the bardo experience itself. The two things coincide, the meditation retreat and the bardo experience coincide.

Sagaramati: Do people actually do this? [192]

S: Yes, I have talked about this with Mr Chen, actually, in the past.

Sagaramati: Has he done it?

S: He had done it, yes.

Sagaramati: What, seven weeks in total darkness?

S: I don't recollect whether he had done seven weeks in total darkness, but he may have done. But he has certainly done these meditations, whether in that way or not.

Sagaramati: It does sound a bit like what..., I can't remember what his name was..., when you go into these tanks and your normal means of perception are dulled.

Subhuti: Lilley.

Sagaramati: Yes Lilley, that was it, you could have experiences which you might say might be a bardo experience.

S: Who was this?

Sagaramati: John Lilley.

Subhuti: Sensory deprivation experiments.

S: Sensory deprivation, that's right. This would be definitely a sort of bardo experience. Because sensory deprivation is a kind of death, isn't it.

_____: [unclear]

S: He stabilises at his natural normal level. [Laughter] Yes, I didn't remember about the sensory deprivations but I did remember this very disappointing conclusion, not to say anticlimax. Really my heart sank when I got

to the end of the book, it was such a pity, after going through all that you just end up in that sort of way. She may have been a very nice girl, but.

Sagaramati: Which does seem to indicate that development has got nothing to do with experience. Well, experience hasn't ...

S: Yes, the fact that you have experiences doesn't mean you're necessarily able to appropriate those experiences. In fact some people seem to be experience-prone because they lack - for want of a better term - a stable ego, a stable individuality able to appropriate - and I don't mean appropriate in the greedy grabbing sense but appropriate in the sense of incorporating and assimilating the experience.

I think William James remarked, and I have quoted this before, that a religious person is not a person who has religious experiences but who makes those religious experiences the basis of his existence. So there are quite a few people who have mystical experiences but who are not mystics, because the experiences come and go due to a certain proneness on their part to mystical experience. They are open not because they are really open and receptive but because they are, as it [193] were, a bit scattered, their individualities, even their egos, are **unformed**. So they are susceptible to these experiences but for that very reason they are not able to retain them.

Sagaramati: They can lose their ground quite easily.

S: Yes. Their mystical experiences, or the fact that they are able to have mystical experiences, is just one particular aspect of their general ungroundedness, and therefore has no very great significance for them in terms of individual development.

Devamitra: So ungrounded is, as you say, equated to a stable ego. You have got to have this sort of stability -

S: It would seem that you have.

Devamitra: - within oneself .

S: Yes. In other words you have got to have a high degree of personal integration - that might be a better way of referring to it, to be able to support and then assimilate and incorporate the higher spiritual experience, even transcendental experience. Otherwise it merely knocks you sideways, for the time being, and it's then gone, completely.

Subhuti: Is this what Trungpa means, do you think, by the possibility of insanity? Do you think that is what he is hinting at?

S: It could be, though I am not quite sure. It could be that a too powerful experience will completely flatten whatever individuality you have and it could be that he equates that with insanity and the *dharmata* taking over. Though of course the *dharmata* would not have taken you over, it would have simply passed over you and passed on like Hurricane Davey. If you see what I mean.

_____: I was quite interested to see that at the beginning of the paragraph he says 'dangerous'. He said that it was a dangerous form of practice. Just thinking about Yoga, it's fairly obvious if you try to do fairly advanced forms of hatha yoga when you haven't had the build-up, the basic practice, then it's very dangerous on a physical level. You can break your back or you can damage your lungs.

S: Yes, so it is much the same as that.

Virabhadra: I do get the impression with, say, schizophrenics, they are having experiences that are very abnormal and amazing experiences, but there is no individuality to it for there to be a ground for those experiences. They seem very much to be people who are almost just having experiences with very little else.

S: Yes, it's as though schizophrenics are people who have experiences without there being anyone to have the experiences. They are just, as it were, the experiences.

_____: I remember going to see Sagaramati a couple of years ago now at Grdhrakuta and there was someone there who came round who was very unstable as a result of having done [194] some yoga practices. He had done quite a lot of *pranayama* and he had done some basic visualisation and he had ended up - he'd had a breakdown and had to go to a home of some sort. But it seemed very much with him that he was a very unstable insecure person who had done these practices and they had just pushed him over.

S: Well, something of that sort happened, as I have mentioned, in connection with extreme forms of the so-called *vipassana* practice, when you are deprived of sleep and food and not permitted to talk. It's a form of almost sensory deprivation and certain experiences are precipitated for which you may not be ready and they just make you more unstable than you already are. And I did meet people who had complete nervous

breakdowns because of this so-called *vipassana* practice, even had to go into mental hospitals. And there were, when I arrived in England in 1964, I think twelve or fourteen people who had been connected with the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara who were then in mental hospitals. And two years later there were two or three still in who were expected, apparently, not ever to come out as a direct result of these practices.

So this created quite a scare in some London Buddhist circles, notably at the Buddhist Society, and meditation generally was labelled as dangerous. This is where, mainly, that particular label comes from. And one was warned not to meditate for more than five minutes at a time, ever. I was considered quite bold in encouraging people to meditate for half an hour, but I was allowed to get away with it even at the Buddhist Society because it was felt that I was very careful and cautious, as in fact I was. But they were, perhaps rightly, quite scared for quite a while.

I did mention, I don't know if it was in this group, that there were certain people who seemed attracted by the *vipassana* on account of what I can only describe as the possibilities of schizophrenia. Now can you throw any light on **that**? The fact that it was dangerous and you might become insane seemed an additional attraction.

_____ : Adding a bit of spice to it.

S: That's it! They were, I think, normally alienated people, very alienated in many cases, who were after experience at **any** price.

Devamitra: But there is quite a lot of literature which deals with insanity. I suppose in a way some people take it as an idealisation of that state.

S: Yes. Well, it is an over-reaction to a one-sided, almost schizophrenic, rationality, isn't it?

Virabhadra: From the point of view of somebody who has got quite a well-developed individuality insane experiences might have quite a sort of value to them.

S: But that experience would not constitute insanity for him, it might simply be a good meditation, if you see what I mean. For instance, supposing, you, in your meditation, just happened to see the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara while you were repeating the appropriate mantra, that would be a very highly positive meditational experience. But supposing [195] some ordinary, alienated person who never had heard of Buddhism suddenly had an experience like that, it would be very scary and horrific for him, perhaps. And it would amount, perhaps, even though technically he saw that same figure - perhaps he had seen one of these Tantra Designs posters once and remembered it - it would constitute a sort of schizophrenic experience. So perhaps it's for this sort of reason that Trungpa talks about possibilities of paranoia and insanity and all that sort of thing. Well, depending on the stability of your base, depending upon your groundedness, depending on the stability of your psychical base - in other words the degree of its integration - the experience is either a positive, possibly meditative, experience, or an experience of schizophrenia, to use that word very loosely, or insanity.

Part of the definition of insanity or schizophrenia or abnormal experiences is the state of mind of the person experiencing them. It's not as though there is a thing out there that remains the same regardless of who is experiencing it. Which again comes back to what Trungpa says about the difficulty of speaking in terms of vision or perception, or experience, even. In the case of a schizophrenic, you could say, there is a vision, there is something out there and that's part of the whole trouble. But it isn't at all like that in the case of meditation; it isn't really out there, though you are seeing it, but it isn't actually in here, because you are seeing it. It's a sort of in-between state, a vertical in-between state, so to speak. It's neither completely object nor completely subject, it is object - so to speak - in terms of becoming subject - so to speak.

_____ : Object modifying subject.

S: It could be object modifying subject.

_____ : With a schizophrenic this doesn't happen, it's just object/subject.

S: Hm. But in schizophrenia there is a high degree of alienation, I think this is part of the definition of schizophrenia. Whereas in the meditative experience there is not that degree of alienation, there is a degree of difference but not amounting to alienation. Especially if you say to yourself, 'That is my own thought form', as you are supposed to in the course of the bardo experience, or as you are reminded to do. Is schizophrenia currently a very precise term or is it a literary term now rather than a medical term?

Virabhadra: It's probably very wide.

S: Even when used by medical men?

Subhuti: It usually means ‘We don’t know what is going on.’

Virabhadra: The way I was using it was covering the general sphere of abnormal experiences.

S: So by virtue of the fact that you speak of **abnormal** you imply a degree of alienation. Because it is not what you normally experience, in other words the experience is alienated from what you normally, i.e. usually, are. So therefore you have no means of incorporating it. [196]

Virabhadra: That’s an aspect of mental illness which I don’t think has really been gone into. I think all the attention is directed towards the nature of the experiences.

S: Almost as though the abnormal experiences were like germs which could be objectively isolated and dealt with.

All right, let’s go on and finish this section.

Then an absolute and definite experience of luminosity develops. It flashes on and off; sometimes you experience it, and sometimes you do not experience it but you are in it, so there is a journey between *dharmakaya* and luminosity. Generally around the fifth week there comes a basic understanding of the five Tathagatas, and these visions actually happen, not in terms of art at all. One is not exactly aware of their presence, but an abstract quality begins to develop, purely based on energy. When energy becomes independent, complete energy, it begins to look at itself and perceive itself, which transcends the ordinary idea of perception. It is as though you walk because you know you do not need any support; you walk unconsciously. It is that kind of independent energy without any self-consciousness, which is not at all fantasy, but then again, at the same time, one never knows.

S: Not really very clear, is it? This journey between *dharmakaya* and luminosity. It could mean by luminosity here the *akasa*, but I am not sure, it is not clear.

‘Then an absolute and definite experience of luminosity develops. It flashes on and off; sometimes you experience it and sometimes you do not experience it but you are in it, so there is a journey between *dharmakaya* and luminosity.’ This **seems** to refer to the possibility of choosing between what I call the creative and the reactive, the light of the *dharmakaya* perhaps and the luminosity, the different kinds of luminosity coming from the six realms.

Subhuti: I thought he was talking about this bouncing. That sometimes you sort of bounce into the full experience and then sometimes you are distanced from it, you are experiencing it dualistically.

S. But then speaking presumably within the context of the intermediate state you don’t bounce back up into the *dharmakaya* literally. Yes, there is a bouncing back of sorts but at ever lower and lower levels, perhaps it is in fact that that is referred to. Or, as I said, there is that choice between the creative and the reactive experienced at ever lower levels. Perhaps it is this which he is referring to when he says that ‘it flashes on and off; sometimes you experience it and sometimes you do not experience it, but you are in it, so there is a journey between *dharmakaya* and luminosity.’ There are repeated journeyings, as it were, between *dharmakaya* and luminosity, or possibilities of choice between the two, at lower and lower levels.

‘Generally around the fifth week there comes a basic understanding of the five Tathagatas, and these visions actually happen, not in terms of art at all. One is not exactly aware of their presence, but an abstract quality begins to develop, purely based on energy.’ I am not quite sure what he means by [197] that. ‘When energy become independent, complete energy, it begins to look at itself and perceive itself’. I am not at all sure of the relevance of all that, where exactly it fits in or why he is saying it in this particular context. Do you see what I mean?

Subhuti: Is he trying to get at the nature and quality of the experience? That it is not this dualistic experience but at the same time it’s not...

S: Yes, perhaps it is simply that, perhaps he is just referring to that. It does put me in mind, though, of the nature of the distinction between *samayasattva* and *jnanasattva* in the course of Tantric meditation. Supposing for instance you visualise, successfully, the Bodhisattva, let’s say, Manjusri, Manjughosa. That visualised Bodhisattva, or Bodhisattva as visualised is the *samayasattva*, ‘*samaya*’ here meaning something like ‘conventional’, and so along with the visualised Bodhisattva there is a definite experience of one kind or another. Do you see what I mean? Sparked off, so to speak, by that visualised form. But it is possible to cease to visualise that form in that way but to retain the experience that has been sparked off. In other words you experience the visualised form in a more subtle, non-visualised way. In a way less objective, even more subjective way, and that is called the *jnanasattva*. So perhaps what Trungpa is trying to talk about is something of that sort. ‘One is not exactly aware of their presence but an abstract quality begins to develop purely based

on energy.' It is not that you literally see a figure out there but you experience the quality that that figure represents, or is the bearer of, so to speak. In other words you experience the figure in a subtler way. He could be meaning that, I think.

Subhuti: I got the impression he is dealing, again, with the American mentality who would consider a vision a bit naïve, almost .

S: Ah, yes, perhaps.

Subhuti: So he is trying to get to the more subtle.

S: Get back to in terms of energy. *[Pause]*

He goes into all that again a bit more in the next section, 'The Nature of The Visions, which we can go on to after we've had a cup of coffee.

[Coffee Break]

It also occurs to me that there is a sort of analogy between these visions - inasmuch as they are, as it were, neither subjective nor objective, neither completely subjective nor completely objective - an analogy between them and the work of art. Supposing you produce a work of art, suppose you produce a poem, is that in relation to you completely subjective or completely objective? It's subjective inasmuch as the poem is an expression of your actual feelings or thoughts, but it's objective in the sense that the poem as embodied, as written down, now has an existence apart from you. Do you see what I mean?

So it does seem to me very often that the work of art, or perhaps art in general, stands midway between the ordinary world, ordinary life, ordinary experience, and the purely spiritual world, or the higher spiritual world, certainly the transcendental world. So the visions seem to occupy [198] much the same sort of position between the samsara and the absolute, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? So there is a sort of analogy between art and meditation.

I also sometimes think that in much the same way the higher emotional is a sort of link between the ordinary mundane and the purely spiritual. In the sense that unless you contact your own higher emotional nature there is no way of approach for you, no means of access for you, to the realms of the higher spiritual.

Sagaramati: The higher spiritual would be the transcendental. It would be the transcendental?

S: From the point of view of this distinction perhaps you could include the higher ranges of *dhyanic* experience which art as such doesn't reach, as well as the spirit of the transcendental. So it is as though art does stand, as it were, midway between the mundane and the spiritual, so to speak, without drawing the line of demarcation too carefully.

Subhuti: The activity of the angel.

S: Yes, right, art is the activity of the angels, in a way. No! - not quite - of the semi-angels almost. Because the angel has in a sense gone beyond the arts, do you see what I mean? The angel has not objectified a part of himself and come in contact with it in that way. It is actually realised. What the artist objectifies in the work of art has actually been realised by the angel as part of himself and incorporated. So perhaps you could say woman, man, artist, angel?

_____ : *[interjecting]* Cherub?

S: Bodhisattva. Ah well, there are different kinds of angels and degrees. According to Christian tradition there are nine grades of angels, the angelic hierarchy consists of these grades. There is a very interesting work by that early Christian mystic believed to be a Syrian writing under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite on the celestial hierarchy. The whole work is on the ecclesiastical and celestial hierarchy, but this is the most influential work in the Christian west on the whole theology, as it were, of - well, angelology, as it is called.

_____ : It became a little bit scholastic, apparently, angels... *[unclear]*

S: Yes, it did become a little scholastic. *[Laughter]* But the whole idea of the angel is interesting because angels came into Christianity from Judaism. And where did Judaism get its angels from? - from Iranian religion. So you are getting a little close to India there, aren't you?

Devamitra: Would that have been from Zoroastrianism?

S: In a sense from Zoroastrianism, yes. But I said deliberately Iranian religion.

_____ : What part do angels play in Judaism?

S: Well, Judaism is very careful to safeguard the unity of the Godhead, so to speak. In Iranian religion, I think, as far as I recollect, though I won't be very definite here, in a way [199] the angels, or what became the angels, seemed to be more personified divine attributes. But in Judaism the angels are simply divine messengers. The Greek word angel, I don't know what the Hebrew word for angel is but the Greek 'angel', 'angelos' means simply 'a messenger'. You get the evangelos, don't you, or what you call the evangelist, who is the messenger. Of course in the *Dhammapada*, I think it's the *Dhammapada* but certainly in the Pali texts, you get the *devadhuta*, the divine messenger, which becomes a bit like an angel. In the Old Testament, though I think it is more in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament, the angels are divine messengers. There are seven great angels which in Christian tradition are called the archangels. There is Gabriel, they all have names ending in -el, -el meaning god. Which suggests perhaps in a way, at least originally, they were perhaps not just messengers of God but aspects of God, or attributes of God, but that aspect would have been played down in orthodox Judaism. So there is Gabriel, Michael - Michael meaning strength of God - Uriel meaning light of God, Raphael - I don't remember what that means, and various others. Ezrael.

So it does seem that the Jews, during the period of the Babylonian captivity, incorporated the angelology of the Persians as well as much else. Judaism was completely transformed after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. In fact there was virtually a new departure. They created a religion for themselves very much on the model of the Persian religion, out of previously existing materials. And a lot of what are called pseudepigrapha were produced, that is works attributed to certain people who couldn't possibly have written them. The Pentateuch was attributed to Moses, the Pentateuch is called the five books of Moses, and it's always been a conundrum how one of those books could have described the death of Moses if it had been written by him. Of course there is an answer to this.

Anyway, that is all by the by.

But here also, the angel as the messenger, is an intermediary, he stands between the human and the divine. It's as though the divine in itself is too remote from man, not really accessible to man, so the angel has to come as the messenger, the intermediary. So here again you get the angel in the intermediate position. You get the emotions in the intermediate position. You get the arts in the intermediate position. I think all these correlations are quite important. I have not yet gone into them systematically but they have occurred to me from time to time. You have got, in the same way the concrete reality, the archetypal image and the ultimate reality. So in the same way you have got the *Nirmanakaya*, the *Sambhogakaya* and the *Dharmakaya*, these are all correlations again.

Sagaramati: So communication is one of the things that stands out here. A messenger is somebody who communicates.

S: Yes, right.

Sagaramati: Then again, going back to the masculine and feminine, it's only, it's your feminine side that would receive that communication.

S: Yes, right.

Anyway, back to the nature of visions. [200]

THE NATURE OF THE VISIONS

The visions that develop in the bardo state, and the brilliant colours and sounds that come along with the visions, are not made out of any kind of substance which needs maintenance from the point of view of the perceiver, but they just happen, as expression of silence and expression of emptiness. In order to perceive them properly, the perceiver of these visions cannot have fundamental, centralised ego. Fundamental ego in this case is that which causes one to meditate or perceive something.

S: Why do you think Trungpa is a bit concerned to make it clear that the visions that develop in the bardo state are not made out of any kind of substance? [Pause]

It's as though he is concerned to make it clear that the visions are not sort of **gross** visions in the ordinary sense. Do you see what I mean? This is why it is sometimes said in connection with the visualisation meditations that you should try to see the visualised forms as very light and ethereal, not as sort of eidetic images. You should try to see them like reflections in a mirror, or as though they were made out of the diaphanous colours of the rainbow. Not as though you close your eyes and you reproduce a solid three-dimensional painting made out of actual solid pigment, not that. You should see sort of rainbow colours, something very light, floating, ethereal, diaphanous. This is how you should try to visualise the Buddha and Bodhisattva forms.

So possibly Trungpa is getting at something of this sort, he doesn't want his American audience to be thinking of the visions as something really solid, as though they are made out of some sort of substance.

Devamitra: Would it be equivalent to the subtle body that enters the bardo, or is it even more subtle than that?

S: Presumably it would be still more subtle than that inasmuch as it represents an even higher realm, a transcendental realm. But nonetheless not that realm in its purity, otherwise the being, so to speak, in the bardo wouldn't be able to perceive it at all.

But what about this? 'In order to perceive them properly, the perceiver of these visions cannot have fundamental, centralised ego. Fundamental ego in this case is that which causes one to meditate or perceive something.' Now what do you think he means by this?

Devamitra: It sounds a bit contradictory.

S: I think what he is trying to point out is that there needs to be a certain degree of openness and receptivity, it is probably no more than that. Which is of course quite correct. But he seems to be thinking of fundamental ego as more in a sense a tendency to hang on to your individuality and not to want to go beyond that. So it is true that you must have a developed ego, so to speak, in order to be able to experience and sustain the visions, but not ego in the sense of that tendency to hang on to ego.

Virabhadra: It's more about individuality, to have enough individuality to be able to, as it were, manufacture a situation but not so as to hold you back. [201]

S: Yes.

Devamitra: Well this leads on to suggest that you can't be truly receptive until you are truly an individual.

S: This is true, yes. Otherwise you are just wide open, and to be wide open to anything and everything that comes along is not to be receptive, not to be truly open.

Devamitra: That implies that receptivity involves a certain degree of discrimination.

S: In a sense, though no, not quite that. You have done your discrimination earlier on, as it were. What I was thinking of was the sort of person who comes along to the Friends and says, 'Oh yes great, I really like what you are doing, it's really good, I accept it.' And he goes on to the Hare Krishna people, 'Oh yes, Krishna is great, I accept that too.' And then he goes to church on Sunday and says 'Oh great, I like Jesus too.' And he thinks he is being really open. But this is not openness. You are simply **wide** open, there is nothing to **be** open.

So ego and egotism are rather dangerous words to use. You can use ego as I did earlier on to mean a certain degree of individuality or you can use ego as the term for that which tends to hang on to the degree of individuality already achieved and to be unwilling to go on to a further and higher stage of individuality which would require for its development a degree of openness with regard to further future possibilities. So you can either use the word ego as the name of a thing, so to speak, a degree of development of individuality, in which case it's a neutral sort of term; or you can use it as that insidious tendency to hang on to what you have already got in the way of ego and to stabilise finally at that level, as it were. And to be unwilling to grow further or to be open to anything more. So the term ego is ambiguous, you can use it in a quite neutral or even positive way, you can certainly use it in a quite negative way. And we have to be quite clear which we are doing, or careful which we are doing. Sri Ramakrishna, the Bengali mystic of the last century, used to talk in terms of two egos, what he termed the *kacha* ego and what he termed the *pakka* ego. *Kacha* meant raw, uncooked, therefore by implication hard, resistant. The *pakka* ego, *pakka* in its colloquial usage means good, *pakka* means cooked, therefore softened, therefore receptive. And they used to say that there were these two kinds of ego, so you can see the basis of the distinction, or the sense of the distinction.

_____: Uncooked egos?

S: So he used to say, in his own way, that the uncooked ego, the *kacha* ego, the raw ego, was the one that said, say in Buddhist terms, 'This house is mine, this son is mine, this money is mine', but the cooked ego is the one that says, 'I am the servant of the Lord.' Receptivity is implied, clearly.

Virabhadra: So we are cooking our egos.

S: Yes, quite. So it's not so much a question of getting rid of the ego but of cooking it, softening it. And what do you need for cooking? [202]

_____: Heat.

S. Heat [*Laughter*] Fire. To soften you.

Virabhadra: Did he actually use the term ego?

S: I believe. It is many years since I have read this literature. I believe he used the word (ahankara?), I would have to check that to be quite sure. He used some such term.

Devamitra: Who was it again?

S: Ramakrishna. So, yes, perhaps it is better to think in terms of a softening of the ego rather than in terms of getting rid of the ego. Though I have used that expression myself in the past. Or wiping out the ego, or blasting the ego, or annihilating the ego. Maybe it's more a question of softening the ego, refining the ego. Also *pakka* means ripe, it not only means cooked it means ripe, too.

So there is a quite nice range of suggestions or connotations there. On the one hand the raw, the unripe, the uncooked, the hard, even the not very tasty. And then the ripe, the cooked, the soft, the boiled, the good, the perfect, even.

So, 'In order to perceive them properly the perceiver of these visions cannot have fundamental, centralised ego.' It's as though there mustn't be too extreme a dichotomy between subject and object, they must sort of come together in much the same sort of way as they do in the case of the work of art. 'Fundamental ego in this case is that which causes one to meditate or perceive something.' This is putting it more epistemologically. It's more what causes one to perceive something from a very fixed, definite point of view that is taken as absolutely final. Only in **this** sense, not meditation or perception *per se*. 'Well, this is the way I see things and that's that!' They can't possibly change, there is no other way of seeing.

Sagaramati: They are very wilful.

S: Very wilful. Your ego, though, is not just this way of seeing, it is that way of **being**, because that way of being comes before that way of seeing. You limit yourself before you limit your seeing. You, as it were, stabilise yourself before you stabilise your seeing, you finalise yourself as you think before you finalise your being. You finalise your being before you finalise your consciousness.

All right, go on, please.

If there were a definite perceiver, one could have a revelation of a god or external entity, and that perception could extend almost as far as a non-dualistic level. Such perception becomes very blissful and pleasant, because there is not only the watcher but also something more subtle, a basic spiritual entity, a subtle concept or impulse, which looks outward. It begins to perceive a [203] beautiful idea of wideness and openness and blissfulness, which invites the notion of oneness with the universe. This feeling of the openness and wideness of the cosmos could become very easy and comfortable to get into. It is like returning to the womb, a kind of security. Because of the inspiration of such union, the person becomes loving and kind naturally, and speaks in beautiful language. Quite possibly some form of divine vision could be perceived in such a state, or flashes of light or music playing, or some presence approaching.

S: Now what do you think he's getting at here?

Sagaramati: It's what you call pseudo-spiritual exoticism, isn't it?

S: No, no, I mean the whole paragraph.

No, I think he is getting, towards the end of the paragraph, at Christian mysticism. But what's he getting at in the paragraph as a whole? He has got a point, a very definite point, though he hasn't quite grasped it, as it were, or at least not been quite able to express it. He starts off with this very first sentence. 'If there were a definite perceiver, one could have a revelation of a god or external entity, and that perception could extend almost as far as a non-dualistic level.' Well, in the bardo surely there is a definite perceiver, surely there is a revelation of a god or an external entity as it were, so what is it he's getting at?

Subhuti: It seems to be almost that if there is an ego then you'll perceive reality personified.

S: Not **quite** that. No, what he is actually getting at, I think, what he ought to be getting at is - it ties up with what we have just been discussing - 'Fundamental ego in this case is that which causes one to meditate or perceive something.' It is not just fundamental ego in the sense of the *pakka* ego, is it? But if you see yourself in a fixed way you will see other things in a fixed way. If you settle down, as it were finally, at a particular level of determinate being you will see everything in a fixed and final way. So supposing, for the sake of argument,

supposing you have settled down in your present mode of being and in that present mode of being you have a certain vision, because you are fixed and final and that vision is the vision seen by a fixed and final person, so to speak, or who thinks that he's fixed and final, the vision **also** will be fixed and final. Do you see what I mean?

So this is what he is getting at. Because you are not growing and not open to the possibility of growing, your vision also will not grow, it will become fixed and final and definite, and **this is it**. And this is what he means by a revelation of a god or external entity; you think 'This is it, I have seen God', much as the Christian and the theistic mystics generally do. Because they take up a standpoint of a fixed and final entity themselves, they see things in a fixed and final way, including the visions that happen to them. **This is it**. Not that it is the beginning of a whole series of visions, or the beginning of a process, they tend to think that they have seen **it** and this is once and for all, this is the last word, so to speak.

So, 'Such perception becomes very blissful and pleasant.' Of course, because why does it become blissful and pleasant? - because [204] there is security, you have got definiteness and fixedness. He says, 'because there is not only the watcher but also there is something more subtle, a basic spiritual entity, a subtle content or impulse, which looks outward.' Well, the blissfulness comes out of the security which again comes out of the fixedness, the fixedness of the whole situation in fact. 'It begins to perceive a beautiful idea of wideness and openness and blissfulness, which invites the notion of oneness with the universe.' Of course, when everything is fixed and final and therefore secure, and therefore you feel happy, of course you will feel a certain - a certain - openness. He says wideness and openness and blissfulness which invites the notion of oneness with the universe. You feel on such good terms with the universe because everything is going your way, everything is fixed and final and secure, you've got it all sorted out. You even feel, well it's all one, it's a sort of apotheosis as it were of your feeling of colossal complacency. [Laughter]

So he is very much on the right track, though he is having difficulty in expressing himself. He is, as it were, saying that there is a sort of pseudo-feeling of oneness which arises out of just a feeling of security and of being on good terms with the universe, on good terms with the world.

Devamitra: It's very much acid-head philosophy too, isn't it?

S: You could say that, perhaps he is getting at this too, whether he realises it or not.

You get an analogy of this sort of thing in ordinary experience - when we have had, say, a gratifying sense experience, do you know what I mean? It puts you into a good mood and in that good mood you just see everything as really nice and you're even prepared to feel it's a beautiful world and everyone is really great and people are all good, and even it is all one. But it all springs out of the gratifying sense experience of one kind or another. This is why, perhaps, Somerset Maugham says, rather cynically, that a man is never in so spiritual mood as he is just after a good meal. Maybe it's **that** sort of thing.

And also, 'This feeling of the openness and wideness of the cosmos could become very easy and comfortable to get into. It is like returning to the womb, a kind of security.' So he is hitting the nail pretty closely on the head. 'Because of the inspiration of such a union' - that is to say between you and it, you and your vision, both being so stable and fixed and secure - 'Because of the inspiration of the union, the person becomes loving and kind naturally, and speaks in beautiful language.' It is out of your feeling of security and complacency, and that mother is behind you, yes? So you can afford to be loving and kind. You can meet people who are loving and kind in that way because of this sort of pseudo-spiritual security. And you can tell the difference of the vibe, as it were. You feel almost the complacency of it all.

Sagaramati: I was just talking about those things in *The Observer*. One of the women who had this after-death experience, she felt, obviously she felt so secure and happy in herself that she just devoted herself with love to helping other people. And I just couldn't see the difference between that and a transcendental experience, in a way. Yes, there was this love but there was something not right. [205]

S: Of course also there are degrees. It isn't necessarily always a case of definitely this or definitely that. You may be half ripe or half raw, as it were. It may be very difficult to tell in some particular instances.

Virabhadra: That's really the Christian thing, you meet Christians and they are so nice.

S: Yes, and so secure and so certain.

Virabhadra: It really doesn't ring true at all, you don't get the feeling that they are growing at all.

S: Right, no. Well, they **aren't** growing, and the security springs out of that because they have got a very fixed idea of themselves in relation to God. In some cases there may be an actual experience, even, perhaps a mystical experience, certainly a religious experience. But sometimes it's no better than just a conviction, a strong

conviction, a strong feeling of certainty without even any religious experience, certainly not any mystical experience, even of the Christian kind, even of a limited kind.

_____: We're talking about visions generally here, aren't we, now, rather than visions of the bardo state as in death?

S: Well, both. In the case of the bardo visions you come down and down and down to your natural level, that is the level at which you tend to stabilise. So in a way by not staying at the higher levels you are giving in to your tendency to stabilise at your own natural level. So this is why the voice of the lama advising you (because *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is the book of the liberation by hearing on the after-death plane), the voice of the lama as it were reminds you not to allow yourself to stabilise on a lower level, not just to allow yourself to sink down stage by stage or level by level, until you reach the stage on which you **naturally** stabilise, but stabilise so to speak on the highest level that you possibly can. In other words make an effort in the bardo, with the help of the admonition of the lama. Don't allow yourself simply to sink to your natural level, which is what we usually do under such circumstances.

So you could say in a way one of the differences between Buddhist visionary experience and Christian visionary experience in the broadest sense, or between Buddhist visionary experience and theistic visionary experience, is that the theist tends to take it as final and tends to try to fix it, to stabilise it in that particular form, on that particular level. There is that tendency. Whereas in the case of Buddhism, for various reasons which I need not mention, the visionary experience tends to be seen much more as a signpost on the way, not as anything more than that.

Virabhadra: What would that actually mean in practice? Say you did have this sort of attitude and you are confronted with a vision in the bardo, what would your response be and how would that lead to falling lower?

S: Well, you might not be able to sustain that experience, partly because you don't recognise the vision, so to speak, as your own thought form. The lama reminds you, the lama [206] exhorts you to remember that it is your own thought form. In a way it is not something that you can get away from in the long run. So if you can remember, with the help of the lama, that it is your own thought form, it is a manifestation of your own true mind, it becomes more easy, so to speak, for you to stay with it and even assimilate it. Otherwise thinking it is something completely other, just something objective, you are alienated from it, don't recognise it as your own thought form, a manifestation of your own true mind, and reject it, because you feel afraid of it as something utterly other as it were, so you sink to the next lowest level.

Virabhadra: So you wouldn't respond in the way that he's talking about here, that you think you'd have a vision of ultimate reality or something?

S: No, this would be too much for you, no. The circumstances under which you have **that** tendency is when you stabilise at a level which is natural to you. 'This is it.' In the context of the bardo you are less likely to do that because you have had that whole series of previous experiences, you stabilise at the lowest of them which is natural to you. But in the case, say, of the Christian mystic he might just have the one-off experience and he just stabilises at that level, do you see what I mean? He doesn't stabilise at the bottom of a whole series of experiences, it is just that one experience achieved in one way or another and he regards that. Or it may be a purely conceptual thing. Because he sees himself as a fixed definite person, not a changing person, he sees whatever for him takes the place of the vision, say God, as something definite and fixed and unchanging with whom he has a definite fixed, unchanging relationship, whether he actually has a vision of him or not; it may be a belief based on study of the bible. Because he has this definite, fixed, unchanging relationship he experiences the security of that, and that gives him his confidence in the world.

_____: In other words he thinks, or he allows himself to believe that he is being received by the vision, rather than in Buddhist terms allowing yourself to receive the vision into you?

S: Yes that is part of it.

_____: In other words, better to sacrifice your fixed ego, if you receive it...

S: Well, yes and no, because they do also have their idea of transformation, sanctification, justification and so on. So in a way theoretically, yes, there is a change, you are redeemed. But in **Buddhist** terms it doesn't really amount to very much because you still have that notion, even theologically, of that fixed, permanent, unchanging ego or soul. You save your soul, you don't transform your soul, though perhaps we shouldn't take them too much up on just their language, but this is in effect what happens, you just save your soul instead of transforming your soul. God accepts your miserable, uncooked ego. You surrender it to God, it's not that your ego from being uncooked and unripe becomes cooked and ripe, you simply surrender, you give up the unripe ego. Or you don't even have the conception of the possibility of your ego ripening, not really, not in any really [207] practical terms or practical way.

Of course there are Christian mystics who **do** see much more clearly and subtly than that, but the standard practice of Christianity as far as the average Christian is concerned, or even the ordinary practising sincere Christian is concerned, is very much as I have described: a **fixed** relationship with God, as it were. You can see this in a most extreme form, perhaps, or one-sided form, in the case of Christian missionaries.

Sagaramati: But even this Christian love, which is quite real, doesn't seem to see very much in a sense. You don't see the other person as a growing individual or someone who can change.

S: No, you see them as a soul to be saved.

Sagaramati: Somebody who is to be established in a certain relationship to God.

S: Yes. Of course they would say that that involves a change in them, but the change from a Buddhist point of view is just not nearly radical enough. Though again I am quite sure that there are sincere Christians, particularly sincere mystics, who are more clear-sighted than that and who do achieve a measure of some self-transformation, one must recognise that. But even to that there is a limit imposed by theology, imposed by the dogmas of the church, and if they try to go beyond that then they come against the church itself, in a way. Or they certainly did. *[Pause]*

Sagaramati: He does mention something here..., he talks a lot about light, then he mentions sound. (**S:** Yes. Right.) Going back to the angels, you have the heavenly choir.

S: Indeed, yes. And in addition to your visualised Buddha or Bodhisattva you have the sound of the mantra. But it is as though vision and sound occupy the most important place in - to use that term - mystical experience. It is said because they are in fact the most refined senses and they offer the nearest analogies to what happens on that particular level. Though you do sometimes experience perfumes, or even sensations of a kind. There's also the music of the spheres. So yes, 'Quite possibly some form of divine vision could be perceived in such a state, or flashes of light or music playing or some presence approaching.' I think he's referring here to the theistic, especially Christian, type of experience. But it's not that the Christian experience is invalid, what is invalid is their sort of fossilisation of it in a permanent form and operating from that restricted basis.

Virabhadra: You've got two extremes, you have got, say, that of the insane person who has got no basis at all for his experience. (**S:** Yes, quite.) And you have got the theist who has got an extreme solid basis.

S: Yes, and in extreme cases has got all basis and no experience. You do meet some such people. Convinced Christians who are so dogmatic, so fixed and so rigid they have excluded the possibility of **any** kind of religious experience at all. They are, as you say, they would be the opposite extreme to the so-called schizophrenic person. [208]

Sagaramati: This seems to be what the..., I don't mean the normal Christian people in the church but the new Christian [*unclear*], what they have to offer people is security. (**S:** Security, yes.) This is definitely what they have to offer.

S: Yes, right. And the Hare Krishna people too, they offer you that fixed relationship with Krishna.

_____: There has to be a bit of experience as well. They tend to offer a bit of experience as well.

S: Well, through the chanting, but I suspect it's a sort of group experience, mainly.

Sagaramati: People are converted in the sense that they are lost and they have some experience and they do brighten up and they feel secure.

S: So in God generally you have got this fixed point of reference. Where Christians have God which is something quite finite, in a way - though they perhaps wouldn't agree with that, but from a Buddhist point of view it is finite, and fixed and determinate - in the case of Buddhism we've got *sunyata* which is simply infinite possibilities.

Sagaramati: That's not very appealing to an insecure person.

S: No, indeed.

Subhuti: A sophisticated Christian would argue that that is what God is.

S: Yes, he would in fact argue in that way, and perhaps if he was sufficiently well up in theology, with a certain amount of justification. But though that point of view is certainly there in theology it does not ramify into actual Christian practice sufficiently extensively. And certainly not into any form of Protestantism that I'm aware of. Maybe the odd Catholic Christian mystic in the odd monastery but perhaps not much more than that.

Right, let's go on, shall we?

In the case of such a person who relates to himself and his projections in that way, it is possible that in the after death period of the bardo state he might be extremely irritated to see the visions of the tathagatas, which are not dependent on his perception. The visions of the tathagatas do not ask for union at all, they are terribly hostile; they are just there, irritatingly there because they will not react to any attempts to communicate.

S: He puts this forward as a possibility, 'it is possible that in the after death period, etc., etc.'. So what do you think is happening here?

Devamitra: I am reminded of the opening of *The White Lotus Sutra*. The Arhants...

S: Yes. Because after all in the intermediate state, in the bardo state, especially at the beginning, you are in a way not in [209] your natural state. You are in your natural state in the deepest sense but not in the conventional sense. So what you may see at first may not necessarily appeal to you. You may think of it as completely alien despite the fact that it would be, in the words of the lama, your own thought forms, manifestations of your own true nature. But you would be so alienated from that that it would appear as something completely different, completely other, completely alien, even hostile, and you would want nothing to do with it, and be even irritated that those particular visions had appeared. And of course then you sink into the next lowest level.

But there's a certain amount of ambiguity. 'He might be extremely irritated to see the visions of the tathagatas which are not dependent upon his perception.' That's a bit ambiguous because in a sense they are dependent upon your perception by the simple fact that you see them. But they have appeared against your conscious will, they have appeared against the will, so to speak, of your unripe ego because they represent some part of you which is other than, which transcends, your unripe ego. But you don't even **know** that that is you, don't acknowledge that. So you are not happy to see yourself. It's rather like looking in the mirror and not liking what you see, and not realising in fact that it's your own reflection. But in this case of course you'd not be liking it because it is too beautiful.

So, 'The visions of the tathagatas do not ask for union at all, they are terribly hostile, they are just there, irritatingly there because they will not react to any attempts to communicate.' There seems to be a bit of inconsistency here. I mean the unwillingness to communicate, as it were, is on your part because you are not able to recognise them as your own thought forms; if you did that you would be able to communicate. So they seem alienated from you only because you are alienated from them. *[Long pause]*

Anandajyoti: It sounds too, at the beginning of the paragraph, as though a person who does relate to his projections in a fixed way will see visions of the tathagatas, whereas weren't you saying about the last paragraph that if someone had a really fixed and stable view of himself in fact he would only, perhaps, have one particular vision, like the Christian mystic? (**S:** Yes, right.) So he wouldn't in fact go through this.

S: Perhaps not, or else very very quickly. It's rather difficult to say what would happen in the case of the Christian. But I think the Tibetan tradition would say that everybody of whatsoever religion, so to speak, does experience the pure white light of the void immediately after death but only instantaneously because they are just not able to grasp it and would not even remember it immediately afterwards, they'd block it out. I don't think the Tibetan lamas have done any work on what happens to Christians in the bardo or what is their equivalent experience. It could be that they do principally, might experience a loving God the Father figure, a truly loving God the Father figure, but be quite unable to accept that or stay with that just because they really believe in an **angry** God the Father figure and eventually stabilise more at that sort of level.

I remember seeing in a book of reproductions of paintings from French medieval illuminated manuscripts of a really vivid [210] representation of an after-death experience of a soul. Here was the body stretched out diagonally naked across the page and here was God the Father sort of bursting in upon him against a background of blue sky and lots of stars and a few angels, and he looked a really wrathful and terrifying figure. *[Pause]*

Let's go into this question of communication a bit, in this context and in other contexts. What does communication imply, what is happening when you communicate?

Devamitra: An exchange takes place.

S: There is an exchange, yes. You come nearer, you come closer. So if you want to exchange, if you want to come nearer, if you want to come closer, you must start communicating. Do you see what I mean? Trungpa says here, speaking of the visions of the Tathagatas, 'they are just there, irritatingly there; because they will not react to any attempt to communicate.' Well, as we saw, or as I said, it is not that **they** will not react to any attempt to communicate, it is that you are not making any attempt to communicate. So to the extent that you don't make any attempt to communicate, or are **unwilling** to communicate, things will appear or feel, or be experienced

as, alien from yourself, other first, other than yourself, alien from yourself and even hostile **to** yourself. This is what we really notice. If we are in any situation where we are not communicating, first of all we just feel that people are other, then we might after a while start feeling that people are alienated and we might start feeling alienated from them, then we might start feeling that they are actually hostile to us. The only way of dealing with this situation is to make an effort to communicate.

For instance, somebody goes into a situation, it might be a Centre, it might be somebody's home, it might be a community, and he just is around a bit, but he doesn't say anything, he doesn't talk to anybody. After a while he starts feeling that people are very unfriendly. So what should he do? - he should start communicating. So once you start communicating you get into contact, then you start exchanging, then you start assimilating, you become closer to one another, or each other, even more like each other. So if you want to start becoming like something or someone you must start communicating. If you want to bridge that gap you must start communicating. [Pause] So communication is really very important indeed. Communication seems to be..., again there is a middle term between the complete subjectivity and the complete objectivity.

Virabhadra: The way you are describing it, it sounds as if communication is a way that you can transcend subjective things.

S: Yes, right. The angel, again, is not just a messenger but a communicator. Sometimes you do have that experience if you are really effectively, authentically communicating with somebody. It is as though, well, it is actually at least for a few moments that the subject/object division is really transcended.

_____ : Mutual self-transcendence of being.

S: Mutual self-transcendence of being, I think I've used that expression somewhere, haven't I? I think people tend to look for it in the wrong place. They think a mutual **submergence** of being is communication. It's this that you often get in sex experience, but actually it's a mutual self- **transcendence** of being that is [211] required, not a mutual merging of being, as it were.

Sagaramati: I have heard it said that sex can be a basis for communication.

S: Well, perhaps we should go into this a little. It depends what you mean by basis, or what one means by communication, also. I mean, is it possible? Does one mean that mutual sexual experience can be a talking point? [Laughter] Does one mean that?

Sagaramati: No. I think..., well, what's behind it is that two people can be alienated and one means of overcoming that alienation is sex.

S: I would say that there is a **possibility** of that if the alienation is only slight. If the alienation is extreme then the sexual experience itself will reinforce the alienation. You will not **experience** even the sex experience. In other words it will be entirely external and impinging from the outside, as it were, upon your alienated state. Not helping you to break through it. If you are just a little bit out of touch with things and a little bit out of touch with yourself it may be, under certain circumstances, in the case of some people, that the sex experience will put you back into contact with your feelings etc., etc. On the other hand of course it may put you out of contact with your awareness. That's the opposite extreme, as it were. This is why I speak of the mutual self-submergence, this is more likely to happen. So you go to the other extreme as it were, you are so submerged in the experience that you lose your awareness, you lose your mindfulness, you are carried away, you go **below** the level of individuality. So one would have to be very mindful and aware in any case, even if there was that possibility for you because alienation was relatively slight. But I certainly don't think it is a quick and easy way for most people under most circumstances. No, not at all, if anything the opposite. It's as though you supplement your alienation with a crude sex experience rather than break through it with the help of such an experience.

Virabhadra: Surely sex is one of the grossest manifestations of subject-object duality?

S: Well yes, it can be. This is something we went into in the *Mangala Sutta* seminar, you could say that.

Sagaramati: But alienation implies that there is no contact between the subject and the object. So in effect you are even beyond aspects of gross duality.

S: Yes, the dualistic experience, if you were completely alienated, would be an advance. Yes.

Anandajyoti: But perhaps in certain situations, let's say, you can get by with a certain amount of alienation, but in sex you are confronted with your alienation, it would become quite apparent to you. So you ...

S: Well, yes and no. If for instance you experience a certain amount of physical release that might blind you to the fact that in the course of the whole experience you had emotionally [212] been quite alienated. There is that possibility too.

Sagaramati: There's a difference between instinctual feelings and emotional feelings.

S: Yes, one could say that. It could be instinctually a satisfactory experience but emotionally you could be as alienated as ever. So in that sense the sex experience would not be putting you back in contact with your emotions; it would in fact be reinforcing your lack of contact with your emotions because you would be unable to make the distinction between an instinctual satisfaction and an emotional experience.

Sagaramati: But how important is it to satisfy your instincts?

S: Well, the whole question of instinct is rather obscure. In fact some psychologists say that instinct is a myth and the term itself should be scrapped. For instance, people speak of hunger as an instinct. They speak of animal instincts, the nest-building instinct, the hunting instinct in the case of men. But it does seem as though this whole concept of instinct is quite unsatisfactory.

So perhaps it's better just to ask what, say, is the place of hunger in the spiritual life, and I think we have dealt with that, haven't we? There's nothing incompatible with spiritual life in healthily satisfying your natural hunger. So that might apply to all the so-called instincts, to the extent that they are analogous with the so-called instinct of hunger.

Sagaramati: There again, talking about single-sex communities, what you are doing, or what I have done is you cut yourself off from an instinct which is parallel to the eating one. It's like going to a place where there is no food. Do you see what I mean?

S: But what is projected in the case of projection, say on to the opposite sex is an emotion not an instinct. So if you could keep your instinctual life separate from your emotional life there would be no harm in your associating with women, it would not impede your spiritual development or your development as an individual in the sense of your incorporation of that feminine element into yourself consciously. But it is because, more often than not, we cannot separate, we cannot keep separated the instinctual and the emotional that when we get instinctually involved, so to speak, we also get emotionally involved, i.e. start projecting. But instinctual satisfaction, which is kept separate from emotional projection, is not incompatible with individual development in the sense of the developing within oneself and experiencing within oneself and integrating within oneself that - what shall I say - that feminine counterpart, let us say, that *emanation* in Blake's terms.

So it would seem as though a measure of instinctual non-satisfaction is in a way the price that one has to pay - that's putting it a little negatively perhaps - for the possibility of true emotional integration; in the case of some people, those who are not able to keep their instincts and their emotions [213] properly separate. I think, though, that on investigation many people will find that a large part of what they thought of as the instinctual was in fact the emotional. So actually the situation is not as bleak or as bad as it sounds.

Sagaramati: You mean when they were emotionally integrated what they thought was instinct would turn out to be not instinct?

S: Well, even when they are **not** integrated if they're a little observant and thoughtful they will see that what they thought was actually instinct was really emotion. So what I am saying is that the degree of instinctual deprivation is not nearly as great as in fact one might think, in many cases.

Sagaramati: Is sensuality, I mean sensuality seems to be

S: Ah, this raises another important question. I think there is a lot of sense deprivation, or sensory experience deprivation, in modern western life. And I think this is why more weight, so to speak, tends to be put on the instinctual sexual, or sexual instinctual and the unhealthily emotional. But perhaps more even on the... well, let's just say the sexual, straightforwardly. For instance, I think quite a few people have got, one might almost say a **need** for physical contact, which is not the same thing as a need or desire or instinct for sex. But usually we get, or even have to get, the two things together, because in our society physical contact which is not strictly a part of sex or associated with sex is almost frowned upon. Do you see what I mean? This is not so in other cultures, for instance in India. And this is why certainly in Britain - it's not the same all over Europe - you don't find people touching one another or fondling one another to the extent, say, that you see it in the East, certainly in India, or that you see it in France or Italy, say. So we are cut off a bit, and we tend to rely on our sexual contacts to give us this too, which means that our sexual contacts become all the more important to us because they supply this element. If we can get this element of sense contact, say through massage, independently of sex, or separate from sex, the need for sex itself, the instinctual need which was a pseudo-need to some extent, becomes less. Also, since contact and sense experience has got many forms, if you are in actual contact with the elements and with nature, with the earth or with the sun and you really experience that, you experience that

form of bodily contact, then also the need of sense experience or that sort of contact in association with sex will diminish. And one actually sees that, that people who are into these more outdoor activities, who are more in contact with the earth and the elements, they are less troubled so to speak by the need for sex contact, or that form of bodily contact.

So sometimes very often what people want is the bodily contact rather than sex in the narrowly genital sense.

Anandajyoti: It certainly seems that city, city life, everything in cities, is quite geared to the artificial stimulation of sexuality. For me it was quite amazing when I went to India for four weeks, sex just didn't bother me ...

S: Several people have said that. All our friends who are there, in fact, or who have been there, say the same thing. [214]

Anandajyoti: ... just didn't think about it.

S: Actually you see women around all the time, in fact you are dealing in meetings with droves of them, hundreds of them, all massed together in front in serried ranks, as it were, but they all say the same thing, and they are all young men, after all, they haven't all taken vows of celibacy. They are just not bothered by it in the way that they were in England, which is really quite extraordinary.

_____: Well, what is taking place? What is ...

S: Well, you have been to India. What do you think took its place?

_____: There is more physical contact.

S: Do you think it is partly that, that they're always slapping one another and stroking one another and holding hands? But I think it's also because of the general feeling of warmth and friendliness. I think it's partly that. There's more emotional satisfaction of an ordinary human kind. So I think when you've got more of ordinary human, emotional, satisfaction, a lot of friendliness around, a lot of warmth around. Well, look at the significance of this term warmth. You hanker less after sexual experience.

_____: I thought I could really see the meaning of the term contentment, say the third precept, practising contentment. I could really feel that in India. I did feel content with my state, it seems like in that situation it's easier to be content than it is over here.

S: And there is no overt sexual stimulation, and very little in the way of overt sexual advances from the opposite sex. And this no doubt plays its part, the behaviour of the women is very decent. One really appreciated this, I certainly appreciated it all the more on my second visit. And in retrospect after my return to England I really appreciate the way in which Indian women behave, it is very decent and very dignified and very human. But there's a lot of emotional warmth about, you get it from everybody, every family, every home that you go to, you get this emotional warmth. It surrounds you all the time. I really noticed on the retreat in *[name of place]* especially that husbands and wives, even, seemed on friendly terms with one another. That's really a striking reflection that you notice this, which suggests that in England usually husbands and wives are **not** on friendly terms. There's tension between them. In India there's an absence of tension in social life, usually, there is certainly an absence of tension between the sexes, for instance. I think it's quite an eye-opener for people from this country just to go there and just to see how things are carried on. It doesn't matter in a way that you are in contact with women constantly. The society is organised in such a decent sort of way and the emotional atmosphere is such that you can move around with perfect freedom. And the advertisements are not too bad. They go beyond what they did ten or twelve years ago but not **very** far beyond. [215]

_____: I felt really hit by a bomb when I arrived back. The tube, arriving back to Sukhavati from the airport seeing the whole mass of sex imagery.

S: Not only the East, people mention this when they come back from the Eastern communist countries, Russia, Poland and so on. From East Germany to West Germany the grossness of the capitalist advertisements really hits them, and that is quite a thought.

Anyway, perhaps we should end on that note, we are in the middle of a section but it is a long one and we start on the slightly different topic of peaceful and wrathful deities, so perhaps we had better leave that for tomorrow.

(Tape 11)

Next Session

All right, we have come as far as the paragraph that reads, ‘The first vision that appears is the vision of the peaceful divinities.’ Would someone like to read that paragraph?

The first vision that appears is the vision of the peaceful divinities; not peacefulness in the sense of the love and light experience we have just been talking about, but of completely encompassing peace, immovable, invincible peace, the peaceful state that cannot be challenged, that has no age, no end, no beginning. The symbol of peace is represented in the shape of a circle; it has no entrance, it is eternal.

S: So the first vision that appears in the after-death state, in the bardo, is the vision of the peaceful divinities. You probably know what is meant by the peaceful divinities, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appearing in the form in which they are usually represented in Buddhist art. Outside the Vajrayanic tradition Buddhas and Bodhisattvas almost always are represented in peaceful form, even though that peacefulness is not always very intensely realised from the artistic point of view. But that is the intention, to represent the figure of the Buddha as a peaceful figure, more often than not. So Trungpa is concerned to point out here, very rightly concerned to point out here, what peacefulness really is. It isn’t that the Buddha is just gentle or a bit calm or a bit soft, Trungpa is trying here to give some indication of what this sort of peacefulness is which the peaceful divinities have. So he says, ‘not peacefulness in the sense of the love and light experience we have just been talking about, but of completely encompassing peace, immovable, invincible peace, the peaceful state that cannot be challenged, that has no age, no end, no beginning.’ So do you get some idea of what he is trying to convey? Peace is as it were something very powerful. The word is very ambiguous, not using powerful in the sense that we speak of the group being based upon power, not in that sense, but in the sense of a quality, even a spiritual experience, which has a very definite nature of its own. It’s as though the peacefulness is so intense that if you came in contact with it it could give you a sort of electric shock. Do you see what I mean? It’s not the peacefulness which is merely the absence of noise, the absence of disturbance, the absence of war. It’s peace in a very positive, even - to use the term - powerful sense. You could say a vibrant peace. This is the sort of peace that normally one experiences only in connection with meditation. I was going to say that it’s synonymous with, but perhaps it isn’t really quite that, but *upeksha*, the fourth of the four *Brahma Viharas* can [216] give us some idea of it, not a complete idea because *upeksha* is still a **mundane** quality and this is a transcendental quality. But even that mundane state of *upeksha* is very difficult for us to conceive of. Perhaps we could take it step by step as it were. If you haven’t had any actual experience of *metta* it’s very difficult for you conceive what *metta* really is like as a so-called emotional experience. It **isn’t** anything like your usual love, affection, warmth, friendliness, it is something much more positive and much more pure than that. And it’s only when you have got some experience of *metta* that you can look back to your previous experience, your ordinary experience of warmth, love, affection, friendliness, and so on and just see, really see, the difference. So that is in the case of *metta*.

So you go on from there and there can be the experience of a very pure, very positive *karuna* or compassion, which is not like your usual sentimental pity. In the same way there can be a very intense, a very positive, a very pure experience of sympathetic joy, *mudita*, which is not like your ordinary pleasure that somebody else is doing well or somebody else is getting on well. Again it is much, much more than that. And then you come to *upeksha*, which is not just the usual peacefulness that you enjoy when there isn’t much noise and not much disturbance and things are pretty quiet inside the house and not many people around and no one’s making any noise, the wind isn’t blowing and the trees are all still. It isn’t **that** sort of peace or peacefulness, it goes far beyond that, it is much more intense, it has a much more definite, even a much more dynamic character of its own. And that is only **mundane** *upeksha*, and here we are talking about peacefulness on a transcendental level. So how much further beyond does that go. So it’s **this** that Trungpa is trying very hard to convey, and this is why he is saying, ‘not peacefulness in the sense of the love and light experience we have just been talking about, but completely encompassing peace’, it is as though there is nothing but that peace, it is all around, it’s **immovable**, which seems rather strange to say that peace is immovable, it’s like a solid block as it were, it has got such a definite, strong nature of its own. It’s not just the absence of something else. ‘Invincible peace’, because it’s transcendental, what can overcome it, what can disturb it? No amount of noise, no amount of disturbance can affect it in any way. ‘The peaceful state that cannot be challenged’ - in its presence, in its proximity, there’s no question of anything except peace - ‘that has no age, no end, no beginning.’ It isn’t even a temporal phenomenon, it is transcendental, it exists outside space, outside time. Peace.

And because it exists outside space, outside time, ‘the symbol of peace is represented in the shape of a circle; it has no entrance, it is eternal.’ So we don’t often think of Peace, as it were with a capital ‘P’, as an ideal, or as a goal, do we? We think of Enlightenment quite often, we might even think of truth, we might even think of the absolute, but we don’t usually think of peace as a sort of goal, do we? Why do you think that is?

Virabhadra: Is it because it hasn’t really got a counterpart on a mundane level? For instance you can imagine, say, the truth, truth as opposed to falsehood, and you can appreciate that as a positive entity, somebody is truthful. Whereas just to say that somebody is peaceful on an ordinary level doesn’t really sound very attractive, it usually just means an absence of something. [217]

S: But actually it does amount to the same thing, because truth is no more like and no more unlike ordinary factual truth, say Truth with a capital 'T', than this transcendental peace is like any mundane state of peace. So even that doesn't really explain it. I think it might be because we just have got an extremely weak and anaemic view of peace in any sense. It's something negative, it's absence of noise, absence of disturbance, absence of conflict, absence of war. It's a grey, neutral sort of state. Lukewarm, not positive, not dynamic, neither hot nor cold. So peace doesn't appear as a very positive spiritual goal. But it would seem in the Buddha's day they did think more in terms of peace, the Indian tradition generally, perhaps, thinks more in terms of peace.

Connected with the idea of peace is the idea or concept of cessation. For the Theravada Buddhist for instance, especially the Indian Theravada Buddhist, cessation was a very inspiring concept. We don't find cessation a very inspiring concept. Because cessation, *nirodha*, for the Indian Theravadin Buddhist meant not just cessation but there was a sort of suggestion that when everything disturbing, when everything of the nature of turmoil just ceased, there would just be peace, in this very positive, dynamic sense, left. And how enjoyable **that** would be. It didn't even need to be spoken, as it were. Cessation meant just cessation of everything that was other than that, everything that obscured that. It's just like the cessation of all clouds, you don't even need to mention the blue sky and the shining sun, you understand that. So the cessation of everything mundane meant the achievement, the realisation, the experience, of that state of absolute peace and tranquillity in the most positive sense, which was not just a state of rest or quiescence, but was as it were active and dynamic and even powerful. So these peaceful divinities, these peaceful Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, have got to convey something of that, and that is very difficult, notoriously difficult, because as I have mentioned more than once before, Tibetan friends have told me, especially Tibetan artists, that it's much more difficult to depict the peaceful divinities than the wrathful deities because it's as though the raw material, at least in a very crude form, for the wrathful deities exists already in one's own heart. But from where is one to get the raw material for the peaceful deities, so to speak? All you can produce is something rather anaemic, rather weak, insipid. So often one finds that the peaceful divinities are represented in that fashion, a weak insipid fashion. You don't get an impression of peace, you just get an impression of blankness and impotence. And we usually think of a quiet peaceful person in that way, don't we? A rather negative person who doesn't make much trouble, doesn't have much impact on others, who can safely be ignored. Not peaceful in a very positive, dynamic, almost creative sense.

You could say that this peacefulness is akin in a way to love, in the sense that I was using the term in the talk on *Authority and the Individual in the New Society*, as the antithesis of power in the sense in which I used that term in that talk. There is a definite - well, one can in a way only say 'power', but it is not coercive power, it is power of one's own innate being, independently of anything else. It is not power **over** anything or anyone. It isn't even power to **do** anything, it goes even beyond that. It exists without [218] reference to anyone or anything. Though it can be brought into relation with things and people.

So the spiritual, so to speak, certainly the Transcendental, is of this nature, which is quite different from the nature of anything mundane, anything non-spiritual or non-transcendental. And normally we are not in contact with this sort of quality, this sort of element, and we don't recognise it, and we think we are dealing with it but actually we are dealing with something else, we are dealing with some more subtle extension of the mundane, more often than not. We very rarely have an actual true experience of something of this genuinely spiritual nature. Very rarely have any experience of a genuinely spiritual mental state or quality, or emotion. The nearest that most people get to it is when they have a really good *Metta Bhavana*.

All right, let's go on to the next paragraph.

Not only in the bardo experience after death alone, but also during our lifetime, similar experiences occur constantly. When a person is dwelling on that kind of union with the cosmos - everything is beautiful and peaceful and loving - there is the possibility of some other element coming in, exactly the same as the vision of the peaceful divinities. You discover that there is a possibility of losing your ground, losing the whole union completely, losing your identity as yourself, and dissolving into an utterly and completely harmonious situation, which is, of course, the experience of the luminosity. This state of absolute peacefulness seems to be extremely frightening, and there is often the possibility that one's faith might be shaken by such a sudden glimpse of another dimension, where even the concept of union is not applicable any more.

S: The keynote of this paragraph seems to be the statement, 'This state of absolute peacefulness seems to be extremely frightening.' Which really seems paradoxical. So why do you think this is? Supposing you are confronted by a peaceful divinity, a peaceful Buddha, maybe a mandala of peaceful Buddhas, peaceful Bodhisattvas. So why should this be extremely frightening to you, just peace?

Kuladeva: It threatens your ego-identity.

S: It threatens your ego-identity, basically this is what it is, but in, say, greater detail?

Sagaramati: I think just imagining that you would experience something as an object that is more real than you are.

S: Yes, then you really would feel threatened. But perhaps on a more ordinary level you would find it extremely frightening, threatening, because you just didn't want to be peaceful, it didn't give you the opportunity of being, the outlet of being, what you wanted to be. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: It reminds me of what you said, I think in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus* about psychic experiences not being in any way frightening or threatening, but spiritual experiences [219] definitely were frightening.

S: Yes. I mentioned this, I think, apropos of *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus* either on a seminar or just some discussion that we had with reference to my own experiences in my earlier days. But, yes, a psychical - I think it must have been a general discussion - you can see a ghost and not be frightened at all. After all, it's on the mundane level, what else is it, so you can see a ghost and not feel frightened at all, but you can get a glimpse of a vision of the Buddha and you can feel extremely frightened, which is incredible. The Buddha of all people, you see a vision of the Buddha and you feel afraid. But you do, you can, it can be a hair-raising experience, though he is so peaceful and so so peacefully shining and so loving, compassionate - what do you feel? - you feel afraid. And here you see one of these horrible old ghosts or hobgoblins, or demons and you feel not at all afraid, you maybe feel quite at home.

Because the spiritual, the Transcendental is luminous, it is spiritually threatening in a way that no ghost could possibly be, even no **demon** could possibly be. It frightens you at the deepest level, it hits you so gently but so devastatingly at your weakest point, that is to say your own precious self, your ego. So this state of absolute peacefulness seems to be extremely frightening, and there's often the possibility that one's faith might be shaken by such a sudden glimpse of another dimension, one's faith in oneself as one at present is, one's faith in one's ego. [Pause]

Even again, on a much more ordinary level, some people feel quite uncomfortable when put in an ordinarily quiet and peaceful situation, don't they? Not to speak of seeing a peaceful divinity or peaceful Bodhisattva. Just to have to sit quietly in a room is an uncomfortable experience for them.

Kuladeva: I met somebody at the LBC who experienced just that, who found it intolerable just to sit through half an hour of a meditation, just because of the silence.

S: Yes, even silence some people find frightening, not to speak of actual peacefulness in the ordinary sense, just silence.

Sagaramati: This actually happened last Order Day, at the Order meeting. People didn't want to speak so they said perhaps we could do the Puja early or something like that, so I said let's sit round and say nothing, there is no need to do anything. And people felt very, very uncomfortable. Some people said they were frightened, which is quite remarkable.

S: Do you think it was some people thinking it was a waste of time, that you weren't doing something, that they had maybe got used to being busy and always doing things?

Sagaramati: Well, it is as if their energies were incapable of just sitting there.

S: Their energies were **restless** energies.

Devamitra: I would have thought, actually, it was, one of the elements in it was that they were sitting there in a large gathering with nothing actually happening. I think that is a bit more threatening, maybe. With say twenty or thirty Order Members doing nothing, there is nothing to say. [220]

S: Well, one would have thought it was a very inspiring situation, this is what seems to have been the case in the days of the Buddha, when the Buddha sat. Well, admittedly they were all meditating, but why couldn't you, or shouldn't you just sit? We are told even two thousand five hundred of them together, in the moonlight. So presumably you had something like this at the back of your mind.

Sagaramati: No, not really. I just thought it is nice sometimes just to sit quietly. (**S:** Yes.) There's no need to actually..., I mean if people feel bored then you should just experience feeling bored.

S: Or at least you can just look around at people, just see their faces, how many different faces of so many different kinds, some happy, some tired-looking, some bored-looking, just look around like that.

Sagaramati: But why should people find it threatening?

S: But this is what ordinarily happens, that people find silence between people embarrassing and even threatening, don't they? One feels that one should say something, one should break the silence somehow. Sometimes this happens with strangers but even sometimes with people that you know quite well. It seems not to happen with people that you know **very** well and feel comfortable with.

Devamitra: Is it a particularly English thing? I can't imagine it in India.

S: Perhaps it is, but maybe some other people just don't allow themselves to get even to this point because they are jabbering away all the time. I don't think the question would arise for an Indian, because usually Indians are talking and sometimes communicating all the time. They don't often sit quietly together.

Virabhadra: It's amazing how difficult they found the silence on the retreats I was on. They couldn't do it, basically!

S: Yes, they didn't think that Lokamitra really **meant** it when he said there would be no talking. I was really so amused to hear him catechising one of the women on the retreat about this; she thought if you talked in the kitchen it didn't matter, or if you talked outside it didn't matter, or if you talked when you were having a walk it didn't matter - what Lokamitra really meant was that you just didn't talk in the shrine room or while the meditation was actually going on, because occasionally people did use to have a quiet chat even in the meditation. *[Laughter]* So he used to say, 'Now do you understand, when I say no talking I mean **no talking, at all**, at any time, not even in the kitchen. Do you understand? **Not in the kitchen.**' And she said 'Yes, Lokamitra', and he sort of catechised her, 'No talking after the meditation, **do you understand?** No talking during the meditation, **do you understand?**' and wagging his finger. And she said 'Yes, Lokamitra, yes, Lokamitra', thinking she could do it again next time. I'm not suggesting that the women were worse than the men, but I just remember this little incident.

But lots of people, in England, certainly find this silence very, at least embarrassing. But the same thing during the communication exercises. People after a while, after they [221] have been just looking at each other for a while, start wanting to giggle. This is all energy which is accumulating and they are not able to express it. Why does energy accumulate in that way? Because you are not satisfied just to be calm and just look. And a living silence, as it has been called, is very rare and quite difficult to achieve. One often gets a dull or a dead silence, or a sluggish or slothful or apathetic silence, but a living silence between, among people, is quite rare, isn't it?

Sagaramati: It's the doing nothing that is the difficult thing. In the shrine room that's OK because you have got a practice, you've got something to do.

S: It also occurs to me that silence between people is threatening because so much of our speech between ourselves is, or has the social function of being, reassuring. We are just making reassuring noises to one another: 'It's OK, don't be afraid, I am not going to hurt you, I am not going to bite you.' A lot of our polite social exchanges are of this nature, aren't they? So if they are not there the natural fearfulness which is underneath and which usually is assuaged by those polite exchanges comes to the surface.

It's like when you shake hands, the original purpose of that is said to be to show that you didn't have a dagger concealed in the palm of your hand. So if somebody keeps quiet it's as though you are not being given the reassurance that you need which would enable you to be comfortable with that person. You're waiting for it, as it were, at least unconsciously, it doesn't come, and you start looking at that person and you actually start feeling that he's a bit threatening somehow, maybe he will do something to you. Maybe he's going to attack you. It's perhaps basically a quite animal thing, because animals tend to reassure one another with mutual sniffings and all that sort of thing.

And perhaps it differs a bit between the sexes, because if it's only men present I think there is almost inevitably in ordinary social life a sort of hostility, very often, between men. And they need overt assurance that the intentions of the other person are not hostile. It's as though in the absence of those assurances you assume that the other person's intent is hostile. In the case of a woman, usually if a woman is with a man she adopts a sort of - what shall I say? - an ingratiating attitude 'Please don't hurt me, please don't harm me, please don't take advantage of me.' And he responds to that in some way or other. There are various socially accepted ways of doing this. She might sort of smile at him in an ingratiating way, this gives him the signal that it is socially acceptable for him to speak to her, so then he says, 'It's a really nice day that we are having, isn't it?', trying to express great politeness and friendliness so that she can feel there's nothing to fear from this particular person. This is how it proceeds. And some men, men being naturally competitive it seems, in their first exchanges try to establish who is superior, who is top dog as it were. So if none of these sort of games are going on it can be a quite uncomfortable, even threatening, even frightening situation. In the case of a man and a woman if they are sitting alone in a room without saying anything, especially if they are looking at each other for long enough, the woman might really start thinking that the man has got designs upon her. Especially if he keeps looking at her every now and again, or eyeing her. [222]

_____: She'd probably be right.

S: Possibly, depending on the man and on the woman, of course.

So it's as though these verbal exchanges are very often, or to a great extent, of the nature of reassurance, mutual reassurance. So that if you are just seated in silence you don't experience this. So naturally, one would assume, the more people there are sitting together the greater the possibilities of danger, so the more you tend to feel threatened.

But it is rather surprising that, say, at an Order meeting people don't find it possible to sit together quietly and very peacefully and enjoy that experience. As distinct from sitting and meditating together, when of course you are doing something - you have something to keep you happily occupied and you can quite justifiably ignore other people. You are not looking at them and they are not looking at you.

Devamitra: I must say I was very surprised to hear it when you said that.

Sagaramati: I was quite surprised at it.

S: Don't you think that perhaps also, though, the idea that if you are not doing anything you are just wasting time and that you shouldn't be wasting time? In other words the positive value of just sitting together, being quietly together is not sufficiently appreciated.

Kuladeva: Yes, some people seemed to think that if there wasn't anything to say there was no point in being there. But I don't think it was all clear cut like that, I don't think the atmosphere was completely threatening.

S: Though some people presumably found it somewhat threatening.

Sagaramati: Some people said they did and others you could see they did, though they didn't say.

S: Well, at least one person at an Order meeting that I attended said that he found the whole situation threatening, and that was even when there was talking.

But perhaps people do over-identify communication with talking; well, let's say contact with talking, whereas the talking isn't always real communication.

Virabhadra: I tend to feel that when I meet somebody I have got to go through the small talk, as it were, in order to get anywhere, and I am quite prepared to do that knowing that it's leading somewhere. And that it will probably die away and then you will start really communicating. (**S:** Yes.) But it's like if you didn't have the small talk it would be very difficult to just jump straight in.

S: I think you should be prepared to go through the small talk, I think it is almost always necessary. I think it's very rarely that one can plunge directly into real communication with another person.

Devamitra: Do you feel that's the case even with people you know quite well? [223]

S: Sometimes. It depends very much on the situation and the circumstances. It doesn't always happen with people that you know very well but it does sometimes. You can sometimes start communicating quite quickly with people that you meet for the first time. On the other hand you can sometimes not be able to communicate with people that you have met dozens of times and you go through the same round of small talk and you never succeed in getting beyond it though you may try, and that can be very frustrating.

Virabhadra: I think particularly, say, in a class, it seems to be really important that there is in a way a lot of small talk flying and so that people come in and they do feel sort of welcome, if people talk to you in an amiable sort of way rather than confronting you with a ...

S: Yes, as if to say 'We only talk about the Dharma here'. Yes, one doesn't want to give them that sort of impression. On the other hand you need to check sometimes, if you see what I mean, not let things go too far and get too much out of hand. It requires quite a delicate touch, as it were, to know just when you start putting a stop to all that, gently and without them perhaps noticing too much what you are actually doing. I'm sure all chairmen and all those who take classes are very skilled at this sort of thing.

Sagaramati: In varying degrees!

Virabhadra: We had a bhikkhu staying at Sukhavati while I was there and it was really awful because he had this sort of attitude of only talking Dharma, and he was just completely blocked, basically.

Subhuti: Small talk Dharma.

S: Right, yes.

Virabhadra: And there was no communication at all.

S: Yes, 'Do you know how many skandhas there are?' *[Laughter]*

Virabhadra: Sort of 'Isn't life suffering?' and all that.

S: What did you say? 'Yes' with a big smile, 'Have some more tea!'

Virabhadra: No.

S: Also this difficulty in just sitting quietly with others suggests a sort of lack of trust. If you really do start feeling uncomfortable and even threatened, it suggests that basically on an almost animal level there is an absence of trust. So perhaps there ought to be more experiments, more efforts made for people to just spend a bit of time quietly together without feeling any need to say anything and without feeling threatened. Maybe just try it in **small** groups to begin with, just four or five at a time, and also not allowing things to go dead, or to start feeling dull and boring.

It also suggests that very often, actually, you do find people boring, if you see what I mean. I don't mean that you find their conversation boring, I mean that you find **them** boring. Because you can find somebody's conversation quite [224] interesting but you might find **them** boring. So when you are just sitting around together saying nothing you are just left with them, if you see what I mean. You don't find it very interesting or much less, say, inspiring just to look at them, or to feel that they are there. Sometimes you can only tolerate them provided you can have an interesting talk with them. *[Laughter]* Do you see what I mean? So it's almost as though, in a way, you don't like people, and you can allow yourself to be distracted from that fact if there's a fairly interesting conversation going on between you, but if you are just landed with the people in the lump, as it were, the 'the lumpen proletariat', so to speak, you just feel a bit impatient or bored and so on. Because if you really like somebody, one of the characteristics of that liking, especially in the more mundane sense, is that you enjoy looking at them, you don't even mind if they don't say anything, you are quite happy just sitting there and not only looking at them but gazing at them, as it were. But this is not one's normal attitude towards people. But if you really do appreciate people just for what they are you should enjoy just being able to sit down and look round at the circle just seeing them there and quite happy just to see them, without having to supplement their actual being with conversation.

So this is also connected with *metta*, appreciation of people just for what they are, not for what you can get out of them even in the form of conversation. And this brings us to another point which I have noticed more than once; how much we are influenced, how much we are affected just by the way that people look. Do you see what I mean? Our reactions to people, even our attitudes to people, are determined to a great extent by considerations of this sort. Whether we just like the way that they look, and usually we don't. There's perhaps the odd person that we really give a second glance to, as it were. Which means we don't really very often appreciate people or feel *metta* towards them just for their own sake, so to speak.

Kuladeva: You mean external appearance?

S: Yes, this seems to play a very important part in our attitude towards people, at least initially, in many cases.

So when we are just sitting there with a whole lot of other people, say at an Order meeting, we are just landed with them **as they are**. There are no witty remarks, no interesting enquiries about centre activities, and no useful information, nothing of a poetic nature, not even any little piece of gossip or scandal. Or even no inspiring quote from something someone has been reading recently. No, nothing of that. We are just left with them as they are or as they appear, which one might feel is pretty uninspiring, or unstimulating. So what one should do is just to look around and just try to see them as human beings, sitting there, with all their admitted imperfections and all that, and just accept that, without feeling threatened, without feeling frightened. If you look at them you might start thinking they are not so bad looking after all, there is a certain expression there, there is a certain intelligence, a certain sensitivity. You just look a bit closer, they do look actually more human. *[Laughter]* Do you see what I am getting at?

Devamitra: I think some people might find it extremely difficult to see them more human! [225]

S: Well, just take my word for it.

Devamitra: Oh, I do! *[Laughter]*

S: If you just look at them long enough, study them long enough, then you really start - you might initially detect certain animal resemblances, but look at them long enough and you see something definitely very human there. And even maybe attractive and sympathetic. So when we all sit silently together it just gives us an opportunity of doing this, at leisure.

All right, let's go on to the wrathful divinities, next paragraph.

There is also the experience of the wrathful divinities. They are another expression of peacefulness, the ruthless, unyielding quality, not allowing side-tracks of any kind. If you approach them and try to re-shape the situation they throw you back. That is the kind of thing that continually happens with emotions in the living situation. Somehow the feeling of unity where everything is peaceful and harmonious does not hold final truth, because whenever there is a sudden eruption of energies in terms of passion or aggression or any conflict, suddenly something wakes you up; that is the wrathful quality of the peacefulness. When you are involved in ego-manufactured, comforting situations of any kind, the actual reality of the nakedness of mind and the colourful aspect of emotions will wake you up, possibly in a very violent way, as a sudden accident or sudden chaos.

S: I find this personally just a little bit confused, as though he is talking about two different things and I am not really sure which he is talking about, do you see what I mean? It is quite clear that if you find the peaceful divinities too frightening, they sort of turn into wrathful divinities. And therefore, Trungpa says of the wrathful divinities, 'They are another expression of peacefulness'. It's quite important to understand that. 'The ruthless unyielding quality, not allowing side-tracks of any kind. If you approach them and try to re-shape the situation they throw you back.' But then he goes on to say, 'That is the kind of thing that continually happens with emotions in the living situation. Somehow the feeling of unity where everything is peaceful and harmonious does not hold final truth.' Here he seems to be speaking of peacefulness in a quite different sense. Whereas surely the peacefulness of the peaceful divinities does hold the final truth. So he seems to mix up two things here.

Anandajyoti: Do you think he is referring back to that feeling of unity that he talked about earlier on?

S: Yes, he does seem to be referring back to that, and that's where the mix-up seems to come. There seems to be a difference between what you experience as a result of your contact with genuinely peaceful divinities, and being shaken out of just that sort of state of very relative mundane love and harmony. He seems to call that peacefulness too. And that seems to be rather inconsistent, or at least confusing. [226] 'When you are involved in ego-manufactured, comforting situations of any kind, the actual reality of the nakedness of mind and the colourful aspect of emotions will wake you up, possibly in a very violent way.' Well, this is very true but he seems still to be mixing up two rather different things.

Anandajyoti: Yes, it could do with single inverted commas around peaceful.

S: Right, this is true, yes indeed. That would make the distinction clearer. Though still his remarks would be a bit of a *non sequitur*.

But anyway, his initial point was certainly clear and certainly correct. That in fact the wrathful divinities are in fact the peaceful divinities in, as it were, disguise. It's you yourself who introduce the threatening element, you yourself who see the peaceful divinities as wrathful divinities. Because you experience the peacefulness as something ruthless, unyielding, not allowing side-tracks of any kind. The peacefulness has its own, as it were, integrity, it will not deviate from that and you cannot reshape it, it does not permit you to deviate from that.

Let's go on, then.

Of course there is always the possibility of ignoring these reminders and continuing to believe the original idea. So the concept of leaving the body and entering the luminosity, then waking up from the luminosity and perceiving these visions in the third bardo state could be seen symbolically as being delivered into that open space - space without even a body to relate to, such open space that you cannot have the notion of union because there is nothing to be united with or by. But there are flashes of energy floating, which could be either diverted or channelled in; that is the definition of mind in this case, the gullible energy which could be diverted into another situation or turned into a rightful one. The possibility of freeing oneself into the Sambhogakaya level of the five Tathagata realms depends on whether or not there is any attempt to go on playing the same game constantly.

S: It's almost as though your consciousness that you are experiencing something as frightening, and perhaps your realisation that what you are experiencing as frightening is not really frightening, can act as a sort of warning to you, a sort of reminder essentially of what is happening and a reminder of the fact that you have the power to choose. When you start experiencing, let us say, the peaceful divinities as wrathful divinities, if you realise that this is what is happening and that you are experiencing the feeling of being frightened, let's say, because you are seeing wrathful divinities, and you are seeing wrathful divinities when they are in fact peaceful divinities because of some inadequacy within yourself, then you can start doing something about the situation

and possibly making a right choice instead of a wrong one, choosing to be creative rather than be reactive. He seems to be meaning something like that, though again here it's all a bit confused.

If you, as it were, ignore what is happening you sink to a lower level still, where the process is repeated over again. [227] He says, 'Of course there is always the possibility of ignoring these reminders and continuing to believe the original idea. So the concept of leaving the body and entering the luminosity, then waking up from the luminosity and perceiving these visions in the third bardo state could be seen symbolically, etc., etc.' Again he seems to be a bit inconsequential here.

I don't really quite see how this open space comes in here, this 'space without even a void to relate to'. It doesn't really seem to follow on very well. It's almost as though someone has been editing the transcript of a seminar - this material was given originally as a seminar - and has done their best with it but has not really been able to express what he was getting at, and perhaps he wasn't even originally able himself to express it very well. As we see, sometimes he comes out very clearly but sometimes it is really quite muddled.

'But there are flashes of energy floating which could be either diverted or channelled in; that is the definition of mind in this case, the gullible energy which could be diverted into another situation or turned into a rightful one.' It's as though if you don't realise what is happening the situation gets worse and repeats at a lower level, as it were. But you still have the opportunity to understand what is going on, again, but if you don't understand what is going on still, again the situation is repeated at a lower level. *[Long Pause]*

'The possibility of freeing oneself into the Sambhogakaya level', that is the level at which the visions appear, 'of the five Tathagata realms depends on whether or not there is any attempt to go on playing the same game constantly', the same game seeming to mean this repetition of what is happening at ever lower levels so to speak. This he envisages as a sort of game that you go on playing. So entering or re-entering the luminosity, as he calls it, and then re-emerging on another level where the same problem is repeated in an even more radical form with an even greater degree of alienation from the real.

Sagaramati: And 'the same game' is really the reactive mind.

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: If it was the same pattern, then ...

S: Right, yes. But in a way it is a bit more than that. Say, after death you have, despite your reactive mind and despite the fact that the reactive mind has been predominant during your life-time, perhaps, you do have the experience of the clear light of the void. But you are not able to grasp it so you get the same sort of experience repeated at a lower level when you start having the visions of the peaceful divinities. But your reactive mind is still functioning so powerfully it rejects that too. So then again the same thing is repeated at a lower level, lower and lower, and eventually you start experiencing wrathful deities. Then the fact that you experience them as wrathful meaning or expressing your alienation from reality and therefore of course your, as it were, hostility to it. Or your increased alienation from reality and your increased sense therefore of hostility towards it. So that you feel that these are terrifying forms and you feel frightened by them. But even then you don't realise what is happening, perhaps, so again the whole thing is repeated at another lower level, and so it goes on until, of course, you are reborn. Or until at some level or other you realise what is happening and don't allow the reactive [228] mind to start up again, you definitely allow the **creative** mind to develop and then you are liberated on that particular level, or the level of that particular visionary experience.

But Trungpa's whole discussion seems on the whole rather confused, with periods or areas of relative clarity where he seems to be not only seeing things very clearly but expressing them very clearly. But anyway, none the less, you do get the general picture of what happens, at least in principle.

All right, let's go on.

At the same time as these vivid and colourful experiences, there is also the playing back of the six realms of the bardo experience. The perception of the six realms and the perception of the five Tathagatas are one state, but they have different styles. It seems that the perceiver of the Tathagatas, this kind of mind, has tremendous ability to keep the link between physical body and mind, very spontaneously. There is no division between the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body; they are both the same, so there is no conflict.

S: So again Trungpa brings in the physical body, but it's not really clear why he does this, or what is the meaning of saying the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body are the same, there is no division between them. But anyway let's leave that at least for the moment, and recur to: 'At the same time as these vivid and colourful experiences there is also the playing back of the six realms of the bardo experience. The perception of the six realms and the perception of the five Tathagatas are one state, but they have different styles.' This is perhaps rather extreme, or at least a little unskilful, if you see what I mean. Yes, ultimately

everything is non-dual, ultimately the klesas and the Bodhi are non-dual, ultimately the elements and the wisdoms are non-dual, ultimately samsara and Nirvana are non-dual, but you are not really concerned with that here, here you are concerned with choice. You are operating within a definitely dualistic framework. You are confronted with the manifestations of the creative mind, let us say, on the one hand in the form of the different Buddha realms, and the manifestations of the reactive mind on the other hand in the form of the six realms of sentient beings. And these are correlated - a Buddha world or a Buddha realm and a realm of sentient beings - you have to choose. And if you are unable to choose at the **higher** level you sink to a lower level and there the same pattern is repeated with the same opportunity of choosing. If you are unable to take advantage of that you sink to the next lowest level.

So, perhaps no doubt in the ultimate sense, yes, there is non-duality, but it doesn't seem really very useful to introduce it at this stage, or in this context. Do you see what I mean? 'At the same time as these vivid and colourful experiences,' that is to say of the five Buddha families, 'there is also the playing back of the six realms of the bardo experience. The perception of the six realms and the perception of the five Tathagatas are one state but they have different styles.' This seems to me really - what shall I say? - not exactly an understatement, [229] an underestimation of the importance of that difference as actually experienced. Do you see what I mean? The word style is far too weak here. This reminds me of something, the word style as used in the compound lifestyle. We sometimes say that the important thing is commitment, commitment is primary, lifestyle, i.e. the way in which you express that or the way of life in terms of which you express that commitment, is secondary. But how could this be misunderstood, so to speak?

Devamitra: It discounts the lifestyle altogether.

S: It discounts it. Yes, this is the word I was looking for I think, discounts. Trungpa discounts the difference between the reactive mind and the creative mind, the Buddha families and the six realms, and he discounts the difference on its own level, so to speak. You discount the importance of lifestyle, you suggest or seem to suggest it doesn't matter **how** you live, you can eat, drink, womanise, go to night clubs, cheat - as if to say if that's your lifestyle it doesn't matter, the important thing is commitment, lifestyle is secondary. It has sometimes seemed to me that sometimes people use the term lifestyle in this context, as when they say 'lifestyle is secondary, commitment is primary', in this way, they **distort** it in this way. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: It is the basis of a rationalisation, it would maybe have been more skilful if they didn't have that basis, for their own good.

S: Yes. So therefore what does one mean by this expression 'lifestyle'? Style, it's a sort of aesthetic mode, as if to say whether you wear jeans or whether you wear smartly pressed trousers or whether you wear a tee shirt or whether you wear a collar and tie, it doesn't matter, it's just a style. So life-style is something like that, supposedly, something relatively superficial and extraneous that doesn't really matter. But this is exactly what it is **not**. So the word style can be very misleading here in this context, lifestyle.

Someone says 'you don't seem to be expressing your commitment very well' and the reply is 'that's just my lifestyle, that's my lifestyle, I have got the right to my lifestyle just as you have got the right to your lifestyle. I'm no less committed than you are just because I have got a different lifestyle.' But this can be a complete rationalisation.

So similarly the difference between the five Buddha worlds and the six realms of sentient existence is not just a difference of **style!** Whether you're a Buddha or whether you're a being in hell is not just a difference of **style!** But this is what is being suggested here. Maybe the American environment and audience are to some extent responsible for **this** distortion, or this travesty, almost, of the truth and the relationship between admittedly relative truth and ultimate truth.

But there is this more mundane reflection of the same sort of misunderstanding in the matter that I have mentioned, the lifestyle. So to dwell a little more on this question of lifestyle first, what is the criterion of a valid lifestyle, so to speak?

Devamitra: That it helps you grow. [230]

S: That it helps you grow, that it really does help you grow. And this is the point that must be raised, the point that must be pressed if necessary. And I think maybe, I begin to feel more and more, that this word lifestyle is very unsatisfactory, it suggests a merely subjective preference without any particular ethical significance. Just like the type of shirt that you wear.

Devamitra: Actually, that is a particular rationalisation which is very difficult to get round.

S: How or why is this? Is it that people see a particular lifestyle, as they call it, as something that is all of one piece?

Devamitra: I think it's the reverse in a way, that they see your lifestyle as threatening. They have to, as it were, sink to the lower level of their lifestyle which they find comfortable. But they justify it by saying this is my way of doing things. But they only defend their lifestyle in terms of your lifestyle which they find threatening.

S: But perhaps also it's the result of an unreal distinction between commitment and lifestyle. Perhaps you make, to begin with, the commitment too abstract. 'Well, here's my commitment, yes, I am committed', theoretically of course commitment should find actual **expression** in lifestyle, but you don't look too closely into that, whether the commitment is actually being expressed in terms of that particular lifestyle - you sort of take it for granted. You are not actually earning your living by robbing banks, that should be good enough, as it were. 'The way in which I live is just the way in which I choose to live, it's just my personal preference, it isn't any more or less ethical or any more or less expressive of my commitment than anybody else's.' So if someone uses the word lifestyle in this sort of context he seems to suggest that his way of living is exempt from criticism.

One doesn't question that commitment may find expression in different lifestyles, one is actually questioning whether in fact it is a question of a commitment being expressed in terms of a particular lifestyle or whether it is not a question of someone not being very committed and therefore following or adopting a lifestyle which is in fact, in some ways at least, incompatible with any commitment.

But I think the word style almost invites misunderstanding, though I have used it myself occasionally in the past. I thought, reading some time ago, I think it was the back inside page of the Newsletter, I thought this really, in a way, invites misunderstanding. Though I think I used the expression myself, originally, commitment is primary and lifestyle is secondary. Though I know what I mean, but it is as though those who choose not to know what I mean have it made a bit easy for them.

Devamitra: On the other hand you've got to say something along those lines, because otherwise people would get really discouraged if they feel that there is only one way, or a limited way, of involving themselves in the spiritual life.

S: Right. I'm objecting more just to the word style and its implications. Just as I object to the word rôle, for much the same sort of reasons.

Devamitra: What's a suitable alternative in that case? [231]

Subhuti: The particular means whereby you express your commitment.

S: The particular way of life in which you **embody** your commitment.

Virabhadra: That implies that there definitely is, there would probably be a new lifestyle, or a new way of life, which will develop, as something which is being embodied.

S: Yes. But there seems to me a degree almost of alienation here as between the commitment and the lifestyle, you are in fact keeping them separate, and the commitment seems to become a bit abstract and a bit theoretical. Though the commitment is primary, the lifestyle secondary, the commitment doesn't exist **apart** from a lifestyle, because everybody's living in a certain way, and if he is committed presumably his commitment finds expression in the way in which he is living. You can't keep them as it were in watertight compartments, and claim to be committed **regardless** of your lifestyle.

Or perhaps you could say, if you want to use the expression lifestyle at all, make it clear that not all lifestyles are appropriate expressions of a spiritual commitment.

And just to take up this question of rôle for a few minutes, since it is connected here. Do you know what I mean when I say that I am not satisfied with this word rôle, or the way in which people use this? They use it in much the same way as they use lifestyle. What do you think I am getting at?

Sagaramati: When somebody is acting in a rôle they are doing something distinct from their own person.

S: Yes, and sometimes they try to exculpate themselves by claiming that something is a rôle when actually it is part of themselves. Or something that can be detached from them when actually **it is them** in a certain situation.

Sagaramati: A quality of them.

S: A quality of them, in fact. For instance, to mention again, I mentioned this morning, some of the women's lib people. They talk sometimes as though being a woman is a rôle that the individual adopts, or being a mother is just a rôle, completely detachable from your personality. But actually this is not so at all. That being a father is just a rôle. Well, no, if you are a father you are a father, you are not playing a rôle, you **are** a father. But to say 'I don't like playing the rôle of a father' when you have a child is ridiculous, because a father you are. So

here again you get a sort of alienation. So it's not as if a woman doesn't like to play the rôle of mother or the reverse of that, likes playing the rôle of mother, because she **is** mother or she is **not**. It's a factual matter, as it were, a direct expression of what you are.

Devamitra: It's quite a mechanical way of looking at things, actually, isn't it? It's like there are different parts fitting into a machine and you just slot in that particular part of yourself.

S: Someone says I am only giving a hypothetical instance not one I have actually heard. Supposing somebody says, 'I don't want to be chairman because I don't want to play a rôle.' Do you see what I mean? Well, you are not going to be asked to take [232] on the rôle of chairman, you are going to be asked to **be** the chairman, with all that that implies.

Some people look at being an Order member as some sort of rôle that you adopt, not that you **are** an Order member but it's a rôle that you adopt. Again alienation is implied.

Sagaramati: You put on a kesa and suddenly you [*unclear*]

S: Right, yes. It's the non-Order members more often than not who see things in this way, this is what I meant.

Sagaramati: Sometimes you do have to behave, as it were... well, be more conscious of other people in a sense.

S: But you are not any the less being yourself, or you are not acting a rôle even so. You are **being more conscious of other people**.

Sagaramati: Because you are being more of an Order member.

S: Not just being more of an Order member, being more **genuinely** an Order member. Not just acting your rôle a bit more skilfully, no.

Virabhadra: Usually there is some element of authoritarianism caught up with rôles. People feel put in rôles or have rôles thrust upon them.

S: Well, sometimes they do, but the fact that I am saying that these instances do not constitute adopting a rôle I am not saying that there are not occasions on which a rôle is not adopted perhaps inappropriately. If someone starts behaving towards you just as though they were your father and they are not, they are trying to put themselves into the rôle of father which is inappropriate. Sometimes people may do that, just because you look very young, or for some other reason. But if somebody **is** your father he is not adopting a rôle in **behaving** as your father. So it's as though people want to reduce functions and qualities of people, of individuals, to just rôles which they can detach themselves from. It's almost as though people don't want to accept the fact that you really realise and experience yourself in a certain situation and function in accordance with that.

So it's the same with the so-called lifestyle, the so-called style. The use of the word style suggests that it is all very innocent and a bit irrelevant and superficial, it doesn't matter - it's only a style, it's just the way you do things. Not that you are actually doing anything different, this is the whole point. That you are not just doing things in a different way, you are doing something different. You are not just expressing your commitment in a different way, in a different lifestyle, you are just not expressing your commitment at all, in fact you are expressing the opposite, perhaps. So you try to gloss over a difference of behaviour, a difference of contact by terming it just a difference of style, just a difference in the way of doing things.

So similarly here, Trungpa says 'the perception of the six realms and the perception of the five Tathagatas are one state but they have different styles.' As though the reactive mind and the creative mind are two different styles, it almost doesn't matter, just a matter of subjective preference which one you choose. Well this is really quite deplorable, actually; even accepting that ultimately they are non-dual. [233]

Subhuti: You find some people applying that sort of approach to the fact that you are a Buddhist. They think that's just your style, that's just your way.

S: Right, indeed. Well, not even your way, yes, your style, the way **in** which you do things not the way that you follow.

Virabhadra: I got quite angry with some of my old friends, I didn't express it to them but I felt quite angry towards them because that was the way that they responded to me. It seemed like they just thought, well, that's just something that he does, it's just something that he's taken on. They didn't, there was no..., I realised that they weren't seeing me at all, they weren't seeing here's Virabhadra who's committed himself, it was just like any other thing that you might do.

Anandajyoti: It's just what you, the old you, are now into.

Virabhadra: It seemed to be based on not seeing an individual.

S: Yes, you might just as well have been stamp collecting, they could have understood that more readily.

But sometimes we trivialise and superficialise - if I can use that expression - things by means of these sort of expressions, don't we? Even this sort of vulgarism, he's sort of into this or into that, that trivialises. Where did this wretched expression come from, did it come with the hippie cult? 'He's **into** religion, he's into spiritual life, he's into politics, he's into women'. It doesn't really say anything.

_____: That's its intention.

S: It trivialises.

Subhuti: A sort of reluctance to evaluate. No one thing has any greater value than any other.

S: A reluctance to evaluate, this is what it is, yes.

_____: It's all one.

Subhuti: Yes

Sagaramati: It doesn't matter what you are into.

S: Or you may say, 'He's really into things', vaguer still. It almost doesn't matter what he is into, he's just into things. 'He's the sort of person who really gets into things.'

Devamitra: Isn't it just an expression of a general sloppy usage of language?

S: Well, that among other things, yes indeed, a general imprecision of thought, a vagueness of attitude, a general reluctance to commit in any direction or to get really involved in anything or be devoted to anything.

One should certainly avoid using these sorts of expressions when writing articles for *Shabda* or The Newsletter, or for *Mitrata*. I took somebody up on a few slovenly expressions of this sort, didn't I? Was it you? In an article for *Mitrata*. It must have some other unfortunate contributor. [234] Maybe I took it up with the editor, it was somebody else's article, not his. I found three or four such expressions in an article which was intended for *Mitrata* and I saw to it they were cut out or rephrased. These things creep in if we are not careful, certainly in conversation.

Sagaramati: I think sometimes you do it so you don't sound too pedantic. They're a bit 'in'. Like Trungpa is full of in things in a way.

S: The trouble with in things is that they date so quickly and then you just start sounding, a few years later, really old-fashioned.

Devamitra: They are so meaningless in themselves, usually, that's the trouble. If you just fall completely a victim to clichés like that you express absolutely nothing.

S: They are just social noises, noises of mutual reassurance that you are into the same thing, you belong to the same sort of group, this is all that it means, really.

And if you won't play that game people get a bit uneasy. This is why they say nasty things about the FWBO, that we are exclusive and monolithic and all the rest of it. Because we won't play or we try not to play all these little games, we actually insist on saying we mean something different even when we use the same words. Or even sometimes insist on using different words.

Sagaramati: With that rôle thing it does put the responsibility on you as a Buddhist to actually manifest the fact that you **are** different, in a way. (**S:** Yes indeed.) If everybody thinks you are just like anybody else, well then ...

S: Show them that you are jolly well not.

Devamitra: But they're not going to see, they don't want to see. It happens at the Festival of Mind and Body.

Sagaramati: Just, you are hitch-hiking and somebody sees that you don't drink and you don't smoke, you just tell them why you don't.

S: Yes, if you don't look especially ascetic or puritanical, that helps. If you do look ascetic and puritanical you might have some difficulty in convincing them. At least look healthy and robust, at least look as though your arms are strong enough to **lift** a pint of beer [*Laughter*] even if you don't actually do it, at least you have got sufficient muscle to do that. A few of our Friends don't even seem to have that.

But also the idea that you shouldn't even **be** different, this is again almost a sort of capital offence in some circles - to be different. People say if you do this and if you do that it would make you look different, as though of course you would instantly agree that one certainly couldn't ever want to be different. As though that was a convincing argument for not doing something, because if you did it would make you different or look different, or worst of all be different. Maybe on second thoughts looking different is worst.

So to come back to what Trungpa actually said, this whole idea of the perception of the six realms and the perception of the [235] five Tathagatas being one state but they have different styles, this is really quite disastrous, quite catastrophic. It's like saying if you are leading a worldly life and doing all sorts of unskilful things they are not really unskilful, it's just a different style, just a different way of doing things. And the man who is meditating and the man who is trying to cultivate skilful thoughts, words and deeds, he is no better than you are, he has just got a different style. You are both essentially doing the same thing. That **might** be so in some very profound highly metaphysical sense, but that sort of sense has got no meaning within the context of spiritual life as we actually know it and experience it, whatever. It's a glorious let-out.... [**Tape 12**] ... for the hedonistic American - hedonistic Westerner in general. It's an aspect of egalitarianism, the reluctance to evaluate, the reluctance to order hierarchically, the reluctance to say that one thing is better than another, or even in extreme cases one way of life or even one person is better than another. Which is of course incompatible with any Going for Refuge, or with *kalyana mitrata*. I had extreme difficulty in the early days of the Friends, with some people, convincing them that the fact that there were different stages of the path implied that different people might be at different stages of the Path, which meant that different people might actually be further on than, and therefore superior to, certain other people. Some people were almost prepared to say that there were not different successive stages of the Path to avoid having people **on** different successive stages of the Path, and therefore the people who were on the later, higher stages being superior to those who were on the earlier, lower stages. It was as extreme as that, almost, in the very early days.

So the secular and the sacred, so to speak, the spiritual and the worldly, are not two different styles. They are two different paths going in completely opposite directions. So we really have to resist this. The way that the Friends do things, for instance, we don't do things in the way that we do just as a different style, we do them in the way that we do them because, mistakenly or not, we believe that this is the **best** way, certainly the best under the existing conditions and with the available facilities, the best way of doing things. The best way to do things, the best way to follow. Not just because we prefer this style and all other conceivable styles are equally valid. There are many *miccha-ditthis* entangled here.

Sagaramati: Though often we are doing, or following a certain way of doing, things without having tried other ways. Say with other Buddhist groups, some of them seem to think that we are elitist.

S: Well, I've tried them. I've had enough to do with them, and anyone who has any doubt about it can go up and see for themselves, I am quite happy that they should do that for themselves. Some, in a way, have, because sometimes five minutes is enough, you need only go along to one of their public meetings and sit in on it for five minutes and you know. The famous old saying, 'You don't need to eat the whole egg in order to know that it's bad', it really is like that. An intelligent person, or reasonably sensible person, sensitive person, can size up the situation very quickly. And it isn't a case of not giving them a fair chance; what you actually see, what you actually experience **is** so bad that it could not possibly [236] be as bad as that and compatible with anything else or very much else which could be very good. For instance, if you go into a church and if you hear someone thundering forth that all sinners will burn in hell for ever you don't need to go any further than that. [*Laughter*] That sort of belief, that sort of doctrine, that sort of teaching could not co-exist with anything of a very genuine nature. The fact that that teaching was there would invalidate, it would **poison** other teachings, other doctrines. So when you go along to a Buddhist meeting and you see all around you miserable, emaciated, haggard, alienated, pale, pasty, puffy, self-opinionated people, you don't need to spend another minute there. [*Laughter*] You know that there is no future there for you. And I spent years with [*Laughter*] people of this sort. You can tell the way that they look at you, the way that they say certain words. You can tell in an instant, if you are a bit sensitive or perceptive.

Devamitra: I think actually there is also an assumption on the part of some people involved in other Buddhist groups that people in the Friends and even in the Order haven't actually had a taste of other things. Which actually is not the case.

S: Yes, I mean many have. For instance Vajradaka spent months in a Zen monastery in Japan.

Devamitra: Subhuti and I suffered a whole week at the Buddhist Society summer school once.

S: And refused to go again!

Devamitra: They wouldn't have us again actually!

Sagaramati: I had a go at the Buddhist Society for two weeks - two nights.

Devamitra: But I mean, I know quite a lot of people have actually looked around quite a bit before they come to the Friends and they make their choice.

S: Well a few years ago you **had** to because the Friends were small, hardly known and very difficult to find. It's not quite like that now, but even so it isn't a household word, exactly, yet, and there are even people who are quite sincerely interested in Buddhism and the spiritual life and who may look around for months or even years before hearing about the FWBO, depending on where they live, of course. So quite a few people have done quite a bit of shopping around first. Again others haven't and it's likely that they haven't needed to.

But I think one shouldn't hesitate to give expression to one's genuine conviction. You can say 'I may be right or may be wrong, if you like you can argue it out with me but this is actually what I think, this is why I am associated with this particular Movement and why I belong to it and why I am committed to it. And I don't believe that we are just doing the same thing in a slightly different way, I believe we are on a more radically different path and it would be better if you too were be on that path, actually, if you could but see it.'

And they seem to believe very often that there is this view that all these different ways of doing things are merely different [237] ways, different styles, and it doesn't matter, there's no substantive difference between them all. They seem to believe that this sort of attitude is expressive of tolerance and if you don't subscribe to that you are **intolerant**. Which is extraordinary. This wasn't the Buddha's view. Buddhism is tolerant in the sense of permitting, even encouraging everybody to follow his own genuine path, to find out things for himself and not to coerce anybody. But the Buddha didn't say that the six Tirthaka teachers of his time were saying substantially the same thing that he told but their style was simply a bit different. He roundly condemned them as mistaken and wrong, and as teaching *miccha-ditthis*. So we have got very good precedents if we need precedents. So we don't want to go from the extreme of Christian **intolerance** to the extreme of this pseudo-liberal, **pseudo-tolerance**. And we are quite happy to recognise whatever is good or worth while in other movements, other traditions, other cultures, we are very happy to do that, and we do it on occasion. But we insist none the less on not permitting anyone to interpret as a difference of mere style what is in fact a radical difference of approach and belief and conviction.

Anyway, that really brings us to tea-time.

Subhuti: The question of the unity of Buddhism, that there is an assumption that Buddhism presents a number of different alternative paths which are in a sense exclusive of each other. But in fact your position is quite different to that, that there is in a sense one Buddhism.

S: I think, one could have said something for this alternative paths theory in the old days when different Buddhist traditions were geographically isolated and they had no knowledge of one another. They then were just... say Zen was just Buddhism for people in contact with it in Japan. Theravada was just Buddhism. They didn't think of it as one path **among many**. But nowadays when one is in contact with all these different historical forms of Buddhism it's almost a matter of intellectual honesty not to take up one, ignoring all the others. There is also the whole question for us in the West of whether we can in fact adopt or follow an Eastern form of Buddhism wholesale. It might still be possible for some people in some parts of the East just to follow the form of Buddhism which is best known in their area, that may be a quite valid procedure for them, though it's becoming less and less so for those who have got any sort of Western education, even in those countries, and who therefore start asking the sort of questions that people ask in the West. I know from some of my own contacts that there are, say, Malaysian Buddhists who find orthodox Chinese Buddhism as practised in Malaysia, within the Chinese community, quite unacceptable; and they find something like the FWBO much more intelligible and much more acceptable.

Subhuti: It seems to be the assumption that all the different schools are different techniques, it seems to be a reflection of technique, as it were.

S: That's true, that is true, yes.

Subhuti: They are just different techniques that you can select rather than something that has to be lived in a given context. [238]

S: Right, indeed. And also, it seems to smack of the demarcation of spheres of influence. If you don't pinch my disciples I won't pinch yours. So you have to have a sort of agreement that you are all actually doing more or less the same thing, it's just a different style, again. Not that you really believe that your path is the right one. Well, some in fact do believe that, say some of the Zen people well, fair enough if they really believe that. One might believe that they are mistaken but one is in a position then to discuss it with them, if they are open to discussing it. Just as we are quite willing to discuss why we think our particular approach, not as in the sense

of one approach among many, but why we think in a way our approach is **the** approach, not just **an** approach. We are quite willing to discuss that with people. The Zen people often adopt a quite narrow, quite rigid, attitude but are not willing to discuss it.

So it's a bit like different gurus just agreeing not to get in one another's way, and even a bit of mutual back-scratching goes on because they are all into the same game, as it were. No one ever criticises [*unclear*] this is something that, a point that Theodore Roszak makes, I think I mentioned this, when he writes about all these big festivals in the States, the sort of festivals they have been having of which our own London Festival of Mind and Body was a small imitation. He said the one thing that was lacking was criticism, nobody ever criticises anybody else. But of course how **can** they? Dog doesn't bite dog, it's like that. Because if you start criticising one another where do you end up? So you all have to sort of be on at least distantly polite terms and not say anything against anybody else, because what you say against others could well be applied, perhaps, to you. You are all living in glass houses so how can any of you afford to throw stones? It's a bit like that. You can only afford to throw the odd stone if you really are convinced that your house is not made of glass, then you don't mind the odd stone or two coming back.

Devamitra: It's going to be very interesting to see if there is any response or reaction to the next issue of The Newsletter because it includes three very critical articles about outside events and groups.

S: Good.

Subhuti: I think it might not be a bad idea if there was an article fairly soon on the FWBO and Buddhism at large and our attitude to these different groups in this country.

S: Have you heard my second New Zealand lecture? (**Subhuti:** No, I haven't.) It covers pretty much this ground, because it is called *Western Buddhists and Eastern Buddhism*. You should listen to it, all of you, the whole **series!**.

This was the most popular of the three lectures, it got quite a warm response.

Subhuti: Well, some people are bound to react, but many will appreciate it clearing the ground.

S: I think almost unanimously the people in Auckland, many of whom were not regular Friends, appreciated this. They appreciated, I think, most of all my emphasis on more the indigenous approach, and Buddhism, following the Buddhist path, not meaning the effort to take on in an artificial way a foreign culture. One shouldn't of course allow this, again, to be used as a rationalisation for not really following the Buddhist path at all, that is the opposite extreme. [239] Still that's not one that we are especially exposed to, really. [*Pause*]

Sagaramati: In these experiences, do you actually experience any of the six realms? It says here 'the playing back of the six realms of the bardo experience.'

S: The actual text speaks of the dull ray of light coming from that realm. It's as though if you follow that ray of light you arrive at that realm. But perhaps we shouldn't take that too literally. In a sense the ray of light is the realm, it represents a certain possibility just as the realm itself does. And the more brilliant light ray coming from the appropriate Buddha world will represent that Buddha world itself, is an extension of that, an emanation of that. So it's as though we get a sort of glimpse or experience even though at a distance, at a remove, and that is expressed in terms of the light ray.

What about this, 'There is no division between the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body, they are both the same so there is no conflict'? Do you think the expression 'the spirituality of the body' has or can have any meaning at all? Because this sort of phraseology is quite common and is connected with all sorts of misunderstandings. Can you even speak of the spirituality of the mind? Let's take it in its more extreme form, 'the spirituality of the body', taking that phrase quite literally what could it mean, could it mean anything?

Devamitra: It could suggest a certain belief in the validity, say, of ritual bodily purifications.

S: Yes, but does the body literally become **spiritual**? Just go back a bit, 'It seems that the perceiver of the Tathagatas, this kind of mind, has tremendous ability to keep the link between physical body and mind, very spontaneously. There is no division between the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body, they are both the same so there is no conflict.' You could say that it means in a more ultimate sense that body and mind, in a manner of speaking, are both possibilities within the one mind. So it is in a sense the one mind keeping in touch with them both, but he doesn't quite say that, does he?

Virabhadra: Could he be referring to everyday experiences rather than the actual after-death experience?

S: Could be, but still what does one mean by spirituality of the body? Perhaps it does suggest a sort of pseudo-sacramental attitude towards the body, or even a sentimental attitude, 'the body too is sacred, the body

too is holy', so what you do with the body is also a spiritual activity. Well, it could be, but not that that makes the body itself spiritual, but the body is spiritualised by becoming the vehicle of a spiritual attitude. But this says, 'the spirituality of the body'.

Subhuti: Is there a relationship between the spirituality of the mind and the five Buddhas, and the spirituality of the body and the six realms? Is that what he is implying?

S: Possibly.

Subhuti: I don't see how he gets the spirituality, but is that the basis of the distinction? [240]

S: It could well be, and as I said earlier, in the ultimate sense yes, non-duality, surely.

_____: Do you think he might be getting at the fact that traditionally the Buddha's body was affected by the fact that he was Enlightened, he had traditionally 32 marks?

S: Yes, but this is an expression of something as it were mental, the body itself is not spiritual. But there does seem to be a - well, line of thought is perhaps too precise an expression - but a sort of mood or attitude that the body itself is spiritual. And this seems to come up in connection with a sentimental attitude towards sex, as it were; that sex can be spiritualised or even itself **be** a spiritual activity. It seems to be leaning in that sort of direction. You don't want to exclude any bodily activity, don't want to say that it isn't very spiritual, so in a way you pre-empt discussion by speaking of the spirituality of the body. It may of course be that just his phraseology here is very clumsy, it could be simply that and it isn't really intending to suggest what I suspect he suggests.

Sagaramati: Even the previous sentence doesn't really make much sense here.

S: But in a sense of course there is a single mind sort of playing back and forth between the transcendental and the mundane, the Buddha realms and the realms of sentient existence. So there is a sort of connecting link, but it is a mind, it's not a body. So in that sense, yes, in a deep sense the creative and the reactive, the Buddha worlds and the worlds of sentient existence are possibilities within, in a sense, one and the same mind, in a manner of speaking.

But the language, at the very least, is very clumsy. And also one is a bit suspicious because of his previous things about the perception of the six realms and the perception of the five Tathagatas are one state but they have different styles. This makes one suspicious of what follows. As though the radical difference between the reactive and the creative, so to speak, the samsaric and the Nirvanic, is not being recognised on its own level, it is being played down in the interests of a pseudo-universalist approach.

I get the impression that in America those aspects of Buddhism which seem to justify the ordinary, as it were hedonistic, American way of life have been avidly seized upon. For instance Zen sayings like, 'how wonderful and how miraculous, I draw water, I chop fuel!' well, how wonderful and how miraculous, I drive my car and drink beer, etc., etc.

Perhaps Trungpa is just very clumsy in his expression. One could say that ultimately there is no distinction between the spiritual nature of what we call body and the spiritual nature of what we call mind. But he does say the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body, which suggests the spirituality of the mind **as mind** and the spirituality of the body **as body** in the ordinary sense of those terms. But in a way it isn't surprising if, as one hears, sometimes during Trungpa's talks and seminars there are young men and young women sitting at the back in each other's arms and happily canoodling all the time! Which doesn't, I need hardly remind you, take place at our seminars! [Laughter] [Pause] Not that I would necessarily be against it if it could take place in a genuinely Tantric way, but not in a pseudo-Tantric way which is only a justification for straightforward American materialism [241] and hedonism. You have to get a really good burning ground first.

All right, let's carry on with the next paragraph.

The book says that the first time you awaken from the unconscious absorption in the body, you have a visual experience, minute and precise and clear, luminous and terrifying, rather like seeing a mirage in a spring field, and also you hear a sound which is like a thousand thunders roaring simultaneously. In the mental state there is a looseness and detached feeling, while at the same time overloaded with intelligence, as though the person had a head without a body, a gigantic head floating in space. So the actual visual experience of this bardo state, the preparation for perceiving the visions of the Tathagatas, is clear and intelligent and luminous, but at the same time intangible, not knowing where you are exactly; and that sensual experience is also happening in the audible sphere, a deep sound roaring in the background, earthshaking, but at the same time there is nothing to vibrate. Similar experiences can also

happen in life, although the absence of a physical body makes the bardo experience more clear and more hallucinatory. In a life situation there is not the extreme aspect of the mirage, but there is a basically desolate quality, loneliness and flickering, when the person begins to realise that there is no background area to relate to as ego. That sudden glimpse of egolessness brings a kind of shakiness.

S: This is reasonably clear. There is a key sentence here I think, let me try to find it. 'So the actual visual experience of this bardo state, the preparation for perceiving the visions of the Tathagatas, is clear and intelligent and luminous, but at the same intangible, not knowing where you are exactly.' Do you see what he means? Is there any familiar analogy in one's ordinary experience?

_____ : When you wake up in a strange bed.

S: Yes, that's probably quite good, yes. Because a strange bed means a strange room, a strange house, you don't really quite know where you are. Yes, maybe things are bright, the sun is shining through the window but for a minute you just don't know where you are. That is probably quite a good analogy. You're not quite sure what you're going to see, who you are going to see, it's a strange bed, strange place. And then of course a friendly person comes in with a cup of tea and you think, 'Ah, I'm at Grdhrakuta or I am at Heruka', or some other centre. 'Oh yes, I arrived here last night, it all comes back.'

But there is something very interesting here in that, 'In the mental state there is a lucidness and detached feeling but at the same time overloaded with intelligence as though the person has a head without a body, a gigantic head floating in space.' That's really quite interesting, isn't it? - quite graphic. [242] It reminded me a little bit of dragon's head, snake's body. It's as though that could be some people's actual experience after death, in the bardo state, of being a gigantic head floating in space. Again I remember in this connection in the life of Vivekananda he is said to have been given, as it were, an experience by his master Shri Ramakrishna, a sort of *samadhi*, experience in which he continued to experience his head, he was conscious of his head but was not any longer conscious of his body, so therefore it did feel as though he was just a head floating in space. And you can have experiences like this, because just in the same way as it is possible to withdraw consciousness totally from the physical body and get, as it were, outside the body, even literally in a manner of speaking, so it is possible to withdraw consciousness from one part of the body and not from another. And it would seem that that part of the body from which consciousness is last withdrawn, in a sense from which it is most difficult to withdraw consciousness, is the head. So in a way it is not an unfamiliar, not an unexpected experience, that one should be in the bardo state just experiencing oneself as a gigantic head, not to say gigantic brain, floating in the void. It's as though you feel that a lot of people are like this already in life. It's as though there is this head with a limp, lifeless body dangling from it, just moving about, the head is floating as it were, almost like a kite, with the body as a sort of tail. Do you see what I mean? There's this alienated, almost disembodied intelligence well, after death the intelligence does become disembodied. So some of us, if we are not careful, we might wake up like this. Or a gigantic pair of claws, floating in space. I had better not continue the possibilities, but you see what I mean. [Laughter] But the head is the likeliest possibility. Or a great pair of gnashing jaws just floating around, or a gigantic flapping ear, or a gigantic open mouth, floating around in space.

Sagaramati: You mean these images would correspond to some experience in the ...?

S: Correspond presumably to the nature of one's dominant experience or dominant self-experience. It's pretty obvious if someone wakes up, so to speak, in the bardo, experiencing themselves just as a gigantic head, it's pretty obvious what sort of person they are or have been. So that is quite interesting, isn't it?

'Overloaded with intelligence', that's quite a good expression.

Anandajyoti: I certainly..., some years ago when I started sitting, once how I felt really strongly just being a gigantic head, it was a very vivid experience. It was as though I could just feel the feeling of my skull as if it was just sitting there on the cushion with little limbs dangling, and it reminded me very strongly of dreams I used to have when I was young, very abstract dreams which were just dreams of a particular part of the body, a kinaesthetic part.

S: Well, maybe you just need to get into your body more, as they say.

Anandajyoti: That was a few years ago and it was quite interesting. [243]

Devamitra: So following on from what you said in the group we had a few weeks ago, somebody who is integrated would in fact presumably experience himself in the bardo as a body.

S: As a complete body, yes. Don't take body too literally, body is not necessarily physical body. I think this is a quite important point. Did you understand quite what I mean, that body is not just physical body? You can have a total body experience even though you've no experience of the physical body. This is what is called,

let's say, the subtle body. Has anybody got any sort of experience of this kind of thing, do you know what I mean?

Devamitra: The only parallel or analogy I can think of is sometimes when we sit in meditation you feel as if your spine has suddenly become very straight and a rush of energy. Would that be something?

S: It could be something to do with that, but I'll give you a little example from my own experience, some of you must have heard this before but never mind. Some of you know that some years ago I was induced to have acupuncture. This must have been at the beginning of 1965, just a few months after my return from India for the first time. Some of the people I was then in contact with at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara believed in acupuncture, and they persuaded me to go and see an acupuncturist. There's a bit of a history behind this but I won't go into it now. Anyway, I went along and didn't do much the first time but suggested that I should come along again because there was something wrong with my heart and that since it was the heart the treatment should be given in the hot weather. So I went along and it must have been June or July. And he gave me just one prick in this left ring finger, and the instant the needle entered I felt a great wave of energy rush up this arm and it smote my brain as it were all in a flash and it knocked me out of the physical body, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? And my experience was this, there was I, about twenty to thirty feet out of the physical body to one side, just up here on the right as it were, looking down on it all. And I could see my physical body and I could see the acupuncturist frantically massaging my legs and apparently by doing this he was trying to bring me back. And he afterwards told a friend of ours that for about thirty-five minutes, I think it was, he said my heart had stopped and I was technically dead. I was simply up there, as it were, some twenty, thirty feet away just calmly looking down on it all, with no emotional disturbance or anything like that **at all**, totally absent, not even a thought of it. I think this is quite common in that sort of state, just looking. But, and this is the point I want to make in this connection, it was as though I had a physical body. It was not that I was a **disembodied** spirit, I had a body, but it was so to speak a subtle body which is just like the ordinary one. So it would seem that this is the body in which you go through the bardo experiences, this is my assumption. So that you can have a body experience without having a **physical** body. We usually think in terms of the mind or the soul, the consciousness being dissociated from the body and then becoming disembodied, but actually it doesn't seem to be like that at all. I have had other similar such experiences, though not quite as dramatic as this one. So it's as though even when you are disembodied, well, certainly as in the after-death state, you do have a body, but a subtle body. It is, apparently, another level at which consciousness is dissociated from even this subtle body, but it is as though there is a still more subtle body with which it is associated and then of course a state [244] in which it is not associated even with any body, however subtle. The Buddha once said, according to the Pali scriptures, 'O Monks, I do not teach the Dharma for the sake of the acquisition of any body, however subtle, but for the non-acquisition of any body whatsoever.' And this is the sort of thing that he was talking about.

Subhuti: Does that correspond with *rupaloka* and *arupaloka*?

S: It would seem to, yes. Though I don't think the *rupaloka* is quite the same thing as this body in which you find yourself in this sort of state. I rather suspect that that is a still more subtle body.

_____: Can it be helpful to conceive of the spiritual life as the development of these subtle bodies, or is that necessary?

S: I think it can be helpful, otherwise you give the impression of something disembodied, as it were, and intangible, and abstract. Because people tend to think of it as, say, abstract in the sort of mental sense, it all becomes sort of mentalised or conceptualised, and becomes then a bit sort of anaemic and in the head. So sometimes you have to make it a bit more solid, even a bit more gross to retain that feeling of concreteness.

So I have a - I won't say theory because it is more than that - that mind and body are always present. You never have mind without body, but it is always a very subtle body, or it may be a very subtle body. But body doesn't mean just three-dimensional physical configuration - you can have a total body experience without the physical body being actually there. This is the point I'm getting at. In that sense you can have a spiritual body. You have on the spiritual level something analogous to your bodily experience on the physical level. It is not a **disembodied** in the sense of abstract experience, there is an element of concreteness there which is indicated by the word body in this more as it were metaphorical sense.

Sagaramati: What's the difference, then, between being and body? In the sense that you once said that you cannot have Enlightenment without a being who is Enlightened. So does that mean you can have beings who won't have a body?

S: Well, their bodies are, as it were, inconceivable. You could say that the whole of the existence is their body. This is sometimes said. Some forms of Buddhist tradition do say this, for instance some of the Far Eastern forms of Buddhism, mostly the Hua yen and the Kigon schools say this sort of thing. But I think you have to be very careful about this because if you don't phrase it carefully it ends up sounding a bit like quite ordinary pantheism, but, no, it is not like that. But in a manner of speaking you could say, yes, there is perhaps a stage at which the whole universe is your body, not just the physical world but the whole of conditioned existence,

in a sense. But again one must be very careful to avoid pantheism or substantialism and so on, I think it could be phrased better than that. I am not quite sure at the moment just how that could be done. But you see the general principle involved?

The body here represents that element of concreteness, so to speak, that you are not concerned with something abstract and merely conceptual. So you can have a body even if you don't have a physical body, and a body experience even though you don't have a physical body. So you feel in the bardo, in a way, exactly as you feel during life. [245]

Devamitra: Would the body be something you would necessarily see, or would there be experience without actually being visible?

S: It's visible, it's visible in the light, so to speak, of the *akasa*. It's visible, it's a body, you can be seen with subtle senses, heard with subtle ears and so on.

Devamitra: Would that mean that somebody not actually in the bardo state, but maybe in tune with those senses, would actually see such bodies?

S: Oh yes, or sort of sense. Again I have had this sort of experience a number of times. It's quite strange, you can actually perceive somebody present without actually seeing or hearing with the physical senses. It is really quite extraordinary. It's a very vivid experience, it is at least as vivid as actually meeting somebody in the flesh, so to speak. But you don't actually see or hear anything with the physical, nor is there even an analogous experience of a subtle nature. But the person **is there**, most vividly, and it is definitely them and it is not anybody else. And they are in a particular place even, which is really strange because there is nothing, there is no physical body, but actually they are in a particular place. Or at least that is your experience, you experience them as being in a particular place, so that is the only way you can express it.

So supposing during your bodily life you are not very much in touch with your body as distinct from your head, well, it could well be that in the bardo your head is your body. Because even during this life itself, in a sense technically you have a body but psychologically you are not really experiencing it.

So when you are in the bardo state you could be just experiencing your head blown up to gigantic size, because that's all that you were, you didn't in fact have a body, though you appeared to have a body, even when you were alive on earth.

_____: Yes, I am finding it very helpful, modifying my views on yoga somewhat!

S: In what way? Say more.

_____: It's almost as though I conceived of the after-death experience as just qualities vaguely spinning off into space, qualities of *metta*, awareness, things of this sort, totally divorced from any bodily considerations. So attention to one's body in this life was superfluous. One could get on to developing these higher qualities, let's say *metta* and mindfulness, but it's almost as though what we are saying here is that to be completely integrated body considerations must be taken into account because they will ...

S: As you develop positive, let's say spiritual, qualities you are as it were modifying your subtle body, do you see what I mean?

_____: The whole of it?

S: You are building up a still more refined, sort of **radiant** body, this is the general tradition. [246]

Anandajyoti: What you are saying is that you don't actually have to use physical means to get in touch with the..., to be psychologically in touch with your body. (**S:** No.) For some people maybe it's quite useful, and maybe you do have to.

S: Well, I'm using the word body in a more general sense. If you want to improve the condition of your physical body you have to have recourse to physical means. But it's as though if you want to improve the condition of your, let's say, spiritual body, or mental body - the body in which you exist in the bardo - you have to have recourse to psychological or spiritual means. You see what I mean? Certainly there is an analogy and I think that helps to give concreteness and positiveness to the whole thing. You work, in a way, on your subtle body quite as literally and realistically as the hatha yogi works on his physical body, or as the body builder works on his physical body.

Anandajyoti: Those who are hatha yogis just become precious about their physical body and don't sort of recognise (**S:** Yes.) that in fact the long-term development is the development of the subtle body.

S: Indeed. Just the same with the physical culturist, the weight lifter, the body builder, and so on, the weight watcher even. The health and beauty boys and girls.

Anandajyoti: Traditionally hatha yoga is only part of a series of practices, but some people did isolate it and forget that there was anything else.

S: And this of course happens to begin with in India itself. It wasn't just a Western development by any means. If you look at, if you go through Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* there's just a few **words** covering all the things that are done under the heading of Yoga in the West, only a few **words** in the total text, all the other words deal with quite different and considerably more advanced and more as it were psychological and meditative things.

Sagaramati: I remember doing yoga in dreams and I certainly can do a lot more things in there than I can in my physical body, without a doubt. *[Laughter]*

S: Well, perhaps your mental body is very elastic.

Sagaramati: I feel the physical one is a bit weighty. But with yoga you feel like you know what you should do but your physical body just won't do it. You feel that there is another sort of intelligence that knows, but your physical body because of its condition now just won't do it.

S: So one could summarise by saying the sense of body-hood is not necessarily associated with the physical body. The Theosophists speak of different bodies at different levels, but this has been taken from Hindu-Buddhist tradition. It does in a way give greater concreteness and reality, in a way, if you can speak at least sometimes, or from a certain point of view, of the spiritual life as building up these more subtle bodies on more subtle levels as a means of access to, a means of living and working in or on, these higher more subtle planes. This is a way of looking at it, that when you are practising *metta* and [247] when you are developing other positive qualities, you are building up a sort of mental-cum-spiritual body at a higher level, by means of which you experience a higher level of reality, or by means of which you live in a higher world.

Anandajyoti: That's also good because when one practises morality, ethical behaviour, you almost see it as storing up something for future life, in fact you don't really conceive of it as actually doing anything here and now.

S: And it's not just treasure, it's **you, you** are the treasure.

Subhuti: Whatever happens you get a subtle body after you die, don't you? (**S:** Yes.) It's not a question of building it up, it's going to be there?

S: Yes. I was speaking of building it up in the more spiritual sense. It's not so much a question of building up as beautifying it and adorning it, or even shaping it.

Anandajyoti: But the distinction I was making is the realisation that you've got the subtle body now which you can work on rather than getting it when you die.

S: Yes, it is more malleable. Yes, you've got it now. And in a way, again, the physical body is modelled in accordance with the subtle body, to begin with. It is the subtle body hovering, as it were, if you like to use that expression, which provides the person in accordance with which the molecules which constitute the physical body shape themselves. This is the traditional view, which is beginning to be considered at least by some people, scientifically. Though of course we get a little bit beyond strict science here, or at least perhaps I should say orthodox science, because science too has its orthodoxies.

Sagaramati: There are some mental events in the Theravadin Abhidharma, that talk about the malleability of the body of mental events and the plasticity.

S: Malleability, yes.

Sagaramati: But the word *kaya* is actually mentioned in those, I don't know whether they refer to...

S: Ah yes, here *kaya* is used as aggregate. The malleability of the aggregate of those particular mental events. This is a difference between the subtle body and the gross physical body; the subtle body is much more malleable, it's much more plastic, you can shape it much more easily; you can stretch it out into all sorts of horrifying shapes or mould it into all sorts of beautiful shapes.

Sagaramati: Can you fly with it?

S: Yes, you can have the **experience** of flying in it. This is connected with the so-called astral projection. I don't want to get into these pseudo or semi-occult things too much. But I did have a couple of..., well I had a

student at Yale who had a brother and these two, both brothers, were able, so they told me, to project their astral bodies and they regularly communicated with one another usually by moving objects [248] on one another's desks. And they were conscious of doing this, they could consciously project their astral bodies and hover over the other brother, each of them could do this, and move about things on his desk to attract his attention. And the brother who was my student told me that they regularly did this. And I knew him reasonably well, I had no reason to doubt him, though I never asked for an actual demonstration. But the way he told me I felt he was absolutely speaking the truth.

Subhuti: [*Unclear name*] said that he was able to have an out-of-the-body experience at will. He was a bit worried about it.

S: Yes, I think he mentioned this to me some time ago. But some people do have these sort of experiences, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes at will.

Some traditions say one must distinguish between the astral body and the subtle body, or astral body and etheric body. I won't go into that now, but no doubt perhaps one shouldn't even literally think of different bodies sort of strung out, definitely marked off one from another. It's more like a body experience, as we may call it, at higher and higher levels. [*Pause*] And not all these body experiences need be associated with a physical body, this is the important point. So you can feel embodied even though the physical body is not there. You don't feel that you are a disembodied spirit, you don't feel that at all, you feel exactly as you feel now with a physical body except that the bodily experience is not a physical one. But from within, as it were, it feels exactly the same. Except this body is different, it is more malleable, more plastic, it's not so bound, it's not so limited, you can do more with it.

_____: I think a lot of Theosophists and scriptures just gain reassurance from the existence of astral and subtle bodies. (**S:** Right, yes.) That there is something beyond the grave, so to speak.

S: Indeed, yes. Because they don't want to die.

_____: And they don't use that as a basis for any form of change.

_____: So presumably the subtle body could become as fixed and static as your worldly existence on its own level.

S: Yes. You could have a sort of arthritis of the psychical arteries. Well, what Trungpa says about the gigantic head floating in space gives you some idea of the sort of thing that could happen. You could have an experience of yourself as being like a skeleton.

_____: Like a horse.

Sagaramati: Even the experience of other people can be quite different to their actual physical body. (**S:** Yes.) You were talking about this.

S: Say more.

Sagaramati: Well you were talking about..., you might feel somebody as being big whereas in actual fact physically they may be smaller than you are. That sort of thing. [249]

S: That's true.

Virabhadra: It's quite noticeable that people get bigger with meditation.

S: In what sort of way?

Virabhadra: They feel larger.

Sagaramati: What, after they have meditated?

Virabhadra: Yes.

S: Well, sometimes if they have been meditating properly they do sit up more, they do sit up better.

Virabhadra: I was thinking of, say, somebody who comes to a class, you may see them when they first come along and you don't see them for a few weeks and then you see them again and they have just got, somehow they look bigger. Maybe they are just a bit more aware of their body and carry themselves taller or something. I have noticed that on a number of occasions, people whom I have thought of as quite small I see again and they are quite big.

_____: There is this fact that if you hold your spine straight then all the weight goes on it, with the pressure it grows. I was watching this programme once with James Burke or something.

Sagaramati: We ought to measure people.

S: But also as you get older doesn't the gristly stuff in between the bones of the spinal column get thinner so the bones occupy less space vertically so that you become shorter?

Virabhadra: That's right.

_____: Were you meaning that sort of thing, Sagaramati, or maybe you just feel that is in - I shouldn't say just feel - but you sense that someone's body or their presence very differently?

Sagaramati: Their presence might be different from how they objectively physically are.

Devamitra: The thing actually extended because I said that I was amazed to discover, for instance, that I am one and a half inches shorter than Sagaramati. My experience of my height in relation to Sagaramati is that I am bigger than him. *[Laughter]*

Sagaramati: It's not **my** experience!

S: That is interesting.

_____: It's a question of perception, isn't it, rather than ...

Devamitra: Well, it's definitely a physical thing. I suppose I'm not very big physically but I feel as if I **am** big physically.

S: Well, some people say you are just clumsy! *[Laughter]* [250]

Virabhadra: It's like the small dog that goes snapping at an Alsatian, it thinks that it is big but it appears not to be.

S: But there is another factor to be taken into consideration, though again we border on the occult and I am usually quite reluctant to do that, but there is the question of aura. If you are self-confident it is said that the aura expands or becomes positive and more radiant, and you can affect people unconsciously, they being unconscious, through this, or by this means. So they don't only experience you in terms of your physical body, but in terms of your aura, even you could say in terms of your **subtle** body. So it could be, not that you are clumsy but that you have an unusually positive and extensive aura, do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: You'd better watch out because women pick up on that!

S: You mean the general bigness, expansiveness?

Sagaramati: Well, it's like off a retreat, you are a lot more confident and feel a lot bigger in a sense, and they do notice.

S: Well, everybody notices, I think, but the thing is that women notice in a particular way or rather perhaps that a woman's noticing has certain implications that a man's usually doesn't. I think one could make that point, that when men come off retreat they should be particularly careful in this respect. That they do often come off in a very positive and quite radiant mood and even looking like that, and looking in a sense quite attractive, and perhaps they haven't been around their centre for a couple of weeks, they've been missed by everybody, and when they walk in they are made very welcome, people are glad to see them, and perhaps in some cases the women do latch on to them, in some cases, in a particular way. So one must remain aware of that. Or even after a meditation session, the same sort of thing has been known to happen.

But the general discussion points to the need, perhaps, of finding alternative means of expression, or certain alternative modes of conveying certain facts of spiritual life. The sort of building up, or improvement, or decorating and beautifying of one's subtle body, so to speak. That is a way of speaking about the whole thing which would appeal to some people, presumably. The nourishing, strengthening and beautifying your subtle body. You don't want it to appear like the picture of Dorian Gray, do you? But here again that might be a sort of allegory of that kind of thing. *[Pause]*

_____: It ties in with the whole idea of creation. (**S:** Yes indeed.) Quite important.

_____: One's life is a process of creation.

S: If not on one level, well, certainly on another.

_____: Developing skilfulness, where avoiding unskilfulness can be a bit dry. (**S:** Yes.)

S: It's a quite interesting thought, if people's physical bodies were suddenly whipped away what would one see, would one see a gigantic head floating around in empty space, or an [251] enormous pair of hands, or what would one see? Or someone that one had thought of as very big a little tiny pygmy-like figure floating around, or vice-versa.

Sagaramati: It would also make sense of some experiences during meditation. When you feel energy in your physical body.

S: Yes.

_____: Sorry, I am jumping now, but there is no age given to this body, presumably the subtle body, so is this the link up with the sixteen year-old-youth, that one would appear as it were in an ideal age? Or one could appear old if one was say crotchety in this life?

S: Well, put it this way, the subtle body, again perhaps I am just ignoring a distinction which is sometimes made with subtle body and let's say astral body or etheric body, but leave that aside, it's a question of terminology also. But this subtle body is of course impermanent as all conditioned things are, as all compounded things are, but it is long-lived so to speak in relation to the physical body. Not that it is immortal or eternal or anything like that but that there is a comparative continuity. It is of course changing, it is not that it remains the same all the time, but it has a greater degree of continuity than the physical body. Because a physical body has a certain continuity but it is within a span, say, of seventy or eighty years. But linked with the series of physical bodies is the subtle body which sort of lasts for quite a number - hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands - of physical bodies, though itself constantly changing.

_____: That makes it a little easier if you can see the Bodhisattva (**S:** Yes, of course.) having had hundreds of thousands of years, aeons. The idea of doing it in the physical body is absolutely daunting. But you can see the Bodhisattva doing it in a subtle body, that is not quite so daunting.

S: And of course above the subtle body there is a higher body too, we are told, specially created by the Bodhisattva out of his skill in means. And it is in that body, according to some teachings, that he remains in the universe and from which he as it were descends into the physical world. He sort of moulds or shapes that with that subtle body, or with that - let's say it's more than a subtle body, with that spiritual body; as it were remaining in that spiritual body essentially he shapes a subtle body in accordance with the kind of body he wants to descend into, as it were descends into the subtle body and from that, like stepping down the rungs of a ladder, into the physical body, the newly-conceived physical body and the physical world. This is the Mahayana teaching, broadly speaking, in this respect. It recognises these sort of possibilities.

And of course it recognises the possibility of Bodhisattvas in their spiritual bodies being around without actually descending to a lower level.

Sagaramati: And also where there are bodies there must be corresponding worlds.

S: Yes, indeed. No world without a body, no body without a world. [Pause] [252]

Anyway perhaps we had better start thinking of winding up. It's the sort of thing we were talking about in the first of our recent sessions at the LBC, we have come back on to much that sort of ground. There is probably quite a bit of collating of notes to do. But it gives one a broad idea of the traditional Buddhist view which is sometimes lost sight of. In a way quite rightly we keep the path in the foreground and we keep these sort of things in the background, and that is a quite right perspective in a way. But these things are in the background of traditional Buddhist teaching, and it is good that we should know them.

_____: Can one make the comparison between subtle body and the angelic body that we were talking about yesterday?

S: Yes, one could. Perhaps one should say, though, rather in a sense spiritual body rather than angelic body, but one can't draw lines too rigidly.

_____: Spiritual body would be probably better, wouldn't it? Maybe using the word spiritual.

S: In Pali and Sanskrit the term is *nama-rupa*, name and form, literally, they cover these two aspects, the aspect of consciousness and the aspect of concrete being. Or what we usually call mind and what we usually call body. Which in a sense are the same thing, in a sense, different **aspects** of the same thing. [Long Pause]

Here and there in the Pali texts there are references to things like the mind-made body, it is called, the *manomayakaya*, the body made of mind, if you like the mental body. In the Upanishadic tradition there is usually mention of **five** bodies. In Buddhist tradition there is also mention of five eyes - I think we are going to get to this in a day or two's time - which represents the same sort of thing, because an eye belongs to a body, so to speak, unless you use it in the purely metaphorical sense. And some of these eyes are certainly not metaphorically intended. But in, I think it is in the *Patiliya(?)* Upanishad you get the five *kosas*, which are sort of bodies, the five sheaths they are called. There is first the *anamaya kosa*, the body made of food, the *pranamaya kosa*, the body made of breath, energy - subtle body this would be, then you have got the *manumaya kosa*, I think it is *manumaya*. Then you have got the *prajnamaya kosa* and then *anandamaya kosa*, five altogether. But it was a general Indian conception, of different levels and of different bodies operating at those different levels.

So this is very different from the ghost in the machine theory of the relationship between mind and body. As if the physical body is not there, well, there's just a ghost left, but actually it's not so at all. We think of the ghost, the non-physical, as perhaps something tenuous and wraithlike, like a wisp of mist floating. As though you actually feel like a wisp of mist, whereas actually, as far as my own experience goes, you just don't feel any different at all. In fact you could say that it's because the subtle body is present even here and now that you experience body-ness, not because you have got a physical body: that is just a conglomeration of molecules. It's more that the subtle body is merged with the physical body what you actually experience in a way, in the subjective sense of bodily identity, is the subtle body, even in **this** life. Do you see what I mean? So when those molecules drop away and you reawaken in the bardo, [253] you experience yourself in the same sort of way except that the physical body isn't there, those particular constituent molecules aren't there any more. You've just slipped out of that rather heavy and uncomfortable and awkward sleeping bag, you could say, and you are now in something much more trim and tightly fitting and in which you can move about much more freely. [Pause]

_____: I have often wondered why some of the disciples of the Buddha used to refer to their body as just being bags of filth and things like this. It makes more sense in this context.

S: Yes, it's not body as such, if you see what I mean. Though of course there is another angle to that. It was meant to help them develop detachment from the physical body.

_____: The one I was thinking of was Sariputra, after his Enlightenment he was saying that he almost couldn't wait to get away. He was just so attached to his physical body weighing him down.

S: Only a strict sense of duty detained him.

_____: Something like that.

S: All right, then, maybe we should leave it there. Tomorrow we start on the first day. [Pause]

_____: I rather feel that there might be quite a few philosophical problems involved with this way of looking at it, I am not quite sure what they are. Seems that it's quite difficult ground in a way.

S: Well, there are quite a few philosophical problems involved in connection with our ordinary bodily experience, anyway. It would only be an extension of exactly those problems, I imagine. Philosophically there is really no more difficulty if you have several bodies than if you have only one. You have still got this whole mind-body relationship, so to speak, question to deal with.

_____: I think that's more in terms of..., scientists would be a bit wary of thinking that there could be anything else apart from the body apart from on the physical level that we...

S: Well, one can only oppose to that view one's own personal experience. As, say, with the relativity of time. Supposing one has had precognitive experiences, how can you possibly deny those experiences? And that certainly sheds a fresh light upon reality, or at least upon time, upon consciousness. So the scientist may be able to ignore your experience in some way satisfactory to himself, but you can hardly do that yourself.

Sagaramati: These other bodies, they wouldn't come out of a womb then, the physical body comes out of a womb, but these [254] other bodies, there isn't any copulation takes place in order to produce them?

S: Buddhist tradition does say that on other levels of existence that it's possible to multiply the bodies on those levels without recourse to the gross method of copulation. New beings can come into existence if you just exchange a look, for instance. There are many traditions like that in non-Buddhist sources also. It's rather a nice thought, the actual biological methods in the case of animals, including human beings, are really rather messy and unaesthetic, looking at it quite objectively.

_____: Presumably again your subtle body is going to change from one life to another, it's not something which is determined.

S: Yes indeed, it is modified by your thoughts, words and deeds of each life.

_____: Could you say that it's a sort of objectification of your own karma?

S: You could say that, you could say that, yes indeed. Yes, even a way of looking at your own karma. Karma not being something abstract. This is one of the difficulties in talking about karma, it sounds as though it's very abstract and theoretical and just has a sort of notional existence, doesn't really represent any **thing** concretely. But, yes, you could look at the subtle body as the embodiment of one's karma. Or certainly at the very least it reflects one's karma much more directly and easily than does the physical body.

Sagaramati: Because it can presumably change instantly.

S: Instantly, yes. Hence the malleability, the flexibility, the ductility. All these terms are used.

_____: Going from one life to the next, would the subtle body change from the form of an old man to that of a baby, say? Would the form of the subtle body not correspond to, say, the baby or the child?

S: I'm not sure about this, quickly looking back at my own previous experiences it's as though those distinctions aren't so relevant on the level of the subtle body. What is it that grows old? There is a sense in which you could have an old subtle body but that would only be because you thought old thoughts, as it were, you see what I mean? You could end up even as an old person having a quite 'young looking', in inverted commas, subtle body. But not necessarily. If you were very much identified with your physical body and really thought that **you** had grown old and felt old, your subtle body presumably would look old, just like the physical body. But that need not happen because the two **are** distinct.

Devamitra: It reminds me, actually, of Yeats's conundrum in his older life which comes across in many of his poems, the fact that he feels a young spirit, so much, and he has got this really old body.

S: Only a few weeks ago I was talking to my mother, who is eighty-two, and she said to me, she was in fact a bit puzzled by it, she said, 'It's really quite strange, I don't feel old [255] at all, I feel quite young.' And I think there are probably quite a few old people feel that way, they don't feel really old, as they think in a way they should be feeling. But they don't, they feel just as they were, they are just handicapped by an older body.

Virabhadra: So at the time of conception you could distinguish between the consciousness which is conceived or which enters the newly-formed organism and the subtle body, and they might be quite sort of unconnected, as it were. The consciousness would be that of a newly conceived being.

S: I get the impression, though it's no more than an impression, that the subtle body doesn't fully come into association with or start manifesting through the physical body until a certain later stage. I wouldn't be too sure about that, but that is my impression.

Sagaramati: That would explain why young children see fairies and other beings.

S: Yes, indeed. They frequently claim to see fairies and other beings, yes. And are told by their parents, 'No, nonsense, of course you don't, don't be silly,' all that sort of thing.

Subhuti: You say it doesn't become fully associated with the ...

S: That's my impression. As though it hasn't fully taken over that particular instrument. It's perhaps more like that.

Subhuti: It becomes fully identified with it.

S: Fully identified with it or used to handling it.

Sagaramati: It's like self-consciousness would be the establishment of that identity, in a way.

S: I haven't thought about that, it might be. I am not sure, I would have to think about that. But a child doesn't develop self-consciousness until about a year, I am not sure. It doesn't develop it before it is a year old, anyway. I think child psychology has studied that; it knows at which point what we would call self-consciousness emerges, when the child clearly starts being able to abstract itself from itself. So for instance until then he always says, 'Baby does this, baby does that'. He doesn't say, 'I do this or I do that, or you do this, or you do that.' It's 'Baby do this, mummy do that', as though it's all the same, not really differentiated into a subject and an object.

_____ : So if the subtle body doesn't become fully associated until a little later, what is it that does..., what is that element of consciousness that enters earlier on, if it isn't the result of ...

S: Well, I sort of solved that question, in a way, not very satisfactorily, which raises further problems, that it enters only partially. This is what it seems like.

_____ : So in a way the initial element of consciousness and the subtle body aren't different.

S: Yes, it would amount to saying that. But the [256] consciousness hasn't taken over the physical body properly. On the other hand there is another way of looking at it, there is this sort of instinctual apparatus, so to speak, which can keep the physical body going even in the absence of a sort of individualised consciousness. Do you see what I mean, more like just a sort of instinct? But I'm not sure about this, I'm sort of speculating a bit here. It's one of the things I haven't really thought about very much for quite a number of years, partly because people didn't seem very receptive to this aspect of the teaching. Also for some years I wasn't especially interested in it myself, it didn't seem to concern me very much. Perhaps it is something that needs to be gone into more systematically.

_____ : Do you think it could have relevance as a way of teaching the Dharma?

S: I can't say that I had thought of that but Buddhadasa seems to have felt that and maybe he is correct, at least for some people.

Subhuti: Many people are very, very concerned about such questions, about what happens after death.

S: Perhaps more concerned than they care to let on in some cases.

_____ : In away an over-concern with eyes open.

Devamitra: Well, it is such a pressing question if you have got no answer to it, if you don't have another tradition that you are involved with, it is one that really hits you hard. Certainly this was the case with me, I wanted to know.

Kuladeva: You certainly get a lot of questions from new people about what happens when you die.

Devamitra: You get a lot of that kind of question in schools too, actually.

S: That's very interesting.

Devamitra: It is one of the most common questions amongst teenage students At Atlantic College. I think every time I have taken a sixth-form group I have been asked that question, it's one of the first to come up.

S: As though they are young enough not to be afraid to ask that sort of question, it hasn't become a personal question yet. Though it could be, of course.

_____ : Certainly in my experience the questions that I was asking when I was sixteen and seventeen and I read quite a lot of Theosophical ...

S: I can't say that personally I was in my early days ever very interested in these questions. I eventually concerned myself with them just as parts of the general Buddhist field. At the beginning my personal interest was only reality itself, so to speak, this was the only thing that really aroused my interest. Anything of karma and rebirth just seemed on such [257] a low ordinary level, I used to say OK, believe it, accept it, so what, this is what the Buddha teaches, it must be OK.

But it didn't really bother me or concern me. My personal interest was with something quite, quite different. So I didn't pay any particular attention, ever. In fact I tended to feel a bit impatient with questions on that sort of level. But I can see now that it needs to be given more systematic attention. All I wanted to hear about was *sunyata* and the *dharmakaya*, and the One Mind and the rest of it, this was all that I felt was of any worth at all. 'Of **course** you were reborn, so what! I accept all that, I believe all that.' I had no difficulty in accepting it. So perhaps that made me not go into it as much as I might have done had I felt any sort of personal difficulty. So I tend, perhaps, to expect other people just to accept it like that and to think that it's pretty obvious, what's the difficulty, what's the problem? But perhaps it isn't as simple as that for everybody.

So I was thinking, as I mentioned a little while ago, or a few days ago, that a future series of lectures could well be on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, discussing in each lecture one particular important topic, in a very general way.

Devamitra: Actually, that would really draw crowds, I reckon.

S: It probably would. We would have to really get the York Hall for that, probably. Because I remember that - when I was - during my first two years in England - the lecture for which I got the largest number of people was a lecture on the problem of death. We were packed out for that in a way that we had never been before and never were afterwards. Among all the lectures I gave in London I think I can say the lecture for which we got the largest number of people was on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* at the Kingsway Hall. One of the lectures in the very first series I gave. We never got more than the number of people that we got for that lecture at any other subsequent lecture, until my quite recent ones.

Devamitra: I reckon you would really draw them in if you did it like that.

S: Well, perhaps it is just as well that I am not giving that series just yet. Give the team time to prepare, with lots of really good publicity. Yes, it could be quite a successful series.

Devamitra: I think it's also not just a question of it's an existential issue, if you like, there is a certain fascination about.

S: A natural curiosity also, naturally.

Devamitra: Yes, it really is fascinating, even just the speculation.

Sagaramati: Well yes, you just don't like to limit yourself, almost, to your existence in this world, in a way. The fact that you have got a dream life and things like that, and your imagination can imagine other things.

S: Yes. Even if there are no other worlds, the fact that you [258] feel the need to imagine them is quite significant. If you feel the need to imagine them it means that there probably **are** other worlds.

Subhuti: That's an ontological argument!

S: Yes, I was aware of that. But I don't quite accept the ontological argument, obviously.

Kuladeva: It seems a more tangible explanation for rebirth than what's usually given is quite important really. Because I have noticed with a lot of people, as they get older, they seem to turn back towards God or Christianity.

S: That's true

Kuladeva: One of my grandfathers was a lapsed Catholic and during his last years he became a Catholic again. And also I was speaking to one of my brothers recently, he was once being trained for the priesthood and he left that when he was about eighteen and he's had quite bitter feelings towards the church ever since then. But the last time I saw him, which was about eight or nine months ago, I asked him what his feelings were towards religion, specifically Christianity, and he said that as he was getting older he could feel that he was wanting to turn to something.

S: This is quite an important point, actually, I think. Because formerly we have tended to say there's karma, when you die your karma is still there as though it's an impersonal force and that somehow produces another being, another personality, which is true as far as it goes, but perhaps that is not sufficiently clear and sufficiently concrete.

John Wakeman: There is an extremely large amount of misunderstanding about this, especially books written for schools that I've seen. Almost every one mentions the area of rebirth as being something in which Buddhism is not clear or is inconsistent. (**S:** That's right.) It's often used as an argument against Buddhism. It would be really good to clear that up.

S: Well, it actually has been cleared up, that particular difficulty, but people find it very difficult to see the point.

Virabhadra: It is a quite difficult subject to grasp, really, isn't it?

S: Not really, only because of our conventional, linguistic and psychological ways of doing things or ways of looking at things. By which they think that there is change therefore there must be something that changes. Well, this is convention, this is assumption. So how can Buddhism believe in rebirth while it teaches *anatta*? This is the usual difficulty. It has been cleared up **again and again**, it is so clear and so simple, but they just can't or won't see it. They insist on looking at the whole matter in a way that cannot but create a problem. But Buddhism does not look at matters like that, therefore there is no problem really, no problem at all. [259]

Tape 13

Next Session

S: The first day, that is to say, the first day of the bardo state experience. Would someone like to read that first paragraph?

THE FIRST DAY

It says in this book that having woken up, after four days of unconsciousness, into the luminosity there is a sudden understanding that this is the bardo state, and at that very moment the reverse of samsaric experience occurs. This is the perception of light and images, which are the reverse of body or form; instead of being a tangible situation of form it is an intangible state of quality.

S: Do you see the difference? One is, to use the language that we were using yesterday, in a subtle body and one's experience has become more subtle. Instead of body or form one has got light and images. Do you see the difference? 'Instead of being a tangible situation of form it is an intangible state of quality.' Do you see the significance of that distinction? It connects up with what I was saying a few days ago about the difference between the *samayasattva* and the *jnanasattva*, do you remember? When you visualise and when you meditate upon a particular concrete image and as a result of that visualisation and meditation, and mantra recitation also, you get a definite feeling, a definite experience. You experience, so to speak, a definite spiritual quality, but then you can allow the visualised image to dissolve and you are left just with the quality, which is a subtler sort of state, a subtler sort of experience.

So it's much like that here. 'Instead of being a tangible situation of form it is an intangible state of quality.' The bardo state is more like that. So instead of body or form one has got light and images.

This paragraph just draws attention to the general fact that the bardo state and the bardo experiences are of a much subtler nature as compared with those of the physical world and one's state during life.

All right, carry on, then.

Then you get the dazzling light, which is a link of communication between body and intelligence. Although one is absorbed into the state of luminosity, there is still some intelligence operating, sharp and precise, with a dazzling quality. So the psycho-physical body and also the intelligence, the intellectual mind, are transformed into space.

S: It's not quite clear what that means, is it? 'Although one is absorbed into the state of luminosity there is still some intelligence operating'. Well one isn't strictly speaking **absorbed** into the state of luminosity, it is more that you are functioning in a subtle body in that more subtle state, that more subtle world. Maybe it is simply that, inasmuch as everything is more subtle, distinctions are in a way blurred, there are not the same sort of hard outlines as you find in the comparatively gross earth life state. It is, I think, more this that he is trying to express. *[Pause]*

And also, of course, there is the point that what is happening to you is you, what you are experiencing **is you**, so in a sense you are transformed into the space that you now experience, that you now perceive, just you are in the case of the dream. In the case of the dream, we are sometimes reminded by people who analyse dreams or study dreams that everything that happens [260] to you in the dream, everybody that you meet in the dream is you, it's all a transformation of your own psyche. In a dream, in a sense, there is nothing external. If you dream about a black dog, that black dog is you, because it's your dream. So in the same way, whatever you experience in the bardo state is your 'dream' (inverted commas). So the space within which all this happens is not a space outside you, it is a space inside you, so to speak, except that here it's **all** inside, and the figures that you encounter are you, even though you don't realise that or can't appreciate that.

So in this sense the psycho-physical body and also the intelligence and intellect and the mind are transformed into space. Just as in the dream you are transformed, your mind is transformed into the space which is the dream, or the space within which all the dreams happen, all the dreams occur.

Virabhadra: What do you think about the timing? It mentions four days.

S: I don't think that the timing can be taken too literally. It's a bit too schematic, the seven times seven, the forty-nine days of the bardo. It seems to become a little uncertain towards the end, as it were. There must be a correlation to some extent, at least at the beginning. But perhaps seven times seven is intended more to indicate an internal relationship as between the different phases of the experience, rather than to suggest a correlation of that time with our ordinary time. Because we know that in the dream state we can have a quite different time experience from what we have in the waking state. Also, I was reading or hearing recently that there had been experiments conducted with people who were shut up underground without any natural light and who lived without any reference to ordinary clock time. It was found that they definitely sooner or later

settled down into a cycle of waking and sleeping, eating, drinking, even though they had no means of knowing what the time was. They organised that for themselves. But when they came out and when they were asked to guess or to judge how many days or how many weeks they had been underground, so to speak, they invariably underestimated the length of time. They never **over**-estimated, which seems extraordinary, they invariably underestimated the length of time. So this suggests a certain relativity. Somebody in the bardo state might feel that it had all taken, say, twenty minutes, two days, but it might be several hours or several weeks. So it's difficult to achieve a sort of overall correlation. So if we say that the bardo experience unfolds over a period of seven weeks we are suggesting that the time sense and time scale in the bardo state is exactly the same as it is for us during the ordinary waking state; but that is quite a big assumption.

So I think I said the other day that, according to my own experience, when somebody dies you experience a sort of contact, a communication with them quite strongly for about two and a half to three days, and after that any time up to a week. But that doesn't mean that that particular deceased person would feel subjectively that he, say, had been in touch with you, assuming him to be able to feel in the same way that you feel, he may not necessarily feel that he had been in close contact with you for two and a half to three days, and after that less so, say, for up to a week. His experience might be quite different, he might feel it more like a few minutes or a few hours or few days. [261]

So you should be careful about saying that the bardo experience takes so long. Therefore the scheme of weeks seem to me to suggest internal relations between different phases of the experience. Saying that this phase takes as long as that phase, however long it happens to take. It may not be seven days, it might even be seven **minutes**, but the relative proportion is the same.

Virabhadra: What's the significance of the unconsciousness? We haven't really considered the period of unconsciousness in our discussion.

S: It seems as though one is knocked out, the experience is so dramatic, not to say traumatic - this is what is said - that one falls into a sort of swoon, one is knocked unconscious and gradually comes to. It's as though unless you are an experienced yogi the shock of separation from the body is a bit too much for you.

Sagaramati: So the first experience is of the past etc. You become as it were unconscious after that and then you wake up again?

S: Yes. The first experience of the luminosity, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is just before you actually die. When you die you fall into the swoon and then the luminosity experience revives.

In a way it's a bit analogous, again, to the dream state. Because it is said after you go to sleep you have first of all an experience of deep sleep and **then** you start dreaming. And apparently this repeats itself, doesn't it? The periods or phases of deep sleep alternate with periods of dream, and you gradually surface, as it were, the deep sleep becomes less deep, the dreams become more and more superficial and you gradually come back to the waking state, you wake up. So it is quite analogous to the bardo state, isn't it? - these alternations between the experience of the luminosity and then the recoiling from it and the re-emergence at a lower level where you experience the same thing over again.

_____: The waters of Lethe.

S: The waters of Lethe, yes. I saw a remarkable painting of the waters of Lethe in the Manchester Art Gallery. It's a sort of Pre-Raphaelite painting by someone I haven't heard of but it was almost the most remarkable painting in the room. Quite extraordinary, both from an artistic and also a symbolic point of view. You know the one? I couldn't get a picture postcard of it though, unfortunately.

Sagaramati: They haven't got one, no. Maybe someone could take a photograph of it.

S: Yes. I think it was actually called *The Waters of Lethe*.

_____: What are they, what do they refer to?

S: Lethe in classical mythology is the river that you drink of after death in the underworld which makes you forget everything. [262] Classical mythology meaning the mythology of the Greeks.

So this is a quite widespread idea, that there is a period of forgetfulness, and I suppose this is partly in explanation of the fact that you do not remember your previous existences. I did touch upon this earlier in the week, didn't I, when I mentioned how even the vividness of, say, the retreat experience would fade to such an extent that you would hardly remember that you had been on the retreat at all. You certainly didn't remember what it was like to be **on** retreat. I think I have mentioned before, also, that some of my Tibetan friends have told me, especially Dhardo Rimpoche, that in the case of those incarnate lamas who are identified when young, that they remember or have some recollection of their previous lives up to the age of about seven, and then it

fades away. And he told me that this was so in his own case, that up to the age of seven he had definite recollections of his previous existence but then it all faded away.

Sagaramati: Was he a Tibetan in his previous existence, did he say?

S: This I don't remember, but in any case he was certainly from the same part of the world, it seems, because he wasn't strictly speaking, in his present life, born in Tibet proper but in some border region in between Tibet and China. His father was pure Chinese and his mother was Tibetan, he came from a merchant family, trading family. I sometimes used to think that his sharpness and acuteness came from his father's side. His mother was a rather terrible old woman with whom he had a real struggle before he succeeded in achieving his control over her, because she tried to run him when he was a young incarnate lama, and when he first arrived in Kalimpong she was in charge of the whole set-up and there was quite a struggle that went on for several years before he freed himself and established his mastery and reduced her to her ordinary rank of a sort of nun-like widow who was just occupied with her own personal devotions and not concerned with running his affairs and his life. There was quite a battle, I remember, and the end of it was that he won and sent her off on pilgrimage to Bodhgaya for about six months. After she came back things were quite different but she continued to be very annoyed about it for years and would complain to whoever would listen.

So even for incarnate lamas it is not always easy to leave mother! *[Laughter]* And in this case to send mother away! I could say quite a lot more about her, but I won't.

Sagaramati: I don't really understand this 'intelligence which is sharp and precise.'

S: I think Trungpa's terminology is quite haphazard. Intelligence is probably something more like just awareness, your knowledge of what's going on. Because he seems to use the expression 'intellectual mind' as a synonym of intelligence.

All right, let's go on. We come on now to the Buddha families. Perhaps I should make a few remarks about the Buddha families in general and especially the five Buddhas in general who are conceived of as the heads of these Buddha families.

We were talking yesterday about myth being a later development within Buddhism. It was this group, wasn't it? (**Voices:** No.) Oh dear! Well, we were talking about it in the other group, then. We were talking first of all about Christianity; I'll just briefly summarise so that the point is clear. In the case of Christianity [263] we have a myth, that is to say the myth of the saviour god, the son of God who is slain by his enemies, who is dead for a while and who then comes back to life and goes back to heaven, back to his father, taking his worshippers with him. So the point was made that the foundation, the strength of Christianity is the fact that it is a myth of this kind. But as time went on - this is still of course the very early years of Christianity - a certain amount of historicity was incorporated, even ethical and spiritual teachings were incorporated. So in this way in Christianity the myth comes first, the myth being gradually regarded as history, that is to say turned into pseudo-history, and the teaching comes later.

If you consider, for instance, the creed which is still recited in churches. What are you to believe? 'I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, born of the Virgin Mary', and then it goes straight to, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose from the dead from which he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the father from whence he shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.' Well, this is the first part of the creed. You have got nothing but myths. It jumps straight from 'born of the Virgin Mary', to 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'. The teaching, which according to the gospels did take place, there is a certain amount of teaching, is just skipped over, because in a way that is of no significance. So a Christian is not one who believes in the teaching of the sermon on the Mount, because it is admitted that those teachings are found in other religions too, the Christian is one who believes in the virgin birth, in the crucifixion, in the resurrection, in the ascension. In other words **myths**. So in Christianity myth comes first, teaching comes second.

In the case of Buddhism we don't find that. We find first of all teaching comes first and then comes the myth. Do you see what I mean? In the case of the Buddha we have a clearly historical figure who is concerned with, or engaged in, giving teachings to individuals which will help them to develop. But later on, especially in the Mahayana, and then again the Vajrayana, myths develop. *The White Lotus Sutra* is largely myth, *The Sutra of Golden Light* is largely myth; this has its own significance, but it is of a later development. So you get an illustration of this sort of thing in the case of the five Buddhas, the heads of the five Buddha families. How did they develop? First of all you have got the Buddha Sakyamuni, and you have got the Sakyamuni in different phases of his career. You get him depicted in meditation under the Bodhi tree, you get him depicted calling the earth to witness, you get him depicted teaching, you get him depicted reassuring his disciples, you get him depicted giving the gift of the Dharma and all sorts of other things, giving to his disciples, to the world. Do you see what I mean? So there developed a particular, a specific kind of Buddha icon illustrating each particular situation. For instance, if you saw the Buddha displaying a mudra as though turning a wheel, what would that mean? Which episode in his career would that represent?

Sagaramati: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma.

S: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. Or if you saw the Buddha with the tips of his fingers touching the earth, what would [264] that represent?

_____ : Calling the earth to witness.

S: Calling the earth to witness. So if you saw him with his hands folded in his lap what would that represent?

Sagaramati: Under the Bodhi tree.

S: Under the Bodhi tree. So in this way there came to be standardised a set of five, five episodes with five mudras and these gradually became almost like five different Buddhas. You see the process? In other words the whole idea of Buddhahood was all gradually being raised to a more ideal level from the historical level, raised to a more archetypal level, the whole idea of Buddhahood became more multifaceted, more multidimensional, much richer and fuller and expressive. Giving expression more and more to the content of the original historically embodied Buddha ideal.

So it's in this way that the five Buddhas with their five Buddha families developed. It would seem as though first of all - I go into this in one of the lectures. I am sure, perhaps in the Tantric series - first of all there was **the** Buddha, the primary Buddha if you like, and to his right and left there were two other Buddhas, Buddha of the East and Buddha of the West, representing more, say, the wisdom and the compassion aspects or the wisdom and love aspects if you like, intellectual and emotional aspects. And then there developed Buddhas of the North and the South as well, representing other aspects. So you got in that way a set of five, a Mandala of five Buddhas. A Buddha could be regarded as having an active aspect which was regarded as or personified as his Bodhisattva. Or he might even have two Bodhisattvas representing **his** wisdom and **his** love, or **his** wisdom and **his** activity, or **his** compassion and **his** activity. And they might be further subdivided, split up into different aspects, each one of which was separately represented. Then of course in the Vajrayana the big development was introducing female counterparts to them all, so the Buddhas got their female counterparts, the Bodhisattvas got their female counterparts, the emanations of the Bodhisattvas got their female counterparts and so on - in this way, obviously, **families** of Buddhas developed.

But all of these represent a gradual filling out of the original Buddha ideal. Perhaps I can give you a comparison. Supposing there is a sphere of crystal, or it might even be a great big spherical diamond, but it doesn't glitter very much because it's just a smooth sphere. So you cut a number of facets. Maybe you cut five facets, but that isn't enough, you cut subsidiary facets, and again more. In this way the whole thing glitters and shows its iridescent colours much more beautifully, and you get a better idea in this way, a better understanding of the nature and the beauty of the diamond. So the development of all these Buddhas and Buddha families, Bodhisattvas and so on, represents that sort of process.

And then of course these different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become the objects of cults, so to speak, they are visualised and meditated upon, their mantras are recited. So they become, in the Vajrayana especially, in Tibetan Buddhism especially, the foundation, the framework for a vast range of spiritual practices and experiences. And that is all of course reflected in the art, the iconography of Tibetan Buddhism, and to a lesser extent in [265] the art and iconography of the Mahayana. So it is quite important to familiarise oneself with these figures - certainly with the major ones, the five Buddhas and their principal Bodhisattvas. I think in the West we should be quite careful about these female counterparts, they can easily be taken to suggest the existence of as it were married Buddhas, and if there can be married Buddhas then obviously there should be married Buddhists. So in this way the whole thing becomes nothing but a vast rationalisation. You even get that a little bit on the fringes of Tibetan Buddhism itself, so one must watch that. But you get the general idea, the general significance of the thing.

All right, then, let's then go on to consider Vairocana..

In this case the colour of space is blue, and the vision that appears is Vairocana. Vairocana is described as the Buddha who has no back and front; he is panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralised notion. So Vairocana is often personified as a meditating figure with four faces, simultaneously perceiving all directions. He is white in colour, because that perception does not need any other tinge, it is just the primordial colour, white. He is holding a wheel with eight spokes, which represents transcending the concepts of direction and time. The whole symbolism of Vairocana is the decentralised notion of panoramic vision; both centre and fringe are everywhere. It is complete openness of consciousness, transcending the skandha of consciousness.

S: So, 'The colour of space is blue, and the vision that appears is Vairocana. Vairocana is described as the Buddha who has no back and front; he is panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralised notion.' Perhaps we can go a little bit into that. Do you know what the name Vairocana originally meant, or means literally?

Subhuti: The illuminator.

S: It's the illuminator, and in pre-Buddhistic times it was simply a name for the sun. So it's as though here Buddhism in a manner of speaking incorporates solar symbolism. Do you see what I mean? *[Pause]*

This whole question of solar symbolism is quite important. It represents an attempt to communicate the nature of the spiritual by means of material symbols. And possibly the sun and light are the most important of all symbols derived from the physical world. And they reappear in all religions. They appear in classical religions: classical mythology has the figure of Apollo, the figure of Helios. In ancient Egyptian religion you have the god Ra who is a solar deity. And it even has sometimes seemed to me that from a certain very broad point of view one can see that there is a transition in the history of religion, a transition which is reflected in the higher religions, universal religions, a transition from - what shall I say? - vegetation myth to sun myth. Do you see what I mean? From lunar cults to solar cults. From the - I was going to say from the matriarchal to the patriarchal - but one shouldn't use those expressions because they suggest there was a corresponding social state of affairs which actually is not the case. But do you see what I mean? The early cults seem to have been connected with agriculture, fertility, rebirth. And Christianity, one might say, is the [266] sort of summation of cults of that sort in the Christian myth. There were many myths of that sort, there were many slain gods, but it was the myth of the year. You get the symbolism of seeds, and ploughing, and of resurrection, because there is the death, the seed is buried in the soil but then it springs up again. So in the same way man is offered a hope of springing up again after his death. In ancient Egypt this was the essence of the Osirian cult, the worship of Osiris and also Isis, it was this sort of cult. This is why I call it a vegetation cult, it is associated with agricultural societies. They are very much concerned with rebirth, renewal, with fertility, the continued fertility of the earth and man. And of course the growth of vegetation is cyclical, it is governed by or at least correlated with the phases of the moon, hence we speak of lunar cults.

But then it's as though you emancipated yourself from that cyclical process, you are not so much concerned with birth after death again and again, you are concerned with getting out of that whole process altogether and then it's as though the **sun** becomes your symbol. Because the sun doesn't really rise and set, the sun is always there, it's always manifesting light, you look upwards, you look away from the earth. In this way it seems your solar cult develops and this is associated more with the growth of individuality and self-consciousness. The earth cults are a little bit dark, as it were, maybe a bit twilit, you could say, but with the solar cults you come into the full blaze of day. It is not rebirth that is the goal but emancipation from the whole **process** of birth and death and rebirth. Do you see what I mean?

So it seems to me that the higher religions, the universal religions, tend to employ either this vegetation myth or the solar myth. Christianity is much closer to the vegetation myth, makes much more use of that; Buddhism, if we have to classify it at all, to the solar myth. And you see the solar mythology coming in here, in the figure of Vairocana. He emphasises the **light**-giving, in a metaphorical sense, the light-giving qualities of the Buddha. There was a time when solar myth fought with, you could say lunar myth, in the early centuries of the Roman Empire, but the lunar cult so to speak, i.e. Christianity, triumphed. Though Christianity, again, has a few, though subordinate, solar features. Christ is sometimes called light, sun of the soul; there is a hymn, *Sun of my soul thou saviour dear*. But predominantly its mythology, its myth, its symbolism is drawn from vegetation and the process of nature, hence the importance and the place of the resurrection. But it did struggle with the solar cult in the form of Mithraism for quite a while and it was touch and go which would win, it seems. And the philosophical Mithras cult was quite widely diffused in the Roman Empire, and there is even a quite elaborate theology of the physical sun, the sun in heaven, then a sort of celestial sun and then a sort of supernal sun beyond even that. Very much reminiscent, almost, of the *Trikaya* in terms of solar symbolism. But that did not win out for various reasons. Perhaps it was even because society at that time was still predominantly agricultural and required an agricultural myth, so to speak.

Then again, in the case of Christianity, the symbolism of the bread and the wine. Again this is all bound up with agricultural myth. The Eucharist is a sharing, a partaking of the flesh and body of Christ under the symbols of the bread and the wine. And then again the whole idea of the anthropophagi, the eating of the body of Christ, because in very early times it does seem that the king was slain, his blood sprinkled upon the crops, perhaps in some [267] cases fellow tribesmen even partook of his blood, even of his flesh. So you see the whole range of associations, which you **do not** get in Buddhism. Buddhism seems to be quite free of this agricultural mythology. The mythology it makes use of is, it seems almost exclusively solar mythology. So that makes quite a difference, it gives quite a different feel.

I am just sketching something in very roughly, but it could be gone into much more systematically and in great detail. I don't think attention has ever been drawn to this but I have been remarking on this for some time.

So here you get in the figure of Vairocana, perhaps, the highest use that has ever been made of solar symbolism. Solar symbolism, used to express the very idea or ideal of Buddhahood itself with all its associations of light and splendour and space and so on. In the Vedas Vairocana is just a name for the sun god, but here you have got it as the Sun Buddha, the Buddha who is like the sun. And that develops in Japanese Buddhism, Japanese Shingon, into the great sun Buddha, MahaVairocana.

Sagaramati: Do you think these sort of things have psychological power in them, in the sense that whenever a person's born, in a sense he recapitulates even these tendencies and forces at work? (**S:** It could be.) [*unclear*] like the vegetation.

S: Right. It is also as though women, broadly speaking, have got a greater affinity for lunar cults and vegetation myths and all that sort of thing and men for solar symbolism and so on.

Sagaramati: Christianity is seen as Mother Church.

S: Mother Church, yes. But the Sangha, to the best of my knowledge, is never spoken of in those sort of terms.

So 'Vairocana is described as the Buddha who has no back and front; he is panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralised notion. So Vairocana is often personified as a meditating figure with four faces simultaneously perceiving all directions.' The Vairocana with four faces comes more in the Vajrayana, but the symbolism is clear, isn't it? Symbolism, even solar symbolism, has its limitations. So it's as though the sun occupies a definite, fixed position in space; it is not as though the Buddha wisdom, so to speak, of Vairocana is really fixed or occupies a fixed point in space in that way. Therefore I say symbolism has its limitations. But it represents an all-encompassing, or what Trungpa calls quite usefully 'a panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralised notion', and that's really a difficult idea for us to grasp. Because usually with us there's a centralised point, a centralised position, a centralised notion in relation to which we place everything else. But here it's as though we are in the midst of a vast network where nothing is the centre. Do you see what I mean? So yes, in a way Vairocana is the centre but in a way there **isn't** any centre. You can symbolise the sun, you can see the sun in the midst of the heavens, so in the same way, yes, you can imagine Vairocana, the Sun Buddha, in the midst of the spiritual firmament, the spiritual cosmos, sending out light and warmth in all directions - so that's very good, that's a very powerful symbol but it isn't completely adequate. Because actually reality isn't like that, reality is not a fixed point in the midst of unreality, as it were. So [268] you can employ the symbol or symbolism of the net, the network. As for instance in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. If you have a net - and what is a net? - a net is a reticulation, as Dr Johnson calls it. You see what I mean? You have got a sort of criss-cross pattern. You have got in a way lots of centres going on indefinitely, no one is **the** centre, there is no centre to the net as a whole. And reality is more like that, according to Buddhism.

'The panoramic vision is all-pervading with no centralised notion.' The panoramic vision is the vision which sees everything without seeing it from any fixed point whatsoever not even from the fixed point of so-called Absolute Reality. So it's complete openness and a non-positionedness. Even openness isn't an adequate term because you are open, as it were, from a particular point, in a particular direction, **to** something in that direction. But real openness is not like that. You are open without there being any point from which you are open, you are **totally** open. So Vairocana, even though he seems to be located in a particular spot, particular place, symbolises that sort of openness the complete openness of Reality - the complete openness of the Buddha Wisdom, the Buddha Experience.

This is an idea which is coming up quite a bit in the course of study of this particular commentary at least, that is to say the idea of openness, real openness being seeing things not from any particular fixed point - the fixed point usually being ourselves. So if you see things from a fixed point you are still, in a manner of speaking, under the domination of your ego, it's an egoistic way of looking at things, or **the** egoistic way of looking at things. So Vairocana symbolises the opposite of that, if one may so speak. Panoramic vision. Because for us panoramic vision is a contradiction in terms because vision means the vision of an eye from a particular point. This connects up with some of those exercises that we touched upon the other day in which you see, you visualise different eyes in different parts of your body. But what wasn't made clear then was that you **see** from those eyes. Actually I believe that there are people who do that, have that experience, sometimes, abnormally - that they can see from a point, say, on their hand. They see from that point. Or they can see perhaps from their nose. So there are these exercises in which you can actually see, quite literally, from different points within your body. So that decentralises your notion of ego, doesn't it? I have even mentioned in the past a simple little exercise: when you get pains of tensions in your head when meditating it is because it seems that your consciousness is too much located in your head, you can try the technique of pulling your consciousness down into your stomach. Not exactly the stomach but what the Japanese call the *tanden*, the place four fingers' widths below the navel. Because usually we think, I'm up here, I am looking out of my body through my eyes, I'm in my head. It's as though there is a little man sitting in your head and looking out through your eyes and that's you. But actually you can deliberately pull, as it were with an act of will, your consciousness down and say to yourself, I am **here**. I am not looking down at my body, I am looking **up** at my body, or at least up at my trunk. And this can relax the tension and pressure in one's head.

So this is a very mild form of the same sort of thing, learning to think of consciousness as not located at any particular point in space. The *Surangama-samadhi Sutra* deals with much the same sort of question, in a more general, as it were philosophical way. So sometimes it's a good exercise [269] to shift oneself around in space and time. You see what I mean? For instance, what you can do is: supposing you have just been to New Zealand, supposing you have just come back from New Zealand, you can be meditating and when you get into the meditation tell yourself that you are meditating in the shrine, say, at the centre in Auckland, if you have in

fact meditated there a few months before. And you can actually get a vivid sense that you are actually in Auckland and not in England. You can kid yourself in that way, but then when you open your eyes you are in England, but just the minute before you actually were in Auckland, as it were. In the same way, time. You do it especially in connection with meditation for obvious reasons, you can be sitting and meditating and you can in the same way kid yourself that it's ten years ago, and you are meditating here and you have been fantasising what you would do during the next ten years, and that is of course what's actually happened. But you can actually experience it as a fantasy about the future, not as anything that has actually happened. In this way you shift yourself up and down and back and forth in space and time. And in this way you sort of, in a way, decentralise yourself. But you are not entirely at this point in space and time, you are elsewhere too. Do you see what I mean?

So this all helps in the development of this panoramic vision and consciousness in a small way. But it's quite interesting to do this sometimes. You can try it on solitary retreat, perhaps. You can kid yourself that you are on solitary retreat as you were a year ago and regard all the things that have happened during the year as just a dream you had last night and actually you are in 1978 not 1979. It does free you up just a little bit.

'In this case the colour of space is blue'. We haven't touched upon that, even, have we? Colour! Colour plays a very important part in the bardo, obviously, and in meditation when you visualise, that is to say. Colour is deeply emotive, we all know that. It gives a definite feeling tone to things. So what is suggested by the colour blue?

Sagaramati: Space.

S: Space, obviously, the sky, openness, reality, truth.

Devamitra: Infinite space.

S: Infinite space. But you can't see infinite space so long as you remain finite, as long as you adopt this fixed point and identify with that. You can only experience infinite space when you no longer do that at all.

Sagaramati: You can do that a bit when you lay back on the ground on a summer's day and look at a blue sky.

S: Yes, but that is a very limited infinity, because it is just in one particular direction.

Sagaramati: You lose the sort of centralised looking.

S: Yes, to some extent you do. Some people have said that if you are born and brought up in the desert it has a definite effect on the mental state and the overall attitude, because you see just the desert stretching in all directions and above nothing but the blue sky.

_____: They can [270] know when someone is going to visit them even before they appear.

S: They say that Australian Aborigines have got this sort of faculty. Animals have, it don't they? A dog often knows just when its master is coming back from holiday, starts getting excited two or three hours before he actually arrives, even if not actually expected. And in any case how do you tell a dog that you are coming back in two weeks' time at three o'clock so that he gets started getting excited at one o'clock, having **remembered** that you are coming back? Well, even if a dog could remember it that would be pretty, strange wouldn't it? But it doesn't seem to work even like that.

So, 'in this case the colour of space is blue and the vision that appears is Vairocana. Vairocana is described as the Buddha who has no back and front; he is panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralised notion. So Vairocana is often personified as a meditating figure with four faces simultaneously perceiving all directions. He is white in colour because that perception does not need any other tinge, it is just the primordial colour, white.' Well, we know that white is as it were the unity of the seven colours of the rainbow, and colour has been called a decomposition of light. I think Goethe said something like, 'colours are the agonies and ecstasies of life', I haven't quoted quite correctly but that is roughly what he says.

So white, what does white convey, what does white suggest?

Subhuti: Purity.

S: Yes purity.

_____: Wholeness.

S: Wholeness, yes. Also potentiality, richness, because the seven colours of the rainbow are contained in the white light.

Devamitra: Energy. (S: Energy, yes.)

Sagaramati: Intense.

S: Intensity, the white flame is hotter than the red flame. In the context of Buddhist tradition, in the context of the Friends, white is the colour of *upasaka*. But in a way that seems all wrong, doesn't it, in the light of this broader symbolism? White ought to be the colour of the *bhikkhu*, let us say. So white in a way shouldn't be the lay colour, in a manner of speaking. So perhaps we have got it right after all, do you see what I mean?

If the symbolism of colour is to be reflected in the colour of dress, it would seem that for the spiritually committed person white is the best colour. Then if you were particularly, say, devoted to Amitabha you could wear red or if you were particularly devoted to Ratnasambhava you could wear yellow, let us say. But if you don't want to emphasise your **particular** devotion, you simply want to emphasise your devotion or to express your devotion or commitment to the Buddhist spiritual tradition as a whole, then it would seem to be better to wear white. Within which your particular colour or the colour expressive of your particular line of development is contained along with all the others. So perhaps we should start saying that white is not the *upasaka* colour in the **narrow** sense any more than the *upasaka* himself is an *upasaka* in the **narrow** sense. In any case, come next year, we shall have at least [271] the yellow and the red and the blue in the kesa, those being the colours of, or at least of three of the Buddhas anyway. The only colour that you haven't got is the green, but that is made from blue and yellow anyway.

So, 'He is white in colour because perception does not need any other tinge, it is just the primordial colour, white. He is holding a wheel with eight spokes', usually represented as a golden wheel, and here of course there is a link with the historical figure, the Buddha Sakyamuni, who is not actually represented as holding a wheel when he turns the Wheel of the Dharma in the Deer Park at Sarnath, but in this mudra, which is known as the *Dharmacakrapravartana* mudra, which signifies his teaching or turning the wheel. This expression 'Turning the Wheel of the Dharma', is an interesting one. No one seems to have really gone into this properly, as to why one should have spoken of turning the wheel or have spoken of teaching the Dharma as a turning of the **wheel**. Well, why, why turn a wheel? Why should that express your teaching of the Dharma? Is it just a teaching in the narrow sense, what does it mean? Has anyone ever thought about this, does one ever think about Buddhism, these sort of things? What does it mean?

_____: Impermanence. It has got to stop eventually.

S: This wheel never stops, it cannot be stopped, it never turns back. That is explicitly stated.

_____: In mundane terms the Buddha turns, the Tathagata teaches [*unclear*].

S: You could say that.

_____: Something that depends on perpetuation.

S: Yes, that it is not about perpetual motion, as it were. Yes you could look at it like that.

_____: [*unclear*] spun off.

S: [*chuckles*] Well, that depends on the English idiom.

Devamitra: It suggests movement.

S: It suggests movement. I think it goes back into the mists of Indian antiquity and into Indian myth and custom even. Have you heard of the Wheel-Turning King? What is this Wheel-Turning King?

Devamitra: The universal monarch.

S: Universal monarch. This seems to be quite an ancient conception. So what is this wheel-turning monarch?

Devamitra: Actually, you have gone into that before.

S: Have I?

Devamitra: I can't actually remember what you said, but I know you have gone into it. [272]

S: The wheel also, by the way, is a solar symbol, isn't it? The sun appears to roll like a great wheel across the sky, across the heavens. Like a golden wheel, and as though the rays of the sun were the spokes of the wheel. There is that too. But there are other associations. The horse seems to be a solar symbol, doesn't it? in the same way that the cow is a sort of lunar symbol. I hope I am not pressing things too much but the chariot of the sun

in several mythologies is drawn by horses, it is never drawn by cows to the best of my knowledge, or even bullocks or buffaloes. It is drawn by horses, and horses are sort of fiery, they are swift. That seems to be an association with the sun and the sun wheel.

But what was this universal monarch, how did he establish his sovereignty? It's linked up with sacrifice, it's linked up with the horse sacrifice, do you know anything about this? Apparently what happened was, although there are many versions, in ancient India, this is almost I think pre-Buddhistic India, they would select a horse and this horse would be released in a particular direction and be allowed to gallop over a certain country, if it wasn't stopped the king to whom the horse belonged was considered to have established his sway over that territory, and they were considered to have accepted his rule. If of course they tried to stop the horse, or did stop the horse then there would be a battle. But if the horse was released successfully in all directions it came back at the end of the year. There may have been a connection with solar symbolism here you see, the year. It came back at the end of the year and it was sacrificed, the sacrifice was actually called the *asvamedha*, the horse sacrifice. This is sort of allegorised, or given a symbolic interpretation at the beginning of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, where it is said the head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, etc., etc. But anyway, it was originally sacrificed at the end of the year when it came back from the tour. And the king was then regarded as a *Chakravatiraja*, a wheel-turning king. Now why a **wheel**-turning king? I am not quite sure of the connection or the association, but it would also seem as though the place of the horse, whether literally or symbolically, could be taken by a wheel. A wheel could be rolled. It could be perhaps, I don't know, it could be referring to the wheel of the chariot, perhaps the king's chariot, or perhaps the horse pulls a chariot. But the same sort of thing could be associated with the wheel. A wheel rolling in all directions and not being challenged and coming back to base as it were.

So the rolling of the wheel in all directions, or one direction after another, symbolised a sort of establishment of sovereignty. So a wheel-turning king was a king who had established his sovereignty. So the Buddha's turning of the wheel of the doctrine meant his proclamation of, his establishment of, his spiritual sovereignty. Do you see what I mean? It wasn't just teaching in the ordinary sense, that teaching had a power, that teaching had a potency, it produced an effect, it wielded an influence. One has to be careful, of course, using the language of power. But it was more like, say, the light and the heat of the sun, shining forth and warming and fructifying everything. So it would seem that the symbolism of turning the Wheel of the Dharma has these sort of associations, has this sort of significance. It is the Buddha, the Buddha Sun, radiating his influence over the whole world. Not just giving a teaching in a conceptual sort of sense.

So he holds, therefore, the Buddha Vairocana holds the [273] sun wheel in his hands, reinforcing the symbolism of Vairocana himself. It's as though the sun is holding the sun wheel, it's a double symbolism if you like. And it's gold at that, gold of course being the colour of the sun. Sometimes I think it would be quite interesting to go into a myth or a cult in the light of Buddhism. There's a very interesting, quite inspiring - at least I found it inspiring in my teens - oration, it's a prose composition by the Emperor Julian called - I think it is called *Oration in Praise of King Helios*, in which he gives the philosophy, as it were, behind the Mithraic cult. I think it is also sometimes called *Hymn to King Helios*, though it is actually a long prose oration. [Pause]

So, 'He is holding a wheel with eight spokes which represents transcending the concepts of direction and time.' Yes it certainly represents that but the link with the original Buddha figure is via the symbolism of turning the wheel of the Dharma. Yes, there is even a connection with transcending space and time because the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma itself, transcends space and time, it is said to be *akaliko*, timeless, you could also say spaceless, not limited to any particular space, not limited to any particular time. It can't be Eastern or Western. It can only have Eastern or Western expressions.

So, 'The whole symbolism of Vairocana is the decentralised notion of panoramic vision; both centre and fringe are everywhere. It is complete openness of consciousness, transcending the skandha of consciousness.' There are five Buddhas, five Buddha families, and each one of course is associated with one or another of the five *skandhas*. That is to say, *rupa*, *vedana*, *samjna*, *samskaras* and *vijnana*. Among these Vairocana is associated with the skandha of consciousness which is sometimes regarded as the principal *skandha*, certainly in the Yogachara tradition, of which the others are all derivatives and even expressions. [Pause]

All right, go on to the next paragraph.

Along with that there is a vision of the realm of the gods. The depth of the blue is terrifying because there is no centre to hold on to, but the glimpse of the white light is like seeing a lamp burning in darkness, and one tends to walk towards it.

S: The white light here being the soft white light coming from the realm of the gods rather than the brilliant white light coming from the realm of Vairocana. One wants something definite. It may be of a very subtle and beautiful nature but it is still limited in relation to the indefinite, the completely open, the panoramic, the non-centralised.

So it's as though in this stage on the one hand there is as it were complete openness in all directions, there is no central point, there is nothing to grasp, but you find that a bit too uncomfortable, even terrifying. But from the **other** direction there is a very attractive ray of soft white light coming from a definite point, like the beaming of a lamp, and you follow that up. That is more as it were comforting. This is the soft white light coming from the realm of the gods.

I suggest what we do at this point is to go to the actual text and just read the text description of Vairocana and the world of the gods, this is on page 41. Would someone like to read that paragraph starting with 'The whole of space will shine with a blue light', the last paragraph at the bottom of the page? [274]

The whole of space will shine with a blue light, and Blessed Vairocana will appear before you from the central Realm, All-pervading Circle. His body is white in colour, he sits on a lion throne, holding an eight-spoked wheel in his hand and embracing his consort the Queen of Vajra Space. The blue light of the skandha of consciousness in its basic purity, the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, luminous, clear, sharp and brilliant, will come towards you from the heart of Vairocana and his consort, and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear it. At the same time, together with it, the soft white light of the gods will also come towards you and pierce you. At that time, under the influence of bad karma, you will be terrified and escape from the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu with its bright blue light, but you will feel an emotion of pleasure towards the soft white light of the gods. At that moment do not be frightened or bewildered by the luminous, brilliant, very sharp and clear blue light of supreme wisdom, for it is the light-ray of the Buddha, which is called the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu. Be drawn to it with faith and devotion, and supplicate it, thinking, 'It is the light-ray of Blessed Vairocana's compassion, I take refuge in it.' It is Blessed Vairocana coming to invite you in the dangerous pathway of the bardo; it is the light-ray of Vairocana's compassion.

Do not take pleasure in the soft white light of the gods, do not be attracted to it or yearn for it. If you are attracted to it you will wander into the realm of the gods and circle among the six kinds of existence. It is an obstacle blocking the path of liberation, so do not look at it, but feel longing for the bright blue light, and repeat this inspiration-prayer after me with intense concentration on Blessed Vairocana:

When through intense ignorance I wander in samsara, on the luminous light-path of the Dharmadhatu wisdom, may Blessed Vairocana go before me, his consort the Queen of Vajra Space behind me; help me to cross the bardo's dangerous pathway and bring me to the perfect Buddha state.

S: There are a few more details given here, aren't there, about Vairocana, so let's go into these.

'The whole of space will shine with a blue light and blessed Vairocana will appear before you from the central Realm, All-pervading Circle.' It is said that Vairocana occupies the centre of the Mandala and his realm is called all-pervading circle. But one mustn't take this notion of centrality too literally because he represents, as Trungpa says, the panoramic vision, the principle so to speak, of non-centrality. But he is central in the sense of not being located anywhere particularly.

'His body is white in colour, he sits on a lion throne', here is an extra detail. His throne is supported by lions. Why lions particularly?

Sagaramati: They've got a further significance.

S: They have a further significance, it would seem. Perhaps partly because of their colour which is sort of tawny. There [275] is of course their association with the preaching of the first sermon - sorry, the giving of the first discourse, Freudian slip - [Laughter] in fact the Buddha preaching or teaching generally is called his *sinhanada*, his lion roar. So the turning of the Wheel of the Dharma is in a sense his first giving of the lion roar of the teaching. So he is often represented in art on that occasion as seated on a raised seat which we sometimes call a throne, supported by lions. Because he is called in fact *Narasinha*, the man-lion, because he has those leonine qualities. I have drawn attention to this before that the Buddha is called the Great Serpent and the Great Elephant and the Lion. He is compared with these noble animals.

So, 'His body is white in colour and he sits on a lion throne, holding an eight-spoked wheel in his hand and embracing his consort the Queen of Vajra space.' Vajradhatesvari [Transcriber's Note: *Akasadhatesvari/isvari I believe?*] in Sanskrit. Perhaps we should dwell a little on this whole notion of the female counterpart. What I think one must bear in mind most of all when one sees the father-mother figures, as the Tibetans call them, Yab-Yum figures, is that they are **one** figure. Do you see what I mean? It is not two figures, it is actually **one** figure, one Enlightenment experience or the Enlightenment experience of one individual so to speak, which is being represented in this way suggesting the complete interpenetration of its different poles, the Wisdom pole with the Compassion pole, but you do not have literally two figures.

So, 'The blue light of the skandha of consciousness in its basic purity, the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu', this introduces the concept of the wisdom, the *jnana*. It's as though one can look at Buddhahood and at the different aspects of Buddhahood in so many different ways, you can see things in terms of the one historical central Buddha figure, but you can split that up, so to speak, into five Buddha figures. So if the one central Buddha figure is white, the Buddha figures into which he is split up have to assume the different colours which are immanent, so to speak, in the colour white itself. So in the same way if you think of **the** Buddha as Wisdom then the different Buddhas into which that Buddha figure is split up have to be different Wisdoms, different aspects or facets of wisdom. In this way you get a correlation of Five Wisdoms, as well as a correlation of the five skandhas with the five Buddhas and the five elements with the five Buddhas and the five directions with the five Buddhas. It is five because there's the one central figure or element or whatever and the other four occupying the four quarters of space so that you get a sort of mandala-like structure.

So the wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu* is the wisdom associated with, well, not only **associated with** Vairocana - it's the same thing in a different way. In terms of colour it's white, in terms of position - to the extent that the positionless can have a position - it's the central. In terms of *skandha* it's consciousness, in terms of wisdom it's the wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu*. So what is the *Dharmadhatu*? I have explained this on various occasions. What does *Dharma* mean here?

_____ : Absolute truth.

S: Absolute truth, reality. And *dhatu*, what does that mean?

_____ : Sphere. [276]

S: Sphere. So it's the whole of existence considered as the sphere of operation of Reality itself. It's Reality as manifesting in or as manifested in the whole of Reality just as the light of the sun falls through the whole of space, suffusing and saturating the whole of space, filling the whole of space. We are of course ignoring modern astronomy here for the moment. The light of our little star which we call the sun doesn't extend as far as **that**.

So it is almost as though all these alternative symbolisms give us alternative languages. We don't always have to think of things in conceptual terms. We can think of things in terms of form and colour and so on.

'The blue light of the skandha of consciousness in its basic purity, the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, luminous, clear, sharp and brilliant, will come towards you from the heart of Vairocana and his consort, and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear it.' It is interesting that it comes from the heart of Vairocana and his consort. It's as though their hearts overlap, so it's as though the light ray comes from the point of conjunction, the point of synthesis, the point of union, the point of highest integration.

_____ : Does it suggest that one would actually experience the image of Vairocana in this state or would say a non-Buddhist experience the same thing?

S: Well, we touched upon this yesterday. No doubt the experience could be culturally conditioned, but you would experience as it were two symbols which meant for you much the same thing that Vairocana and the consort of Vairocana represent within the Vajrayanic tradition. But I would say that if you are brought up so to speak within, or initiated within, the Vajrayanic tradition and familiar with the symbolism and its significance, for you the whole experience at this high spiritual level would assume a greater sharpness and clarity and definiteness than it would do if you were quite ignorant of any of these sort of traditions.

For instance, if you were a Christian you might conceivably see a vision of Christ with the Virgin Mary. Perhaps Christ for you represents wisdom and the Virgin Mary represents the aspect of motherly compassion and so on. So you would use those two symbols. Or you might see your own mother and father. This might be a reflection on a very much lower level of the same kind of thing. Or you might see or feel the presence of a mother-father-like figure, they might not even be sharply distinguished. But there would be the element of wisdom and the element of compassion, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? And from the midst of that, as it were, would come this bright light.

'At the same time, together with it, the soft white light of the Gods will also come towards you and pierce you. At that time, under the influence of bad karma, you will be terrified'. Under the influence of bad karma, meaning under the influence of, or as modified by, all the actions that you have performed during your recent lifetime. 'You will be terrified'. Not that karma is a sort of hindrance completely external to you - you shaped and modified yourself in such a way, in the course of your previous life, that you cannot but be terrified by the wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu* and seek to escape from it.

'But you will feel the emotion of pleasure towards the soft white light of the gods. At that moment do not be frightened or [277] bewildered by the luminous brilliant very sharp and clear blue light of supreme wisdom, for it is the light ray of the Buddha which is called the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu. Be drawn to it with faith

and devotion, and supplicate it, thinking, 'It is the light ray of blessed Vairocana's compassion, I take refuge in it.' This expression, 'I take refuge in it', is very, very important.

'It is blessed Vairocana coming to invite you in the dangerous pathway of the bardo, it is the light ray of Vairocana's compassion.' This is all clear, isn't it?

'Do not take pleasure in the soft white light of the gods, do not be attracted to it or yearn for it. If you are attracted to it you will wander into the realm of the gods and circle among the six kinds of existence.' That's interesting, because even if you follow up this ray of soft white light, follow it back to its source, even if you arrive at the realm of the gods and are reborn there, don't think that you will necessarily stay there. You will stay there for a while but then you will decess from there into other realms. So there is no question of the possibility of a permanent rebirth in the realm of the gods.

Tape 14

To be back in the realm of the gods means, in the long run, to be back in all the other realms of sentient existence.

'It is an obstacle blocking the Path of Liberation, so do not look at it, but feel longing for the bright blue light, and repeat this inspiration-prayer after me with intense concentration on Blessed Vairocana.' This is the first of the root verses which really contain the essence of the whole Bardo Thödol teaching.

'When through intense ignorance I wander in samsara, on the luminous light-path of the Dharmadhatu wisdom, may the blessed Vairocana go before me, his consort the Queen of Vajra Space behind me; help me to cross the bardo's dangerous pathway and bring me to the perfect Buddha state.'

Here bardo obviously does not necessarily mean the bardo in the sense of the after-death state. Do you see what I mean? So that brings us back, perhaps, to Trungpa's commentary. He says, 'The realm of gods also happens in our daily life experiences'. So would someone like to read that paragraph?

The realm of the gods also happens in our daily life experiences. Whenever we are absorbed in a spiritual state, a trance-like state of joy and pleasure, involved in our own self and its projections, whenever that joy comes there is also the possibility of its opposite, the centreless, all-pervading quality of Vairocana. It is extremely irritating, not at all attractive, because there is nothing to indulge in, no basic ground in which we can enjoy ourselves. It is all very well to have a panoramic vision of openness, but if there is no one to perceive it, it is terrible from the point of view of ego. The contrast between the realm of the gods and Vairocana constantly happens in life, and often the choice is left to us, whether we should cling to a centralised source of spiritual pleasure, or whether we should let go into pure openness without a centre. [278]

S: Do you think that the contrast between the realm of the gods and Vairocana constantly happens in life? Only in a very restricted sense indeed. Can you give a sort of example? [Pause] Trungpa makes the **principle** very clear: 'The choice is left to us whether we should cling to a centralised source of spiritual pleasure, or whether we should let go into pure openness without a centre.' So he seems to be claiming that these two alternatives are constantly before us, even in the sense that we constantly experience these two alternatives.

_____: We do have the expression 'soft option', or to take a soft option.

S: In contrast to the hard option?

_____: Yes, hard work.

S: It's not **quite** the same thing, is it?

Sagaramati: It's as if sometimes you're feeling really happy you can sort of indulge that state or you can do something quite positive.

S: To me it seems a bit more subtle than that. It's as though, yes, supposing you do find yourself in a happy state, you're not content with being just happy, you want to be experiencing something that makes you happy. So instead of remaining with the state of happiness you go in search of something which can make you happy. It's as though you are not satisfied with a state of happiness when it does occur, because sometimes we do just feel happy, it's as though you want to latch on to something that will make you feel happy. As though you want to hang that feeling of happiness on to a particular hook. This is the only way in which, as far as I can see, the alternatives do actually happen, in a very restricted way, in our own everyday life.

_____ : Is it, could it be looked at perhaps in a way of the ego appropriating happiness? (S: Yes, indeed.) Say you're outside feeling happy, quite refreshed, and then you notice that you are feeling happy, almost, and then you begin to ...

S: Yes, want something to make you happy, you want to be able to attribute your happiness to a particular source. Which means that, yes, you in the ego sense want to be able to be happy. You want to reduce an experience of happiness to an experience of some one who is happy with some thing.

So it is true, perhaps you can work from the one to the other, whenever you are happy with something just try to get rid of the thing and just retain the happiness. You find this happening with the *metta bhavana*, eventually, don't you? You can forget all about the persons and just remain with the state of *metta*. Which some people, those who haven't got very far with the practice, or haven't started it up, think is paradoxical, that you can have an experience of *metta* when you are no longer thinking about particular individuals, or even individuals collectively. You just have *metta*. So it is a bit like that, that is a non-centralised *metta*, you could say, you have panoramic *metta*.

Sagaramati: So that panoramic *metta* would be different from *upeksha*? [279]

S: Yes, in feeling tone it is different, but not in its panoramic quality. And of course it isn't transcendental, it needs to go further and deeper than that.

So in a way Trungpa is right that we do get the two things together in our ordinary experience, in the sense that the two **elements** are there. The happiness is there, which means happiness with a particular thing, which means we could detach the happiness from the thing and experience the happiness quite separately, and that would be an experience of pure openness without a centre to some extent at least. So it is not as though we actually experience the two things and then choose between them; it's as though the two things are fused and we have to separate them out, and only then in a sense can we really choose. Or perhaps the separating out **is** the choosing, the separating of the happiness, say, out from whatever it was that gave us the happiness. Perhaps this is a more realistic approach to the *metta* for us, usually.

Sometimes when people fall in love they get a little bit of this sort of experience. Sometimes they have moments when they realise they are not in love with a particular person - they are just in love with love. And it is as though the particular person doesn't matter, you could get on quite well without them and just go around with your state of being 'in love'. Or even with some young people they are in love almost before they meet anybody to be in love with. And the person is just the excuse for the intensification of that state. But you should try to remain in the state of being in love, as it were, without being in love with anyone in particular. Because then it is all with you all the time, you can't be betrayed, you can't be made jealous, you can't experience any of those **unpleasant** emotions then.

So in the same way you should try to stay with the state of happiness, the experience of happiness, without there having to be some thing to make you happy. So the choice at this level represents the archetypal form of this kind of experience, this kind of experience *par excellence* in fact. You are not satisfied with light, nothing but light, you want a light source, something that is bright, something that is shining, something softer, less brilliant. You're not satisfied with happiness - you want the happiness of being a god.

Sagaramati: Maybe it's to do with possession again, because once a thing's out there you can't possess that.

S: All right, let's do the last paragraph then.

This experience comes from aggression, because aggression holds us back and keeps us away from seeing Vairocana. Aggression is a definite, solid thing; when we are in a state of complete anger it is like imagining ourselves to be a porcupine, putting out everything possible to protect ourselves. There is no room for panoramic vision; we do not want to have four faces at all, we hardly even want to have one eye. It is very centralised and completely introverted, that is why anger might make us run away from the expansive quality of Vairocana.

S: I don't think that it's anger that makes us run away from the expansive quality of Vairocana in particular. He seems to be using anger to cover that general sense of recoil from something that we find insupportable. We are just not able to [280]take it, that's probably the best thing we can say about it. So we shrink back, we go for the soft option. We'd rather be a god than a Buddha.

I find this expression quite good, 'We do not want to have four faces at all, we hardly even want to have one eye.' Even if we have got only one eye we are just careful to keep it open only a little bit, we don't want to see too much. It's like being exposed, quite literally, to a very bright light.

We find a sort of analogue of this as when people can't stay on a retreat, I think I mentioned this the other day, didn't I? That it's too much for them, they are experiencing too much, they are seeing too much, they flee. [Pause]

Sagaramati: There also seems to be an analogy to projection. You mentioned earlier that an energy comes up in you and you always look for something, an object to project on to.

S: Yes, right. That's the more as it were kinetic or dynamic aspect of the same process. One should stay with the energy, keep the energy loose and free as it were instead of allowing it to latch on to something, and to project itself upon that. In a way it's a quite strange experience when you start experiencing as essentially your own what you had formerly thought was a quality of a particular object.

Sagaramati: Can you say more about that?

S: Well, beauty for instance. As when you fall in love and you start seeing someone as really very beautiful. But once you have fallen out of love you just wonder what on earth you saw in that person before, they seem just so plain, so ordinary, so commonplace. Where did that brilliant light come from? Why, it was the light of your own mind!

We know that colour is so to speak a subjective experience, don't we? I don't want to go into the metaphysics of all this just at the moment, but colour is not a quality of the object. It's all in the mind, whatever that might mean.

All right, let's leave it there, let's finish with the first day and after coffee we will go on to the second day.

Would someone like to read the first two paragraphs of the second day?

THE SECOND DAY

Transcending the water element, the white light begins to dawn, and in the east, the Realm of Complete Joy, the Tathagata Vajrasattva or Aksobhya appears.

Aksobhya means immovable, and Vajrasattva means vajra being; they both indicate toughness, solidness. In Indian mythology vajra is the most precious jewel, or the thunderbolt, which destroys all other weapons and jewels, which can cut diamond. There was a certain sage who meditated on Mount Meru for centuries, and when he died his bones were transformed into vajra, and Indra, the king of the gods, discovered this and made his weapon out of it, a vajra with a hundred points. The vajra has three qualities: it can never be used frivolously, it always fulfils its function of destroying the enemy, and it always returns into your hand. It is indestructible, adamant. [281]

S: So, 'Transcending the water element', why the water element? Among the elements water is associated with Aksobhya just as space, *akasa*, is associated with Vairocana. It is as though just as Vairocana is the ultimate reality of space in the same way that Aksobhya, or the Wisdom associated with him, constitutes the ultimate reality of the water element. So, 'Transcending the water element', that is to say seeing the water element in its ultimate reality, 'the white light begins to dawn and in the East, the realm of Complete Joy', Abhirati, 'the Tathagata Vajrasattva or Aksobhya appears.' Usually of course he is called Aksobhya, but sometimes Vajrasattva-Aksobhya. 'Aksobhya means immovable', it means what does not shake, what does not tremble, 'and Vajrasattva means vajra being; they both indicate toughness, solidness.' Aksobhya represents the openness, the non-centrality of the enlightenment experience. Aksobhya symbolises it, as it were toughness and solidness, its indestructibility, its firmness, its strength, its immovability, its unshakeability.

'In Indian mythology vajra is the most precious jewel or the thunderbolt, which destroys all other weapons or jewels, which can cut diamond.' It's as though the transcendental can cut everything that isn't the transcendental, can pierce through it. 'There was a certain sage who meditated on Mount Meru', I don't know whether one can attach too much of a symbolical significance to this, Mount Meru being the central and highest point in the physical universe according to ancient Indian cosmography. So, 'There was a certain sage who meditated on Mount Meru for centuries and when he died his bones were transformed into vajra', so what does this suggest? What could have transformed his bones into vajra? His meditation, obviously.

Sagaramati: Oh yes! [Laughter]

S: 'And Indra, the king of the gods, discovered this and made his weapon out of it, a vajra with a hundred points'. This is Indra's very special vajra, ordinary vajras have either five points or nine points but Indra's had a hundred. 'The vajra has three qualities', perhaps this is deserving of discussion. 'It can never be used frivolously, it always fulfils its function of destroying the enemy, and it always returns into your hand. It is indestructible, adamant.'

So what do you think this means, the vajra can never be used frivolously? [Pause] When we speak of vajra we speak of it -we think of it as a thunderbolt, it's something sort of external. But is it really external? It really represents a quality that you yourself have developed. So when it is said that the vajra cannot be used frivolously it means that if you are really the possessor of the vajra, if you have that vajra-like quality, using it frivolously is a contradiction in terms. Because if you were able to use it so to speak frivolously you wouldn't have it. The fact that you've got it means that you are a person of a particular nature, a particular quality, and cannot use it frivolously. So if you think of the vajra as an external object you express that fact by saying the fact of the relationship between the subjective quality and the objective weapon, by saying that it cannot be used frivolously. It's just like saying suppose you gain Enlightenment, what is the guarantee that you won't use your Enlightenment for wrong purposes? Well, Enlightenment is of such a nature that it cannot be used in that way, because it is not a thing separate from the person realising it. In the same way the vajra cannot be used frivolously because [282] the acquisition of the vajra means becoming vajra-like, i.e. non-frivolous, among other things.

'It always fulfils its function of destroying the enemy'. Who is the enemy here? The enemy presumably is everything mundane, really. 'And it always returns into your hand', you never lose it by using it. Just like the light, if you light another candle from **your** candle you don't lose the light of your own candle, so by throwing the vajra, as it were, you don't lose it - it comes back into your own hand. You may expend your energy but you don't lose your energy in that way, by expending the energy you regain energy.

So we shouldn't think of the vajra as something actually objective or external and these three little sayings about the vajra are meant to dispel that sort of misunderstanding. [Pause]

So, 'It is indestructible, adamantine.' Aksobhya or Vajrasattva-Aksobhya represents that aspect of the Enlightenment experience, its indestructible, adamantine nature. I think it's very difficult for us to get an idea about this, because we've only got mundane, physical, material analogies. We mustn't start thinking of something really hard, something really tough, something really solid. It isn't like that at all. It's tough without resistance, it's solid without - what shall I say?

_____ : Inflexibility.

S: Without inflexibility, yes. There is power without coercion. Not that it does not coerce, but that it cannot coerce. It is not coercive power held in reserve, it is non-coercive in its very nature, even though it is power. This is something almost unimaginable for us. It is indestructible but it is absolutely light and delicate and fragile at the same time.

You notice we're having some difficulty expressing or getting some conception of these purely spiritual or even transcendental qualities.

Right, go on to the next paragraph.

The Tathagata Vajrasattva-Aksobhya is holding a five-pointed vajra, - this absolutely solid object, and he is sitting on an elephant throne, - what could be more solid than that? His consort is Buddha-Lochana, the Buddha Eye. In the Buddhist tradition there are five types of eyes: the bodily eye, the Buddha eye, the wisdom eye, the heavenly eye and the dharma eye. In this case the Buddha eye refers to awakening. You may have a very solid, stable situation, but if you have no outlet it can stagnate. The feminine principle automatically opens out, she provides the exit or activation of the whole thing, the element of communication from solidness into a flowing, living situation.

S: So there are a few more details here. 'The Vajrasattva-Aksobhya is holding a five-pointed vajra.' You know what a five-pointed vajra is, don't you? There is a vajra on that lowest shelf there, I think there is, in front of that white image. Just give it to me and I will point out the five points, you might as well know exactly what they are. So they reckon them like this you see, this is one, obviously, so one, two, three, four, so you have got five. So it is a ten-pointed vajra. Sometimes there is interpolated another ridge, what do you call this - another strut as it were, so you have got five here and one, that means nine at each end. So usually [283] when they say a five-pointed vajra they mean one with five points at one end and five points at the other end. You can have also nine, that is to say you can have struts in between each of these. They are quite rare, these, and the one point that means nine at each end, that will be a nine-pointed vajra. I don't quite know how you would get a hundred-pointed vajra but anyway Indra has one so we have to accept that.



I have gone into this in the lectures of the *Symbolism of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment*. There is again a mandala here, the central point and the four cardinal points.

‘And he is sitting on an elephant throne’, he has an elephant as Vairocana has a lion. And clearly the elephant symbolises strength and firmness and immovability, you can’t very easily push an elephant out of the way, can you? He is very firm, very steady, very reliable, very solid.

‘And his consort is Buddha-Locana, the Buddha Eye. In the Buddhist tradition there are five types of eyes, the bodily eye, the Buddha Eye, the Wisdom Eye, the heavenly eye and the Dharma Eye.’ There are various sets and they are differently arranged. He doesn’t give the usual arrangement. First of all of course there is the eye of flesh, the bodily eye. Usually the heavenly eye or the *deva-caksu* is enumerated next. That is more the subtle eye, the subtle vision, it is with this vision that you see non-material objects and which of course you have in the bardo state itself. And then usually there is enumerated the *dharmacaksu*, that is to say the eye with which you see the true nature of conditioned existence, especially the rise and fall of things, the fact that things are all impermanent. And then there is the wisdom eye with which you see the higher reality of the unconditioned, this is the usual explanation, and then of course the Buddha eye which is total spiritual, transcendental vision and understanding.

So his consort is Buddha Locana, so as if to say along with that indestructible quality there is at the time the total awareness. You might even borrow a term from the previous section and say panoramic awareness.

‘In this case the Buddha eye refers to awakening.’ Yes, the Buddha eye in this sense is the highest of the five eyes, though he hasn’t actually enumerated it as fifth. His enumeration doesn’t seem to be in progressive order. So this ties up with something we were talking about yesterday; about having bodies of different degrees of subtlety, as it were. So if you have bodies you have eyes, so that you have five eyes, eyes at these five different levels suggests also that you would have or can have five bodies. **Bodies** at five different levels. So the Buddha eye is the eye that you have when you are a Buddha, it is as though that is the eye of the *dharmakaya* Buddha. When you are a *deva* you have the *deva* eye, and so on. A stream entrant would have the Dharma eye, a Bodhisattva would have - here I am just improvising these correlations but they probably would work out - the Bodhisattva has the *prajna* eye and the Buddha has the Buddha eye, and they all have their respective bodies.

But a bit more about the feminine counterpart, or female counterpart. ‘You may have a very solid, stable situation, but if you have no outlet it can stagnate. The feminine principle automatically opens out, she provides the exit or activation of the whole thing, the element of communication from solidness into a flowing, living situation.’ It’s as though now he’s talking about something else. He can’t be talking about Buddha Locana, because how could Buddha Aksobhya possibly stagnate, it’s inconceivable, it’s a contradiction in terms. So really Aksobhya and Buddha-Locana are one personality, which is [284] immovable and non-stagnating and outward flowing at the same time, all at the same time. But, on a lower level as it were you could take it that that Aksobhya-like quality, which at this level would not be of a transcendental nature, could possibly stagnate. You could have an immovability, something solid and stable which could be liable to stagnation and which did require a feminine counterpart to prevent it from doing that. So, ‘The feminine principle automatically opens out, she provides the exit or activation of the whole thing, the element of communication from solidness into a flowing, living situation.’ Do you in fact sometimes not find that the female represents the element of communication? In ordinary terms, in ordinary social terms?

_____: There are some very famous hostesses.

S: Hostesses, yes, that’s true.

_____: They seem to take upon themselves the introductory aspect of society.

S: Yes, right. Hostesses not in only in the ordinary social sense but in the intellectual sense. Women do run salons, where famous men have come along and enjoyed the soothing relaxed atmosphere and have got to know one another, or been introduced to one another by their charming and intelligent hostess. Do you see what I mean?

_____: The match-making qualities of women.

S: Match-making qualities. Yes indeed, this is very much the province of the women in India. It’s among the women that the discussions start as to who would be a suitable match for whom, that this boy would suit that girl, that girl would suit this boy. They sort it all out and talk it all over, then they start egging on, not to say prodding their husbands or brothers to make the necessary overtures. It’s the women who are behind all of this. The men usually don’t bother very much. They only start acting at the instigation of their female relations. And then again in ordinary social life if the husband is busy at work, or with work, who looks after the social life? who arranges the dinner parties? who gives him the news of what is happening, what the neighbours are doing, what relations are doing? who even keeps in touch with relations and writes letters? It’s usually the wife. We find this happening quite often. Does anybody disagree with this or find that it doesn’t happen? It **tends** to happen, let us say, or at least it **often** happens, that the woman looks after the social life, the wife looks after the social life, and is perhaps more interested in that. The husband’s social life often centres upon or revolves around his job, or is connected with that. But the social life in the broader sense is often the care of the wife.

So in a way it's not inappropriate that the female figure represents the element of communication. Do you see what I mean? There is in a way a natural symbolism here. Not that men don't communicate - they do communicate but it is in a different way or on a different level. In the more ordinary sense, and for symbols to have their power they must have their roots in very ordinary life, it's for this reason perhaps that the female figure does represent quite appropriately this element or principle of communication. And then again for communication to be possible what is needed? [285]

_____: Receptivity.

S: Receptivity, well, no, it's stronger than that, even. It's a certain emotional quality. Unless you can establish some sort of emotional rapport with the other person no communication can take place. So we often find, rightly or wrongly, and I must stress this - rightly or wrongly - that the female symbolises the emotional as distinct from the intellectual, let us say. So again from this point of view the female is more suited as a symbol for the principle of communication. Because unless you have some sort of emotional rapport with people, some sort of emotional link, even some sort of emotional tie, no communication is possible.

So if you want to be an integrated person it's not enough to leave the business of communication to your wife, **you** must develop your own emotional side, your own so-called feminine side and communicate **yourself** with the world and with other people through that. This seems to be the significance of Blake's figure of the *emanation*, she seems to symbolise that. Blake in fact explicitly states this, that one communicates with other men, other individuals, through one's emanation, that is to say through one's own **emotional** aspect. You find that if men meet together and they are all one-sidedly masculine, all quite intellectual, in a way hard-edged, not much real communication, if any, will take place. They have to be emotionally open with one another, or in Blake's terms they communicate through their emanations, through mingling of emanations, he calls it. Do you see what I mean? In the usual, alienated, social situation, as I said, you leave the business of communication to your wife. But if you're an integrated person, since you have developed from within yourself your own emanation you are responsible for your **own** communication.

Devamitra: That extends itself into business circles, doesn't it? Female receptionists.

S: Yes, I think it does, yes. Reassuring, soothing, there is no competitiveness involved. And also perhaps why you have couples going out for dinner together, meeting, and it's husbands **and** wives. If you perhaps only had the men there wouldn't be the necessary smoothness to it, it's the function of the wives to keep the wheels so to speak smoothly oiled. Do you see what I mean? Because as it were the men have delegated or handed over that function to their wives. I'm taking relatively extreme cases, of course, but you see the sort of thing I am getting at. The presence of women keeps things a bit friendly and a bit nice and a bit smooth. If the men were just on their own together, assuming that they are men who are a bit alienated and over-masculine, so to speak, perhaps they wouldn't get on together quite as well, not in the ordinary social situation. If they are working together that might be different. But if the presence of women is needed in that way it means that there's a definite imbalance or lack of development, lack of integration in the case of the men. They soften up the atmosphere, as it were. But it shouldn't be necessary to rely upon women to do that.

Buddhadasa: You do see it in meetings at Sukhavati and places like this, it's not until somebody actually starts to express his emotion in the meeting that the meeting actually starts to take off. (**S:** Right, yes.) And people say that they have [286] enjoyed that meeting. It takes us a little while for us to get up to that level, or down to that level, I am not quite sure which.

S: Well **along** to that level. [*Laughter*] A question of lateral expansion. So Blake says men communicate through their emanations. Perhaps I will read what Blake means by emanation. I have got it in my Blake dictionary, I keep quite handy, all the little quotes together. I have touched upon this sort of thing before. [All capital letters used are emphasised by Sangharakshita in the following quotation]

'The emanation is the feminine portion or "counterpart" of the fundamentally bisexual male. In Eternity where the Individual is complete again there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage as the sexual division no longer exists there.'

There are references given for these various statements, I won't bother you with those.

'Not that the emanation is annihilated, she is absorbed into the individual of whom she is still an active part, though without a separate will. "In Eternity, Woman is the Emanation of Man, she has NO WILL of her own, there is no such thing in Eternity as a Female Will".'

Do you see what I mean, this is a really profound statement? There is no such thing in Eternity as the Female Will.

'But without her the brotherhood of man would be impossible. "When in eternity man converses with man they enter into each other's bosom, which are universes of delight, in mutual interchange and first their emanations meet surrounded by their children. If they embrace and commingle the human fourfold forms mingle also in

thunders of intellect. But if the emanations mingle not with storms and agitations of earthquakes and consuming fires they will roll apart in fear. For man cannot unite with man but by their emanations which stand both male and female at the gates of each humanity”.

You see, it is very clear, isn't it?

'The emanation' - this is the dictionary maker speaking - *'is necessary for the union with god as well as man'*, a bit of theism creeping in here.

“Man is adjoined to man by his emanative portion who is Jerusalem in every individual man. And Jerusalem is the bride of the lamb, this is the mystic union of the emanation in the Lord.” It will be noted that the emanations when they achieve a separate existence and get names of their own, which the spectres never do, exhibit all the characteristics of the personae of the split personality which modern science has discovered. They seek for domination, can be dangerously destructive and fight re-integration which seems to them like annihilation. But the moment they are reabsorbed their voices cease at once. In Eden however, which is the ideal life on this earth, the male and female when reconciled co-operate. The male labours in the fields while the female works at the loom, but at the noon rest and again in the evening the emanation unlooses the horses and refreshes the male.”

'The emanation bears children which are the male's secret loves and graces, his infant loves and graces, his infant thoughts and desires. These expressions of the constant play of his imagination are also called emanations.' I'll skip a bit here. *'But the division of the emanation from the individual is a split in the personality, a stage in the fall of man, symbolised in Genesis by the extraction of Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam. etc., etc. The separated emanation takes the female form, an event which horrifies the eternal. Man is left a dark spectre, or perhaps only his spectre's power, worse yet the emanation acquires a will of her own, which by definition is turned against her consort.'* etc. etc. I'm skipping quite a bit more here. [287]

'The emanation's self-centred pride',

that is to say the separated emanation, *'seeks dominion over the male, she is jealous of all his activities and seeks to stop them by denying her husband his freedom, Jerusalem. She drives all females away from him, invents the theory of sin and the sense of guilt and curbs him with the laws of chastity. She denies herself to him, fleeing his embraces.'* This is the emanation, not the female as such.

'She murders all his innocent pleasures not knowing that she herself is the mother of these emanations, she is even jealous of her husband's labours which take his attention from her, so she prevents his working. Meanwhile the male', that is to say the individual alienated from his own emanation, *'is left a selfish and ravening spectre, his rational power unchecked by his lost emanation dominates him, he denounces all delights as sin and condemns Jerusalem as the mother of sin. His only remaining pleasure is what he imbibes from deceiving a victim. To save the marriage',* there should be inverted commas here of course but there aren't, *'the emanation must renounce her thirst for dominion and sacrifice her selfishness just as the male must also kill his selfhood and sacrifice himself to be absorbed in the brotherhood which is Jesus.'*

This is quite illuminating, isn't it? And you can see its connection with the symbolism of Tantric Buddhism.

Kuladeva: Would Blake have been familiar with Tantric symbolism and the *yab-yum*?

S: Apparently not, I don't think it was known in his day. He was familiar with some engravings of Hindu divinities, some of them with many arms, and he seems to have been slightly influenced by some of these in some of his own drawings. But as far as we know he wasn't acquainted with anything connected with Tibetan art.

So, *'The feminine principle automatically opens out, she provides the exit or activation of the whole thing, the element of communication from solidness into a flowing, living situation.'* So you can see what the female counterpart represents here and what Blake's emanation represents. It's the whole emotional, communicative, so-called female, feminine aspect of our own nature through which we relate to others more freely but which only too often we've denied, identifying ourselves in a very one-sided fashion with our own so-called masculine aspect.

And this ties up with what Buddhadasa was saying, that you only start communicating in a meeting when people start getting a bit emotional and saying what they really feel as well as what they think. And in ideal communication the two are the same. Where there is one-sidedness you either express thought without, apparently, any emotional content, or you just get emotional without there being a very definite intellectual content. People can see that you are emotional, or getting emotional, but they are not at all sure what you are getting emotional about, you are just spluttering, as it were.

Kuladeva: I've noticed this at a couple of Order days that I have been to, actually. That sometimes the subject has arisen whether people should be communicating with us in a subjective way or talking about objective things.

S: Well, the fact that one looks at it in an either/or way is itself a symptom of alienation and division. You have to do [288] both at the same time, eventually. Not consider them as alternatives. If you for instance talk about commitment, you know what you are talking about but at the same time you **feel** it, you feel the commitment which you at the same time understand.

OK, read the next paragraph.

He is accompanied by the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, the Essence of Earth, who represents any kind of fertility and growth, also an expression of that particular Buddha. And he is also accompanied by Maitreya, the Loving One. That firmness, solid and fertile at the same time, needs emotion as well in order to give life to the solidity; it is the emotional, compassionate quality of love, not necessarily selfless compassion.

S: So Aksobhya is accompanied by these two Bodhisattvas. I think perhaps we **shouldn't** try to make it too clear-cut, I mean how Aksobhya came to be associated with these two Bodhisattvas, no doubt for this there are as it were spiritual reasons but it sometimes appears that these associations took place, in a way, for almost fortuitous, likely historical reasons. But anyway, let's just go into it briefly. 'He is accompanied by the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, the essence of earth,' literally Earth-womb, 'who represents any kind of fertility and growth, also an expression of that particular Buddha.' I am not so sure about the fertility and growth, this seems to me to be a bit out of place. Let's go back to the original, the historical Buddha. Aksobhya is a sort of archetypal version of the Buddha as touching the earth and thereby calling the Earth Goddess to witness. So there is this association with the earth, so hence the solidity, the immovability, the stability and all the rest of it. So it isn't inappropriate that Ksitigarbha the Earth-womb Bodhisattva should be associated with Aksobhya. But I don't think it is **fertility** of the earth which is significant here but the fact that the earth contains all sorts of potentialities, as it were. I think **this** is the significance here. That the depth, or the solidity, the stability should not be as it were immovable. There is a depth and that depth contains something, that depth contains a certain richness, a possibility of movement, a possibility of development, fertility only in this sort of sense. It's not the fertility of the fertility cults, so to speak - you have to be careful to avoid those sort of associations, **that** sort of symbolism.

So it is not a question of representing **any** kind of fertility and growth, it is as though the stability or the indestructibility doesn't represent something fixed and definite which cannot change, it's as though it's the matrix for a development also. The earth is not just a stagnant earth, it's not a desert, it is an earth which is potentially fruitful but in the spiritual sense.

Devamitra: Could you look at it in terms of being supportive?

S: You could indeed, because the Earth Goddess who appears when the Buddha taps the earth bears witness to the fact that he has in fact performed all those Bodhisattva deeds, that he has practised the *paramitas* for so many lives and that he is worthy to sit on the *vajrasana*, the throne of all the Buddhas of old. And also she herself has supported him because all those Bodhisattva deeds have taken place on the earth, the earth has seen [289] them because they have taken place **on** the earth, because in a way she has supported them. And even now she is supporting him by bearing testimony to what he has done, she is sort of backing him up or backing up his words when Mara challenges his right to sit on that throne. And the whole way in which she is represented represents a sort of supportive attitude; she comes bearing a vase in her hands, a vase which is the symbol of the Earth Goddess, it is receptive and at the same time pouring out. And her whole attitude, a sort of prayerful respectful attitude suggests reverence and supportiveness. So yes, you could say that Ksitigarbha represented something of this sort too. Supportiveness, which is again, to make another connection, a sort of feminine characteristic. In some representations of this calling to earth episode you get the Earth Goddess pressing her head against the soles of the Buddha's feet, so this represents supportiveness *par excellence*, as it were.

You could say, again going back to what were talking about a little while ago, that the feminine, the emanation, represents not only the principle of communication but the principle of supportiveness. It's the function of the woman, so to speak, not to compete with the man but to support what he does, Blake makes this clear. And this is true of men and women literally to the extent that they are, as it were, separate or even alienated from each other and are the bearers of those respective qualities.

_____: The Earth Goddess was the medium of communication between the Buddha and Mara, in a way. Or is that stretching it too far?

S: I think that's probably stretching it a bit too far. But she was certainly supportive of the Buddha in that dispute with Mara, she didn't take Mara's side or try to manipulate the situation to her own advantage. She just supported what the Buddha said as she had been supporting his Bodhisattva deeds for thousands of years.

Sagaramati: You were saying earlier about the women being more supportive at centres. If the women ...

S: No I am not saying it in the sense that women **should be** more supportive, I am not saying that. I am saying that the majority of women have a natural healthy tendency to be supportive and that they should be encouraged to express that and to develop individually by expressing that in a more and more refined way, or in a more and more refined kind of situation. Do you see what I mean? Not that it's not particularly in accordance with their nature but anyway they should be encouraged to do it or be told that they should do it, no! They should be, just as each person should be encouraged to develop along the lines of his own nature, as it were, psychologically and spiritually, so in the case of women the majority of them, it seems, being inclined to function in that way, should in fact be **encouraged** to function in that way, not be presented with an ideal of pseudo-independence as the way of spiritual development for them. True independence is not incompatible with that supportive function; if you think that being supportive means that you are not being an individual it means that you are thinking in competitive terms in an unhealthy way.

It is just the same with men also. They should develop that supportive function. It's not that a man must always have a woman around to support him, let him develop that supportive function himself, let him be able to support another man. [290] Supposing somebody is taking a class or leading a class, an *Upasaka*, another *Upasaka* should have that supportive element in his own character, maybe that feminine element, sufficiently well developed to be able wholeheartedly to support the Order Member who is taking the class. Not to feel resentment that he is not in the position of taking it. He should be able to put himself completely in the supportive role, so to speak.

_____ : So being supportive is to help create or generate the correct atmosphere? (**S:** Yes, indeed.) And this could be extended into helping to decorate and colour whatever the situation.

S: Yes. And sometimes people don't appreciate the importance of these supportive functions. Sometimes this is why the role of the woman, sometimes, is undervalued, because it is almost as though the supportive things are treated as very secondary and very unimportant, which they are not actually. In the long run they do count quite a lot, so a certain value should be given to this supportive function, or its value should be recognised. Not that, 'Oh, you are not a particularly capable Order Member so OK, you can support the other chap, the really capable one, when he leads the class.' It shouldn't be like that. Your supportive role, even if it is just sitting beside him and being quietly supportive without saying anything, just because you communicate a feeling of supporting him and being behind what he says to the class, or whether you just go out while he's answering questions and get the tea things ready, or you make sure the door is closed beforehand and you are just doing these things, your role, your supportive role, is just as important as his out-front role, because you are contributing in an equally vital way to the success of the whole occasion.

So it's just the same way with the women who come along and maybe they wash up the tea things and they arrange the flowers and they Hoover the carpets, these are quite important functions. They shouldn't be dismissed as just supportive in a very peripheral sense, as though they could very easily be dispensed with, it isn't that at all. And some people, especially women, seem to get a lot of pleasure, a lot of joy out of doing these things. Some men do too, because some men's supportive side, which means to some extent their feminine side, is well developed. But some men are so one-sidedly masculine they can't bear to play second fiddle, as they put it. They don't care for that role at all and resent having to play it. Well, this points to a great imbalance, a great one-sidedness in their own development, in their own life. It might be a good experiment sometimes for someone who is accustomed to always lead, for instance the chairman, to have the experience of supporting somebody else instead of taking the leading role himself, always. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise if there is no one around to whom you can be supportive you are in a pretty dangerous position. Then your consciousness of being supportive to the Buddha, as it were, in **his** function, becomes more and more important. Be very careful if you have no one that you can support in this way. I don't mean support financially, necessarily, but support in those sort of situations.

And on the other hand it isn't good for someone to be **always** in a supportive situation, because it means their, as it were, more masculine side doesn't get the opportunity of developing. So you get young Order Members who are always supporting chafing [291] at the bit a little, and wanting to take on the leading role themselves. Well, they are not necessarily just competing, they are just wanting to develop in a more all-round way. So I think the supportive role, and in a sense the feminine function, and to some extent women in their more supportive function, should be encouraged and appreciated more. This is what I am saying, not that the women should be more supportive whether they like it or not. I am not saying that.

It's natural for younger, less experienced men to be supportive to the older, more experienced men, this is a very natural sort of thing. *[Long pause]*

'And he is also accompanied by Maitreya, the Loving One. That firmness, solid and fertile at the same time, needs emotion as well in order to give life to the solidity; it is the emotional compassionate quality of love, not necessarily selfless compassion.' So Maitreya, as it were, belongs to Aksobhya, or is regarded as belonging to Aksobhya in a stage, perhaps, preceding that of the fully developed Tantric symbolism in which that aspect or

that quality was expressed by the female counterpart. Do you see what I mean? 'That firmness, solid and fertile at the same time, **needs** emotion as well, in order to give life to the solidity; it is the emotional compassionate quality of love, not necessarily selfless compassion.' There is a little bit of confusion of levels here but the general meaning is clear enough, isn't it?

_____ : Is Ksitigarbha a male or a female Bodhisattva?

S: Male. But again in a way the sort of feminine qualities are involved. It's almost as though if you take the symbolism of Aksobhya too literally, the symbolism of the vajra too literally, you end up with something rather one-sidedly masculine, so it is supplemented, complemented, by these figures with their more as it were feminine associations. That's quite significant. But at this stage they are all masculine figures. Presumably you got first of all Aksobhya flanked by Ksitigarbha and Maitreya, early that is in the Mahayana, then only later in the Vajrayana not only Aksobhya but the Bodhisattvas themselves were provided with female counterparts.

_____ : You can see how the Bodhisattvas developed into females in a way, because they would tend to take on more and more the feminine characteristics of a particular aspect of Enlightenment. Like Kuan-Yin for example.

S: Yes, that is true, though in the case of Kuan-Yin it takes place, it seems, at a rather low level, she ends up as a sort of goddess of fertility. You notice that in one of my letters to *Shabda* I described a Kuan-Yin temple in Ipoh where I stayed overnight and I mentioned that it seemed to be run entirely by women, by nuns and also by lay-women, and I wasn't able to find out at that time why that was. It afterwards occurred to me that this was because Kuan-Yin popularly for Chinese Buddhists is associated with maternity, and childless women especially prayed to or made offerings to Kuan-Yin for the sake of obtaining children. So I think this is probably the reason why the Kuan-Yin temple was run exclusively by women, as it seemed. The worshippers were definitely all women, I didn't see a single man. So it could well be that the majority of them were women who were praying for children.

All right, so - [292]

Then there are the female Bodhisattvas: Lasya is the bodhisattva of dance or mudra, she is more performer than dancer, the offering goddess who displays the beauty and dignity of the body; she shows the majesty and seductiveness of the feminine principle. And Puspa is the goddess of flowers, the bodhisattva of vision, sight, the scenery.

S: Here you could say they are more like Blake's Imagination. They're the products of both the Individual and his emanation. Do you see what I mean? There's the sort of family developing - one should really watch this family symbolism, but you know what I mean.

So, 'Lasya is the Bodhisattva of dance or mudra, she is more performer than dancer, the offering goddess who displays the beauty and dignity of the body; she shows the majesty and seductiveness of the feminine principle. And Puspa is the goddess of flowers, the Bodhisattva of vision, sight, the scenery.'

Well, this doesn't really require much explanation, it sort of communicates its own feeling, doesn't it? The offering goddesses generally, who are of course associated with the eight offerings to the honoured guest, you get the further embodiment of the principle of supportiveness. In fact more than supportiveness, actual devotion, too. The goddesses, these Bodhisattvas - they are often called goddesses rather than Bodhisattvas, I think - usually embody that sort of principle.

It's almost as though all these Bodhisattvas, male and female, are different aspects of the female counterpart Buddhacarya. They've all got a certain sort of feminine quality, haven't they, whether they are regarded as being in masculine form or feminine form. They all seem more like an unfolding of the emanation, let us say, of Aksobhya. They seem predominantly feminine in quality. [Pause]

'Puspa is the goddess of flowers, the Bodhisattva of vision, sight, the scenery.' One often thinks of flowers as feminine, doesn't one? And a garden is somehow sort of feminine rather than masculine. In Catholic Christianity the Virgin Mary is called the '*Hortus inclusus*', the enclosed garden. Sometimes the feminine is compared with the earth, there are the associations of tillage and cultivation. The male as it were cultivates the soil of the female because he plants the seed there. So the female becomes a sort of fertile field, becomes a garden of one kind or another. So you get all those sort of associations.

Sagaramati: You could almost say the environment. With communication there has got to be the right environment, really for communication.

S: Yes. You could say the environment is feminine.

Would someone like to read that last paragraph?

Transcending the skandha of form, are mirror-like rays, white and glittering, clear and precise, which shine from the heart of Vajrasattva and his consort. Along with that there is the light of hell, grey light without brilliance. When the person perceives such a display of the vajra quality it seems too complicated to work with, so there is a possibility of simplifying it into the grey light, associated with hell or a fundamental notion of paranoia which is always connected with the intellectual vajra quality. In order to have intellectual understanding you have to see what is wrong [293] with everything rather than what is right; that is the natural vajra intellectual quality, the critical attitude of the logical mind, which also brings solidity. If you have an understanding of something founded on the logic of a critical attitude, then your wisdom is based on extremely solid and definite ground; it is unshakeable. But the other aspect of it is the realm of hell, when the critical attitude does not relate to solidity or basic sanity of any kind, but sets off a chain reaction, an alarm clock so to speak, of paranoia.

S: That's quite interesting, isn't it? 'In order to have intellectual understanding you have to see what is wrong with everything rather than what is right; that is the natural vajra intellectual quality, the critical attitude of the logical mind which also brings solidity.' This vajra intellectual quality shows itself much more in criticism than in creativity. Partly because there is so much more material to hand, so much to criticise especially in the form of various *miccha-ditthis*. You've got plenty of material on which to work and your really vajra-like intellectual quality really sets to work with a will, as it were. The natural vajra intellectual quality is able to do this, to be critical and truly critical because it has a very sound and solid basis of actual deep understanding from which to operate.

But on the other hand the other possibility is simply hell, and hell in a way represents criticism for the sake of criticism, criticism which is not related to any solid basis of understanding; criticism which is based upon fear, which is an expression of hostility, which is, in Trungpa's favourite term, paranoia. You just go on desperately criticising because you are afraid, because you feel threatened. Not because you have any solid basis from which you are criticising, or on account of which you are criticising. I feel this when I listen to the criticisms made by political parties, especially when the opposition criticises the government or the government criticises the opposition. Very rarely do they ever criticise from an actual position of their own, they usually criticise just to find fault, just to tear holes in what the opposite party is doing or saying, out of fear, out of paranoia, even. The fear being that they will lose to some extent, or they will lose a degree of power themselves. Very few politicians seem to criticise from a position of **even** solid principle in the ordinary sense, their criticism is just criticism. And sometimes very emotional, very childish, very reactive, and sometimes very illogical. So that's hell, they are in hell.

Kuladeva: Criticisms of some of the more extreme parties seems quite hysterical sometimes.

S: Yes indeed, because you feel so threatened. It's like some of the criticism of the women's lib people, the way they criticise men, well it just gets really hysterical.

So you can see the kind of choice that is being made here. I mean, sometimes you don't like the vajra quality, the vajra intellectual quality which is operating from a very firm, solid, genuine basis. That is just too much for you, you just fall back upon criticism for the sake of criticism. You fall into the hell world. It's very difficult to argue with people who criticise for the sake of criticising, because you can only argue with someone genuinely and usefully by getting back to [294] the original basis from which they are arguing, but if there is no actual, real objective basis, what are you to do, you can't get back to anything? They constantly shift their ground because all they want to give expression to is their hostility and negativity.

Sagaramati: And the more you go towards that ground, the more hostile they get.

S: Or sometimes they feel that their ground is not real ground, they are not really convinced of its solidity, they don't experience its solidity, so they don't allow you to get very far, to get very close, they don't allow you to probe that ground. They are very much on the defensive, they will very often try to side-step or side-track the argument or pick you up on irrelevancies. Anything to prevent you approaching the ground from which they are for the time being operating, which they actually feel is quite shaky.

If you try to argue about God with a Christian he won't examine the argument. He'll say, 'Everybody **must** believe in God, you **must** believe in it, it is necessary.' He won't discuss that, he won't go behind or won't allow **you** to go behind that feeling that there must be a God, he won't allow you to **examine** that particular feeling. He wants to start from that himself and you to start from it as agreed common ground. It's another way of defensiveness, that you assume, or that such people assume, that your ground is the same as theirs, so therefore they try to lay down in advance what the common ground is. That's their way of cutting the ground from under **your** feet, forcing you to accept their ground as common ground, which it isn't.

Tony Wharton: You can always sense when somebody is arguing in this way, it just seems a waste of energy.

S: Yes, they are just not open, that's another way of putting it. They are not even willing to consider theoretically, for the sake of argument, as it were, that the ground on which they are standing is not as solid as it might appear. They are not open to that possibility, even. *[Long pause]*

Sagaramati: It seems like in Buddhism you do have a - what can you say - not so much a shifting ground but a ...

S: A provisional ground.

Sagaramati: Yes, your ground is quite provisional, you can change, in a way.

S: Yes. Because it is **not** fixed.

_____: It's a process of island hopping.

S: It's more like hopping from one boat to another, all the boats of course being in motion, or all the islands being really whales, backs of whales.

Anyway, any further points about that paragraph, because time is nearly up?

Yes, maybe a little comment on, 'In order to have intellectual understanding you have to see what is wrong with everything rather than what is right.' Some people profess to regard this as a negative attitude that you are always criticising, that [295] you shouldn't criticise, that criticism is somehow wrong, especially if you are **always** criticising. But it's not necessarily so, because there may always be something there to criticise. You shouldn't criticise in a negative, carping, disgruntled old man sort of way, you should be more positive and inspiring than that, it should be a heroic sort of criticism, not a mean sort of criticizing. *[Long Pause]*

John Wakeman: You refer to Vajrasattva and Aksobhya as the same, were they originally the same or did they develop from the same figure or ... ?

S: Aksobhya was originally, it seems, quite separate as far as the Mahayana is concerned, but in the Vajrayana Vajrasattva seems to be a sort of esoteric aspect of Aksobhya and often they are made into a joint figure called Vajrasattva-Aksobhya. One should be careful about separating, as it were, one personality from another, or one aspect from another too rigidly. In a way they are all aspects of one another as I tried to make clear with the analogy of the crystal or diamond sphere which was gradually cut into so many facets, it's more like that.

At the same time, especially for devotional purposes each one of the facets, especially the more important facets, has a definite distinctive, as it were individuality and character of its own. You might be really taken by Amitabha or really captivated by Ratnasambhava, or by some relatively obscure member of the Pantheon, as it were. It might mean a lot to you.

All right, let's leave it there then.

[Tape 15]

Next Session

S: Third Day, Page 18. Would someone like to read that first paragraph? Or perhaps the first two paragraphs, we'll deal with them together.

THE THIRD DAY

In the process of this sequence of days, the Dharmadhatu quality of Vairocana has provided space, and the quality of Vajrasattva-Aksobhya has provided solidity. Now the vision of Ratnasambhava is described. Ratnasambhava is the central figure of the Ratna family, which consists of richness and dignity, the expansion of wealth into other areas, fundamentally solid, rich and expansive. The negative aspect of Ratna quality is taking advantage of richness in order to march into other territories, expanding into whatever space exists, over-emphasising generosity to the point where there is a blockage of communication.

Ratnasambhava is yellow in colour, which represents the earth; fertility in the sense of wealth and richness. He is holding the wish-fulfilling gem, which also means the absence of poverty. And Mamaki, his consort, represents water; in order to have rich, fertile soil the earth needs water.

S: What sort of general picture do you get from this description?

Sagaramati: Richness and abundance.

S: Richness and abundance, yes. There's a particular feature [296] which is not actually mentioned by Trungpa but which is important and is reflected in the mudra of this particular Buddha. What is that?

Subhuti: Dana mudra.

S: Dana mudra, it is giving. It's not only wealth, not only abundance but a giving of that, a sharing of that, it's riches overflowing, as it were. It's the horn of plenty, it's the wish-fulfilling gem, it comes in there. And you notice that Ratnasambhava is head of the Ratna family, the jewel family, the jewel representing all that is rich and precious.

Devamitra: You have also got to be rich in order to be able to give.

S: You have got to be rich in order to give, yes.

_____: Got to have a surplus.

S: Yes. And also in order to be able to give you have got to have a sort of feeling of unity, if you like, in the sense of 'oneness', in a manner of speaking, within inverted commas. And this is why the wisdom associated with this particular Buddha, or the wisdom of which this particular Buddha is the embodiment, is the *samatajnana* the wisdom or the knowledge of sameness. This is sort of non-dualistic giving. You give because you don't really feel any irreducible difference between yourself and the person to whom you are giving. And this is why the consort Mamaki is called Mamaki. Mamaki means 'mine-ness', that is mine-ness in the highly positive sense, the mine-ness on account of which you treat everybody as your own. Not your own in the sense that you possess them but in the sense that you are responsible for them, that you care for them, that you give to them. You don't really see them as other than or different from yourself. Not that they are extensions of your being in the narrow egoistic sense but that there is in a sense no self and no others. And your giving is based on your experience, on your realisation of that, as it were, metaphysical fact.

So Ratnasambhava represents that, that spontaneous non-dualistic giving. And Mamaki represents, well, clearly, the emotional side of that. But there is a very interesting phrase here. Clearly there are two possibilities, there is the non-dualistic giving and there is another possibility which opens at this level too and Trungpa expresses it quite well, 'over-emphasizing generosity to the point where there is blockage of communication'. In what sort of situation would this happen? Where you over-emphasise generosity to the point where there is a blockage of communication?

_____: Do-gooding.

S: Do gooding, yes.

_____: Social situations.

S: Social situations.

_____: Using it as a substitute for [unclear] [297]

S: Why blockage of communication? What does **communication** suggest, or what is communication, essentially, what sort of process?

_____: A two-way process.

S: A two-way process. So if you over-emphasise generosity what happens?

_____: You are not able to just receive.

S: You are not able to just receive, you give the other person no chance to give. In that way you block communication. But why should you **over**-emphasise generosity? - and this is suggested by what he says before. 'The negative aspect of Ratna quality is taking advantage of richness in order to march into other territories, expanding into whatever space exists.' You give in order to establish your control, your domination, your dominance.

Virabhadra: It sounds like the sort of thing that I associate with the Christian missionary activities.

S: Yes, right.

Devamitra: Colonialisation.

S: I myself have met people even in the Buddhist world, both Westerners and Easterners, who are very generous, who are prepared to give lots of money but it was clearly a means of establishing control, and they intended it quite consciously to be that. They gave the money with the idea that it would enable them to control things, to exercise control over things.

Virabhadra: That attitude is almost universal, where any giving is involved. It is almost exceptional to find just giving.

S: Yes. Spontaneous, even if not non-dualistic giving is very rare. Non-attached giving is very rare. There is very often an expectation attached to it, even if not material at least emotional, or even spiritual or pseudo-spiritual.

So, 'Ratnasambhava is yellow in colour, which represents the earth; fertility in the sense of wealth and richness.' Because basically all wealth comes from the earth, all wealth is as it were agricultural, food is the basic wealth. And 'He is holding the wish-fulfilling gem, which also means the absence of poverty. And Mamaki, his consort, represents water; in order to have rich, fertile soil the earth needs water.' Well, represents water I suppose in the sense that water is the element here corresponding to - no, I don't think it is. No, so how does she represent water, that seems to be a bit fanciful? Earth is the element here. She is mine-ness, she represents the sense of belonging in the sense that others belong to you in a positive sense, that you are responsible for them and should care for them. She actually represents that. She doesn't exactly represent water.

Devamitra: What actually is the literal meaning of Mamaki? I think we heard it this morning but I can't remember.

S: I mentioned it just now, mine-ness.

Devamitra: Oh, that is it.

S: The one who feels mine, as it were. [298]

It doesn't say anything about the supporters. What does the text say about that? - animals as it were, supporting the throne. Not lions, not elephants, but -

_____ : Horses.

S: Horses. I wonder how we come to associate horses with richness and giving.

_____ : They are very noble animals.

S: Yes. You could find the association this way, that riches and dignity are associated with kingship, and you could say that the horse is an emblem of kingship. The king rides a horse or rides in a chariot drawn by horses. And there is of course the *asvamedha* sacrifice which makes the universal monarch into a universal monarch. And horses are always very valuable, aren't they? Especially to a nomadic people.

Sagaramati: How come that Ratnasambhava comes next? I would have thought that Amitabha would have naturally come next.

S: Well, you are going round the mandala, presumably. You start in the centre, then you go to the East, then from the East you go to the South, going round the mandala in clockwise order. This is what is happening.

John Wakeman: Why is it that we went from the first day, it was the godly realm, and the second was the hell realm? One would have thought it would have gone in ascending order.

S: It's almost as though the god realm has an affinity with the realm of Vairocana, it is as though one has on the one hand a positive quality, on the other hand a negative quality, the negative quality being the obverse, so to speak, of the positive one. So which hell comes after which Buddha realm seems to be determined by that particular factor.

If, for instance, the Buddha realm of Vairocana represents openness and non-centrality, well, the opposite worldly experience would be that in which you are not satisfied with non-centrality, you want a central point to hang on to, to cling to, to establish yourself upon. And then the world of the gods represents that, the desire for centrality, permanence. So traditionally the gods have that sort of attitude. In fact they think that everything is permanent, that their celestial life is going to go on for ever, that it isn't going to come to an end. They have that sort of tendency, so therefore they represent the tendency which is complementary to, opposite to, the quality represented by the realm of Vairocana. It's some such association as this.

So that means that when you get a correlation from one point of view you don't get a correlation from another point of view. You can't so work it out that all the correlations fit to make a completely self-consistent system.

Subhuti: They don't appear in order of density of the *akasa*. (**S:** No, they don't.) But you would expect them to sort of plunge lower and lower.

S: Yes, you would expect that. Yes, you would. [Pause] [299] In the HUM for instance you have got the colours of the Buddhas in the same order, haven't you? You start off with the blue of Vairocana, then the white of Aksobhya, the yellow of Ratnasambhava, the red of Amitabha and the green of Amoghasiddhi. So here clearly you are meant to go from top to bottom in clockwise order.

There's also the fact that you have got two different things involved. In the case of the Five Wisdoms you have got the central wisdom which is the wisdom of the *dharmadhatu* and you have got then the four other Wisdoms which are represented as aspects of the wisdom of the *dharmadhatu*. So it's as if all the four Wisdoms are on the same level. But that doesn't hold good in the same way for the four elements, which in a way are on the same level as elements but they do represent degrees of density. So you are trying to correlate four Wisdoms, between which there is not a difference of degree, with four elements, between which there is a difference of degree. So you are correlating things which are not quite things of the same kind. So there will certainly be certain discrepancies. It won't be a completely internally consistent system.

None the less it is interesting to study the possible correlations and permutations and so on. Some people are very fascinated by this.

Also another thing which one must bear in mind, we don't go into here, that the difference *jnanas* are transformations of the different *vijnanas*. For instance the All-Performing Wisdom of Amoghasiddhi is the transformation of the six sense *vijnanas*, and the Wisdom of Equality, *samatajnana*, of Ratnasambhava, with which we are concerned now, is the transformation of the *klistomano-vijnana*, the soiled mind consciousness, in other words the dualistic consciousness.

Sagaramati: Do these various correlations have any practical consequences? It seems like it is all very ...

S: They are interesting. It's difficult to say whether they have any practical bearing or practical application except that many people find these correlations meaningful or suggestive and they spark them off or it gets their imagination going, or even quite inspires them, which is of course quite a practical sort of thing.

_____: On a lower level it's also even a mnemonic aid, it's a way of hanging all the various sets of five together.

S: Yes, right. Let's talk about this over-emphasizing generosity to the point where there is a blockage of communication. This is quite important in a way. It means almost that you shouldn't dazzle somebody with a display of your riches and you should in ordinary communication always allow the other person space in which to speak, or to respond. And sometimes people are quite oblivious of the need to do this. Sometimes people may come to see you and they just go on talking and talking and talking and they never give you an opportunity to say anything. In the end they are not even giving - they are simply pouring forth for their own neurotic self-satisfaction. And there is certainly no possibility of communication.

So it's very important that when you are trying to communicate you allow space for the two-way communication to take place. And if the other person is a bit backward in replying or responding, don't immediately fill up that empty space with a contribution [300] of your own.

Devamitra: It reminds me a bit of the Myth of the Return Journey. The attitude of the father to the son. (**S:** Yes.) He allows him the space.

S: Quite, that is true. He didn't wish to overwhelm him with his riches, yes, right.

All right, like to carry on with the next paragraph?

The bodhisattva Akasagarbha is the Essence of Space. With such rich ground you also need space to create perspective. And there is Samantabhadra, the All-Good, who is the basic strength, the organic quality of the whole mandala of the Ratna family. According to the traditional way of finding appropriate locations to build a home or a monastery or cultivate a new field (which was quite possibly developed by the Bön tradition of Tibet), you do not build a house merely at random, but there are psychological factors involved. There should be the open feeling of the east, and the luscious feeling of the south with brooks and rivers, and the fortifying feeling of the west with rocks, and the protective feeling of the north with its mountain ranges. There is also a way of water divining by looking at the shape of the land, and next to the spring of water there is usually a spot which is not swampy but has a good rocky

foundation to build a house. That particular rocky substance, surrounded by such appropriate shapes and locations, is called Samantabhadra, the soil Samantabhadra. Samantabhadra is also associated with aspiration and positive thinking, a basic confidence and positive way of looking at the future.

S: Ratnasambhava amongst the five Buddhas is not quite such a vivid figure as Vairocana or Amitabha or Aksobhya, do you see what I mean? He is not so much the centre or the object of a cult or of special devotion. So one finds that he doesn't have quite the same distinctive personality, he's a bit shadowy. It's not surprising that his Bodhisattvas are a bit shadowy too. Do you see what I mean?

Basically a Buddha's two Bodhisattvas represent two complementary aspects of the Buddha, i.e. of the Enlightenment experience itself. Such as wisdom and compassion, or wisdom and activity, and so on. So this is the sort of distinction which one expects to find in the two Bodhisattvas associated with Ratnasambhava but it doesn't come out quite so clearly, does it? Samantabhadra, yes, it means literally 'the all good', he seems to be more associated with [301] activity, and there are the vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra in the *Gandavyuha Sutra*, so he's associated with aspiration. But Akasagarbha is quite a vague sort of figure, he doesn't seem to be the particular object of a cult in the way that, say, Ksitigarbha is. Sometimes it's almost a matter of accident whether a Buddha or Bodhisattva becomes the object of a cult. It's when somebody sort of catches on, and it may not happen all at once. Ksitigarbha was the object of a very extensive cult in central Asia, China, and in Japan. He is the Bodhisattva who descends into hell. But Akasagarbha who is in a way his twin has never become the object of a cult in that way. But who knows, he might in the West, because he's the essence of space, or 'space womb', literally. So with all the space travel that is going on and science fiction, Akasagarbha in the West could become a highly popular Bodhisattva with a really flourishing cult. This remains to be seen. But for the time being his personality, so to speak, remains somewhat shadowy, and even that of Samantabhadra, though perhaps to a slightly lesser extent.

So these aren't really all very vivid figures, even in the tradition as it has so far existed, the Eastern tradition as it has so far existed. I think already for us in the West Amitabha is a quite vivid figure, Avalokitesvara is a vivid figure, Manjusri, Manjughosa is a vivid figure, and so on. But Akasagarbha certainly isn't a vivid figure and I don't think Samantabhadra is either. We haven't yet latched on to them, well, there wasn't much latching on even in the East, it would seem.

Kuladeva: Is Samantabhadra associated with Samantabhadra the Supreme Adi Buddha?

S: No, there is only the name in common, they are two distinct figures. The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra and the Buddha Samantabhadra these are two distinct figures. There doesn't seem to be any special association, they just have the same name.

There is an association of Samantabhadra with - what do you call it, there is a term for this - *feng shui* - geomancy In Traditional Tibetan Bön geomancy seems quite accidental, quite fortuitous. I don't know to what extent we need to go into that. Trungpa talks about it but mainly because there is almost a verbal association, it doesn't seem much more than that, but one speaks of the Samantabhadra soil, as it were. He even says that the tradition was quite possibly developed by the Bön tradition of Tibet, in which case it has nothing really to do with Buddhism and nothing to do with Samantabhadra. Perhaps it is just the fact that Samantabhadra is 'the all good', or 'the universally lucky'. Because of the meaning of the name itself, there was this association with, as it were, the finding of lucky spots on which to build your house and so on. But no doubt when you do choose a place for a centre or especially a meditation retreat certain physical features can be taken into consideration at least in an aesthetic way, if you are in fact in a position to exercise any choice. We did this a little bit in the case of Tyn-y-ddol, because there was the hill behind and the stream running past at the foot, which is very much in accordance with Tantric ideas, almost. I don't remember if you are open to the East.

_____: The hills are to the East.

S: The hills are to the East, are they? Or rocks to the West, I don't think there are.

_____: No, it's open to the West. [302]

S: It's open to the West, well, that might do just as well. But certainly you have got the hill behind you and the water before you, and those are the two **main** things, I think. [Pause]

Anyway, carry on then.

Ratnasambhava is accompanied by the female bodhisattva Mala, the goddess who offers all sorts of adornments, garlands, necklaces, bracelets and so on, to bring out the highlights of the earthy quality of ratna. The other female bodhisattva is Dhupa, the goddess who carries incense. She represents smell, scent, the environmental situation that earth creates; the fresh air, air without pollution, and the room for vegetation to grow and rivers to run.

S: So the association of Mala with Ratnasambhava is pretty straightforward. Even that of Dhupa, though the interpretation that Trungpa gives is a wee bit fanciful, but never mind, perhaps that is inevitable when one is trying to make everything fit. But you get the general impression.

All right, read the last paragraph.

The light associated with the ratna family is the yellow light of equanimity, non-discriminating light. But it seems as though all that detail and richness of the ratna mandala is too elaborate, too majestic, so there is a possibility that one would rather run into a very simple and self-satisfied little corner, and that little area is pride, the dim light of the human world.

S: Don't forget that the Buddha realm and the samsaric realm represent different possibilities which have a certain resemblance between them nonetheless. On the one hand one has got richness and on the other hand one has got pride. So the question arises what is the nature of the connection between richness and pride?

Richness, if you insist on giving too much, can block communication, we have already seen that. But what is the more general association, so to speak, the link between richness on the one hand and pride on the other? And why also does pride especially distinguish the human realm, pride in **this** sense, whatever it may turn out to be? Because on the one hand you have got the realm of Ratnasambhava, on the other hand you have got the human realm.

_____ : It's the sense of ownership.

S: The sense of ownership, yes. So the actual spiritual riches of the realm of Ratnasambhava are distorted into an ordinary human sense of ownership, and pride on account of ownership. That's the nature of the connection.

Do you think this is specifically human? It suggests a certain accumulation. Well, yes, you suggest a certain organisation when you get accumulation on a certain scale. It suggests appropriation rather than genuine richness. The contrast between, you could say, the richness of being and the richness of owning, that is the distinction. Richness of being is a spiritual quality, but richness of owning is a mundane [303] quality and perhaps distinctive of human beings. Human beings are able to amass things, material things, mental things. You could look upon this as the distinctive quality of human beings, they are able to store up for the future, because they have a sense of time, because they have a reflexive consciousness, Because there is the possibility of storing up for the future there is the possibility of accumulation, there is the possibility of collection, there is the possibility of ownership on a large scale.

So there does seem to be a sort of connection between the richness of being of the Buddha realm of Ratnasambhava and the richness of ownership of the human world. So within, say, the present life, it represents the alternatives of enjoying richness of being and enjoying richness just by owning things. In the one case you are enjoying the richness of your own being and in the other you are trying to capture the experience of richness not by enriching your own being, so to speak, or being yourself rich, spiritually rich, but by appropriating things and heaping things up. There is some resemblance here of course to the *preta* realm, because all these realms are interconnected. Do you see what I mean? Instead of developing yourself you just try to appropriate things which you can own.

Devamitra: I would have thought there was a greater parallel, actually, with the *asura* realm, in attitude. From what we have said previously.

S: Well, that may be on account of developments in the modern West. The modern West is perhaps more *asura*-like. People in India actually think this, they think that Europeans are *asuras*, they don't think that they are really human. And it is also quite interesting that in Tibetan paintings of the Wheel of Life they represent the *asuras* with modern artillery, which is of course of western origin. Sometimes they have got little cannons and rifles and things like this, taking pot-shots at the gods - those that were painted in the last century [19th] and at the turn of the century. And they have even got, they wear armour, chain-mail armour.

Devamitra: Do you actually think that the West is more *asura*-like than any other particular realm?

S: Well, if you think of the armaments race between, say, America and Russia. That seems rather asuric, doesn't it? And also, yes, this richness, this material affluence, that also seems to characterise the West. But also neurotic greed seems to characterise it too, it's almost as though all these things have been intensified in the modern West.

Subhuti: When we talked about the human realm we talked about it in terms of self-consciousness and transmission systems, really in terms of positive qualities. But we didn't go into the more negative aspects.

S: Right, though from the point of view of the corresponding Buddha realm even the positive is negative. Though again within that there is a division of the - what shall I say? - the negative even though it is relatively positive and the negative which is just negatively negative.

So you could say if you look at the human realm positively from this point of view, or within this context, it is that human beings have got so many facilities that the struggle [304] for existence, like that of the animals, has been transcended. There is leisure for spiritual pursuits, even. And this is why the Buddha who descends into the human realm is represented as carrying the begging bowl symbolizing the spiritual life itself. Which can be best led, or perhaps led **only**, within the human realm.

Again, as it were, the correspondences don't quite always fit. There is a sort of slight distortion sometimes. Or at least not even a distortion, you see things from a rather special point of view. You can consider the six realms for their own sake, as it were, when you consider them simply as all part of the wheel. But when you consider each of the five or six realms as it relates to a corresponding Buddha realm it's as though a particular aspect gets emphasised, a particular other aspect of that particular realm. So here it is pride, pride of possession, which is emphasised as the characteristic quality or even temptation of the human world, because this is the world which corresponds to the realm of Ratnasambhava, the realm of spiritual richness. So you could even say that, yes, there's the world of spiritual riches, the world of material riches. The world of material riches is the human world, because it is a world of material riches you have got your basic needs of life looked after, but you can then have leisure for the pursuit of the **spiritual** life. But of course there is the danger that instead of using your material prosperity or using the leisure that your material prosperity gives you to follow the spiritual life, you use that leisure simply to acquire riches, greater material wealth. And then there is the danger, of course, of your succumbing to private possession, or developing neurotic attachment, competitiveness too.

So is it a question of 'it seems as though all that detail and richness of the ratna mandala is too elaborate, too majestic, so there is a possibility that one would rather run into a very simple and self-satisfied little corner, and that little area is pride, the dim light of the human world.' Does this seem quite fitting, as it were?

Virabhadra: No, it is more that you want to grab all the riches.

S: You want to grab all the riches, yes, it is that in which the weakness of the human world consists and why it represents the corresponding alternative to the world of spiritual riches, the world of Ratnasambhava. You don't want to **give**, you want to grasp. *[Pause]*

Sagaramati: Is there any relation between pride and the fact of discrimination? Because the ...

S: Well, the wisdom is the Wisdom of Non-duality. So pride would be the opposite. Also, by the way, there is the fact that there is anyway a traditional list of five *klesas*, five poisons that have got to be worked in somehow. You see what I mean?

Sagaramati: Pride isn't one of them, is it?

S: Conceit.

Sagaramati: Oh, conceit. *Mana*.

S: *Mana*. So it requires a certain amount of ingenuity, but that can again stimulate the intuition, even the imagination and spiritual vision. It is quite interesting for those who enjoy [305] these sort of things. It is very stimulating.

Sagaramati: It must be really frustrating when you can't fit them all together! *[Laughter]*

S: Well, that always happens, and that itself is stimulating in the long run. It isn't all a neat, completely coherent system.

All right, let's go on to the fourth day. First three paragraphs.

THE FOURTH DAY

On the fourth day there is the purified element of fire, represented by Amitabha, the padma family. Amitabha means boundless light, and the basic quality of padma is magnetising, seductive, invitingly warm, open and compassionate. The light is boundless because it just shines naturally, it does not ask for any reward. It has the nature of fire, not in the sense of aggression, but of consuming any substance without rejecting or accepting.

He is holding a lotus in his hand, which means the same thing: the lotus opens when the sun or the moon shines on it, it opens towards the light, so any situation coming from outside is

accepted. It also has the quality of complete purity; such compassion could grow in mud or dirt but the flower is completely perfect and clean. Sitting on a peacock seat is again openness and acceptance; in mythology the peacock is supposed to be fed on poison, and its beautiful colours are formed from eating poison. It is openness which extends so far that it can deal with any kind of negative situation, in fact compassion is exhilarated by negative situations.

His consort Pandaravasini, the White-clad One, is associated with the symbolism of an Indian legend of certain clothes woven from stone, which could only be cleaned by fire. She represents the essence of fire, consuming everything, and also the result of the consuming process, purification, complete compassion.

S: Amitabha is in some ways the best-known of all the Buddha forms. Literally the name, of course, means 'boundless light', or 'infinite light', 'limitless light'.

'The basic quality of padma is magnetizing, seductive, invitingly warm, open and compassionate. The light is boundless because it just shines naturally, it does not ask for any reward. It has the nature of fire, not in the sense of aggression, but of consuming any substance without rejecting or accepting.' Compassion here is a bit misleading, it's more like love, provided one is careful how one uses the term. It is the whole emotional aspect of things, as it were. And the *klesa*, the corresponding *klesa* is of course passion, *raga*.

The colour of Amitabha is red, which in a way tells its own story: red is the colour of love, the colour of compassion, the colour of fascination. It's the colour that you first notice when you start becoming sensitive to colours as a baby. Apparently what happens is first of all you distinguish light from darkness and the first colour you distinguish is red, [306] the first colour you can recognise is red. And after that I believe you can recognise green and so on. There are certain colours like pink and mauve you only recognise far later on. So red in a way is the most vivid and attractive and easily recognisable colour. So it can stand for fascination. It's the colour of life, it is the colour of blood, isn't it? It has got all these sort of associations.

So Amitabha stands, in a way, for love. And obviously the mundane counterpart, the worldly counterpart, is passion. The wisdom of course is the *pratyaveksana-jnana*, the Discriminating wisdom. So why should there be an association of the Discriminating Wisdom with passion, is there any particular **reason** for that, do you think? Do they really cohere in some way?

Subhuti: Well, passion attaches strongly to particular objects.

S: Yes. So it's as though *pratyaveksana-jnana* is an aspect of *jnana*. It's as though previously you had the *samatajnana*, the Wisdom of Sameness, or Wisdom of Equality it is usually translated, here you see everything as one. But that is just one-sided, so along with the wisdom that sees everything as one you see the wisdom which comprehends the infinitesimal differences of things. The uniqueness of things. But doesn't make that a basis for preference and therefore for exclusive attachments. Attachments by their very nature being exclusive and monopolising or monopolistic. Do you see what I mean? So there does seem to be some sense in this fact that passion is the counterpart of love and that the Discriminating Wisdom is associated with both love and passion.

If you look lovingly at something you just see every, even minutest, part of it, you don't miss anything. But if it is a sort of impartial love you don't sort of stick anywhere, you just see everything, everybody. But if it's a passion then you sort of seize upon one particular thing or one particular person, or one particular aspect and you develop a sort of exclusive liking for that, and that is passion in the ordinary sense.

Also of course there is the association with Amitabha of fire, maybe because of the red colour of fire. But fire does consume everything, it accepts everything, so you could say that the infinite light of Amitabha suggests openness, the lotus suggests openness, the red lotus. Openness suggests readiness to receive. Well, the fire also receives whatever is thrown into it - there's a whole rather loose association of ideas here. And the same thing with the peacock, the peacock is able to eat even poison. So you get here especially the concept of transformation. 'In mythology the peacock is supposed to be fed on poison and its beautiful colours are formed from eating poison. It is openness which extends so far that it can deal with any kind of negative situation. In fact compassion is exhilarated by negative situations.' It's the transformation, fire is also a transforming symbol. Because originally in India there was the fire sacrifice - well, all over the world. So why did you burn things as offering to the gods, what was the idea? Has anyone ever thought of this? Well, you throw things into the fire, they are burned, they are turned into smoke, and the smoke ascends up into the heavens and in that way the offering, the burnt offering, is carried up, it is conveyed to the gods. So the fire represents a sort of symbol of transformation, the fire even becomes a messenger, he is a messenger between earth and heaven. Fire, the god of fire, Agni, carries the offerings of the worshipper [307] up into heaven. So fire in this way becomes a symbol of transformation and transmutation.

And the peacock represents the same sort of thing. The peacock is able to face, he is able to swallow, the poisonous snake, and the poison of the snake is transformed into all the beautiful colours of the peacock's tail.

So it suggests these symbols of transformation are associated with Amitabha, the fire symbol, the peacock symbol, probably because it's especially necessary to transmute passion into love, as it were. It is almost as though it is our basic problem, how to transmute that passion, that energy, from something worldly into something spiritual.

Sagaramati: Again, discrimination would be really necessary.

S: Would be really necessary, yes.

Sagaramati: Is it the same energy that's transformed or is it another energy that arises in dependence on some other factor?

S: In a way it's probably an unreal consideration, because is energy a **thing**?

Sagaramati: Well, it's an experience. What I am really saying is when you experience something can you, in that experience, go on to something higher, i.e. refine your experience?

S: It would seem that you can, whatever the actual theoretical explanation may be. I mean, one form of energy it seems to be transformed into another, you can in a manner of speaking speak of basic energy, but perhaps you should be careful how you do that, especially if you treat it as a sort of thing which is literally transformed into other things.

Sagaramati: It's like the idea of *metta*. Can you develop *metta* if you haven't got a cruder form of that energy?

Subhuti: Passion.

Sagaramati: Well, even friendliness. I mean if you haven't got any exclusive sort of attachment to people in a sense, can you develop a non-exclusive ...

S: Well, it is more a question of can you develop *metta* if **you** have no energy? It's not so much a question of whether you have a particular kind of energy, but whether **you** have energy. Because it's **you** developing *metta*, it's not passion developing *metta*, it's you.

Sagaramati: But you have a certain type of energy.

S: Even the whole question of you **have** energy. That is only a manner of speaking. You **are** energy.

Sagaramati: You are energy, right, yes. Well, you are a manifestation. *[Laughing]*

S: You are now being passion, you can if you wish be, that is to say become, *metta*.

Sagaramati: But can you be, say, hatred, and not experience passion and become *metta*? That is what I was trying to say, really? [308]

S: Well, it would seem that if one speaks of a process of transformation there are certain necessary steps. You can't go from A, say, to Z, you have to go from A to B and B to C etc., etc. As in certain chemical processes you can't go from the first stage directly to the last. There is a definite process, a definite sequence of steps to go through, it would seem rather like that. So it is as though from hatred you would have to go to friendliness and then from friendliness to *metta*, not directly from hatred to *metta*.

I have discussed this somewhere, sometime, in some previous seminar some time ago. *[Pause]*

So, 'His consort Pandaravasini, the White-Clad One, is associated with the symbolism of an Indian legend of certain clothes woven from stone which could only be cleaned by fire.' This seems to be a reference to asbestos, doesn't it? I think asbestos cloth was known to the ancient Greeks, wasn't it, as far as I remember? The term asbestos is Greek, isn't it? Look up in my Greek dictionary if you want to make sure. 'She represents the essence of fire, consuming everything, and also the result of the consuming process, purification, complete compassion.' If the emanation represents the more emotional side, Pandaravasini is clearly passion which has been purified. Passion as love, associated with the infinite light of Amitabha and the All-Discriminating Wisdom, the more emotive aspect of that particular aspect of the Enlightenment experience.

_____: That's a really strong image, that.

Sagaramati: It does really state that the basic thing needed for transformation is emotion, doesn't it?

S: Yes, yes. But emotion, what moves from one place to another, in a way energy, you could say. Emotional energy. We don't psychologically experience just energy so much as **emotion**, do we? Energy is usually emotionally tinged, either positively or negatively.

It's as though one can do very little, if anything, without emotion, without inspiration, without as it were driving power.

All right, read on about the Bodhisattvas, then.

Then there is the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the essence of compassion, he who sees in all directions, which is the ultimate intelligence of compassion. Whenever compassion is needed it happens naturally, it has a sharp, automatic quality; it is not idiot or blind compassion, but intelligent compassion which always fulfils its function. Manjusri too represents the mechanical aspect of compassion, but here it is an intellectual rather than a purely impulsive quality. He is also the creator of sound, the communication of compassion; he represents the sound of emptiness which is the source of all words.

S: As I mentioned, the Bodhisattvas in, as it were, the pre-Tantric phase of the development of the five Buddha families represent the more feminine aspect. Or not exactly the more feminine aspect, they represent the Enlightenment experience as it were split up into its constituent complementary aspects, [309] usually Wisdom and Compassion, or Compassion and Wisdom. So here this is very clearly the case. Representing Compassion there is Avalokitesvara, representing Wisdom there is Manjughosa or Manjusri. He is more often, though, associated with the Buddha family of Vairocana, and in the Far East you usually get flanking, or associated with, the figure of Amitabha not Avalokitesvara and Manjughosa but Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. Mahasthamaprapta means '*he who has attained great strength*'. In other words here the complementary qualities are love or compassion and activity - if you like the feminine and the masculine, which are united in the figure of the Buddha Amitabha. Though you can regard the complementary quality of Compassion as being either Wisdom or as being activity. It's as though in one case it is more like feminine and masculine, in the other it's more like receptivity and activity. Avalokitesvara, of course, being the best known, probably, of all the Bodhisattvas, and Manjusri coming not far behind him.

I don't quite like the use here of the words 'automatic and mechanical', I think they are perhaps rather unwisely chosen.

Sagaramati: Spontaneous instead of automatic.

S: Spontaneous, yes. *[Pause]*

Now on to the female Bodhisattvas.

Then there is Gita, the female bodhisattva of song, who sings to the music of Manjusri; and along with her is Aloka, who holds a lamp or torch. The whole process of compassion has rhythm and light, it has the depth of intelligence and the sharpness of efficiency, and it has the purifying nature of the white-clad Buddha as well as the infinite all-pervading quality of Amitabha.

S: In this way he tried to tie together all these figures, perhaps slightly fancifully but perhaps sometimes that is the only way in which one can do it. The whole set of symbols is meant to stimulate one's spiritual imagination rather than to provide one with factual information. So yes, one can associate Gita with this particular family, as she is, yes, song, and Manjusri is associated with sound, you could say music. So she sings to his music, and in that way you can make a sort of association. In fact you should make your own associations, this is why it is quite interesting to study these correlations, not be just satisfied with the connections and correspondences which are actually given, it is not a factual thing, it is to help you to see certain things, certain relations. You should try to work out your own as well, why Gita is included here for instance, why Aloka is included here. Aloka holds the lamp or torch - it is the lamp actually - and yes, there's fire, yes, there's light, yes, there's a lamp, a lamp is a little fire. You can connect it in that sort of way.

All right, go on to the next paragraph which gives a bit of extra information.

That is the complete padma family, which transcends the skandha of perception and shines with the red light of discriminating awareness wisdom. Compassion is very detailed and precise, so it is necessary to have discriminating awareness wisdom, which does not mean discriminating in terms of acceptance and rejection, but simply seeing things as they are. [310]

S: Yes, this is quite important. 'Which does not mean discriminating in terms of acceptance or rejection'. So the discriminating wisdom sees things very much in their particularity, exactly as they are, each one. But it does not discriminate in the sense of preferring this one **to** that one, because this would involve passion rather than

compassion, rather than love. So it is significant that the *skandha* which is associated with this particular Buddha family - don't forget there's a correspondence also between *skandhas* and Buddha families - is perception, *samjna*. Because what is actually perception?

Sagaramati: Sort of identification.

S: It's identification, that this is that. When you see a flower growing in the garden, you see it and then you think, 'Ah, that's what it is, it's a rose.' You perceive that it is a rose, you recognise that it is a rose. It is not perception in the sense of simple sense impression without any mental activity. *Samjna*, or perception as *samjna*, involves a certain amount of mental activity. You identify what you perceive as this or that particular object. So it does seem quite appropriate to connect the *skandha* of perception with the Buddha Amitabha and with, therefore, the discriminative wisdom. So you can discriminate things in this way, you can see them for what they are without necessarily any question of liking or disliking them.

_____: In that perception, *samjna*, is that element of identification a conscious one or could it be just seeing a rose and knowing that it was a rose [*unclear*]?

S: There are sort of levels of consciousness and levels also of clarity of perception. You might know what something was without being able to give its name. You recognise it in the sense that you have seen it before, in that sense you can identify it, but you may not always be able to recall the precise factual information as part of the process of identification. You may know that it's a rose but you may not be able to say what kind of rose it is, there are hundreds of kinds of roses, not to say thousands. You may not be able to give its actual name but you know roughly what it is. At the very least you know that it's a flower, you see that red thing growing there, well, that is a flower, it's not a red leaf or a piece of red cloth that has fallen there as you might have thought when you saw it from a distance - ah, it's a flower, that is perception, identification, recognition.

All right, last paragraph.

In this book it is associated with the realm of the hungry ghosts; there is some conflict here, because passion is usually connected with the human realm. All these padma qualities, sharpness and precision and depth and majesty, have been found too overwhelming, and somehow one would like to play a game of deaf and dumb; one would like to sneak away from that complete picture into the side-tracks of ordinary passions.

S: It's not **quite** like that, is it? The association with the realm [311] of the hungry ghosts doesn't seem to have been quite adequately made. Let's try to work it out in a more satisfactory way, in more satisfactory terms.

Sagaramati: The hungry ghost realm would be like having the passion but not the means to satisfy it, or be not discriminating enough and going looking for your satisfaction.

S: One could look at it like that.

Subhuti: Is the key in alienation, alienation from feelings?

S: Yes, alienation from feeling, especially if Amitabha is feeling, positive feeling, love, whereas the *preta par excellence* almost is alienation from feeling.

Subhuti: So you recoil from the strength of feeling into a sort of absence of feeling?

S: Right, yes, one could very well put it in that way. You experience everything without being able to feel anything. Lots of people seem to do that, don't they?

So it isn't just sneaking 'away from that complete picture into the side-tracks of ordinary passions', you are worse off than that. It isn't even a case of ordinary passions. The poor *preta* isn't even in the position of being able to experience **those**. He is at one remove **further** from the love represented by Amitabha. He is not only estranged from love as a **spiritual** quality, he is alienated from emotion even as a **worldly** quality.

Sagaramati: So playing a game of deaf and dumb - that would be a process of alienation?

S: In what way? How do you work that out?

Sagaramati: Well, I mean starting from the fact that to begin with you are not alienated, how do you become alienated? You experience certain feelings but you play deaf and dumb to them.

S: But what makes you do that?

Sagaramati: Well, maybe you know from the world you are in, the environment you are in, that those feelings are not that acceptable or they're shallow or something like that.

S: It could be that. It could be that that is the way in which you start being alienated from your feelings. We talked about this a bit this morning, mentioning for instance that in children sexual or, say, erotic feelings were discouraged and in that way you could become perhaps a bit insensitive to your own feelings and then even estranged and then even alienated from them.

Sagaramati: So particular environments will produce corresponding alienation?

S: Well, they are not just environments, they are other people. Environments in the sense of other people doing things to you when you are not in the position to protect yourself or look after yourself. It's not birds and trees doing it all to you, or flowers or rocks. [312]

Virabhadra: So a good upbringing is one in which one finds one's emotional life sort of intact?

S: Yes, that is one aspect or one element of a good upbringing, certainly. In which one's parents do not succeed in alienating you from your own feelings. In fact to have no such aim (*unclear*) otherwise and try to **preserve** your feelings.

_____: You usually find notions of socialisation are set up as being opposed to feeling. Civilising the child is seen as inevitably being connected with suppressing certain emotions.

S: Socialisation certainly is necessary, but it's more that it is a question of socialising the **expression** of the emotions rather than the emotions themselves. And the socialisation of the expression should not be so rigid or so extreme that the feelings themselves are inhibited. It's a question of a middle way, which admittedly it isn't always easy for the parents to find.

_____: In a way it is quite subtle, really, isn't it?

S: Yes. Because a child does have to be socialised so that it may survive. But you don't want to socialise it to such an extent that there is very little left **to** survive, or to make it **worth** surviving. [Pause]

Anything more to say about the padma family of Amitabha? In some ways it's the family we know best, isn't it?

Kuladeva: It doesn't say anything about Padmasambhava.

S: No, it doesn't. He's in a sense a more remote member. But he's also, as it were, a historical figure and these are all as it were archetypal forms. There are other figures that could have been mentioned but which aren't. Like Padmanartesvara, the lotus lord of dance.

John Wakeman: Isn't Padmasambhava supposed to have traditionally written the Bardo Thödol? Been associated with its writing.

S: Certainly, yes, it is a *terma*, and a *terma* of course is written and deposited by Padmasambhava and subsequently discovered by one or another of his manifestations and taken out. Broadly speaking it is only the Nyingmapas who recognise the *termas* as scriptures and use them as such. Though in the case of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* as **we** call it, it has become quite widely popular in Tibet, even outside strictly Nyingmapa circles.

Subhuti: Is Shakyamuni supposed to come from the padma family?

S: No, I don't think so. I'm not sure about that, I could look it up. It might be, I have got it here somewhere. At least I had it, unless somebody has borrowed it.

It is Shakyamuni in the lotus family, yes.

Devamitra: Is Milarepa actually associated with a particular family?

S: Seems not to be, no.

Kuladeva: What is the significance of Padmanartesvara? [313]

S: He is a sort of guardian or protector and he has a number of arms, sixteen arms I think it is. But don't quote me because I am not completely sure exactly how many. There are other books which contain the information. And many legs. And each of his sixteen or so hands holds a red lotus.

_____: Is he a wrathful form?

S: Not exactly wrathful, sort of stern rather than wrathful.

_____: Is he connected with Shiva?

S: Not as far as I know at all, no.

Anandajyoti: It is strange that Shakyamuni is associated with the padma family because in a way Shakyamuni is in vertical alignment with Vairocana.

S: This is true, yes. That is true. But again these things don't always correspond in the way that one thinks they should.

_____: Isn't it because we are in the aeon as it were of Amitabha, at the moment? You mention in the *Survey* this is ...

S: Yes, it's more the aeon of Avalokitesvara, who is of course linked with Amitabha. There is a Tibetan belief, no doubt based on certain sutras, that Avalokitesvara is as it were in charge of the spiritual affairs of humanity during the interregnum, as it were, between the disappearance of Shakyamuni and the appearance of Maitreya as a Buddha.

Sagaramati: How sort of literalistically does one take these Buddha families? I have heard somewhere that you are born into a Buddha family or something, and you belong to that family.

S: Well, the Buddha family represents a certain set of qualities which can be either spiritual or mundane, and you as a person of a certain temperament or quality can either be of, or have an affinity for, that particular family.

Sagaramati: I got the impression this extended over a period of lives. Like, once your character was basically formed and there wasn't much you could do about changing your basic character.

S: It could be but on the other hand I wouldn't like to make any hard and fast rule. If you are following a particular line of spiritual development, and especially if you are, say, devoted to Avalokitesvara or Amitabha and are carrying on with their particular spiritual practices very vigorously, the chances are that you would continue over a period of several life-times without changing your particular line of practice. Which would presumably be in harmony with the temperament that you continued to be born with.

Devamitra: You are not confusing a line from the *Bodhicaryavatara* which draws a parallel between - it's something to do with the Bodhicitta arising? 'Now my birth is complete I am ...

Sagaramati: No, I don't know where I have actually got it from. I've heard it but I don't know where it came from. [314] Because I did get the impression that you had some..., you were a sort of basic character, like really deep down inside you there was a sort of tendency and that tendency was so deep that it continued life after life.

S: That could well be so, though at the same time one would not like to state categorically that that was so in all cases. But certainly one can envisage that possibility of someone following the line of spiritual practice or practices represented by a particular Buddha family over a period of many lives. In a way that is implied, say, in the possibility of being, say, a Nyingmapa in a succession of lives. Because if you were in fact a Nyingmapa it would mean that for you Amitabha would be the *dharmakaya* Buddha and Avalokitesvara the *sambhogakaya*, and Padmasambhava the *nirmanakaya*. So you would definitely be associated with the padma family by virtue of the fact of your being a Nyingmapa in a whole series of lives.

And the fact that you can be a reincarnate lama over a whole series of lives, but in the same monastery and following the same spiritual tradition, would suggest that possibility. Anyway, perhaps this is getting a little speculative, so perhaps we should come really right down to earth and have a cup of tea.

_____: One last point. I was interested in the fact that you seem to be prepared to use the word love which you've always been very reluctant to do.

S: Yes. Very much within inverted commas, please. I sometimes think one just has to use that word though it is so unsatisfactory. I wanted to avoid compassion as in a way too specialised by presenting 'love', so to speak, that looks down upon. Though, yes, certainly you can do that but it is only limited to that particular function. One needs a more general, less specific term, hence love, for want of any other. Or *metta*, yes, but as we use the word *metta* we do associate it much more with almost a mundane positive quality.

_____ : *Maha metta*.

S: One could say *mahametta*, yes. Or *mahamaitri*, one could certainly use that term just as one uses *mahakaruna*. Yes, *mahamaitri*. Though even that is not really enough in a way. The Tantric *maharaga*, the great passion, the great representing or symbolising the fact that the passion has been transmuted by the force of *sunyata*.

Tape 16

All right, the fifth day. Read perhaps those first three paragraphs, one after the other.

THE FIFTH DAY

On the fifth day there is the karma family, which is the pure quality of air or wind. It is a green light; the colour of envy. From the Realm of Accumulated Actions the Tathagata Amoghasiddhi appears. The karma family is associated with action and fulfilment and efficiency. It is powerful and nothing can stand in its way, therefore it is regarded as destructive. Amoghasiddhi means accomplishing all actions, all powers.

He is holding a crossed vajra in his hand. The vajra is a symbol of fulfilling all actions, tough and indestructible, as we saw in the vajra family. The crossed vajra represents the area of all [315] activities completely perceived in all directions, panoramic fulfilment; often it is described as a multi-coloured vajra.

He is sitting on a seat of shang-shang, a kind of garuda; this particular type of garuda is a musician, he holds two cymbals in his hands and plays them as he carries Amoghasiddhi on his back. It is again a very powerful image and a symbol of fulfilment, a kind of super-bird, a transcendental bird who can fly and cover all areas, encompassing all space.

S: Amoghasiddhi is a slightly mysterious figure. I think Govinda brings this out a bit better in his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*. Amoghasiddhi is action, his name means 'the unobstructed success'. He is the head of the karma family, karma means action. But it isn't, so Govinda suggests, and I think perhaps he is right here, it isn't very overt or obvious action, it is subtle, indirect action. This is in a way suggested, I think Govinda points this out, by the colour green. Green is in a way an ambiguous colour. It is the result of a mixture of blue and yellow so there is a certain subtlety about it which you don't get in the case of the primary colours. Otherwise you have got blue, you've got yellow, you've got red, these are primary colours. You've also got white which is the synthesis of all the colours. But amongst the colours of the five Buddhas the colour of Amoghasiddhi, green, is the only colour which is a - what do you call it, is it called a secondary colour? (_____: Yes) It is the only colour which is a secondary colour. And also Govinda suggests Amoghasiddhi is a bit like the twilight, as it were, when you get a sort of blue of the night and the gold of the day - as a popular song used to say - sort of merging, you can get a [fault in tape two or three words lost] there. So he suggests that Amoghasiddhi, or the action of Amoghasiddhi represents something sort of subtle and even esoteric. It's not just action in the ordinary, crude, obvious sense. And this would seem to be more appropriate, more in keeping with Enlightenment, that its activity is subtle activity, a Buddha activity is a subtle, even an esoteric activity, that it works in unknown ways. A bit like God, you could say! [Laughter] 'God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, he plants his footsteps on the sea' - you should pronounce it 'say' here because it's eighteenth-century - 'and rides upon the storm'. Who is this, who wrote this? Was it Addison? It was some other name, I think, but anyway. But do you get the same sort of idea, except that riding on the storm isn't particularly subtle and typical of the rather crude and obvious riding which the Christian God tends to do. [Laughter] The Buddhist Buddha is a bit more subtle and really esoteric, and really does move in a mysterious way. Do you see what I mean? There is a sort of subtle, almost indefinable type of action, refined and delicate, it is that which is the activity of the Enlightened mind. So one could also look at things in this way. So, 'the karma family is associated with action and fulfilment, and efficiency.' But not only that: 'It is powerful and nothing can stand in its way, therefore it is regarded as destructive'. I think that's a bit beside the point, actually. So, 'Amoghasiddhi means accomplishing all actions, all powers.' It's unobstructed success. 'He is holding a crossed vajra in his hand. The vajra is a symbol of fulfilling all actions, tough and indestructible'. Trungpa seems to like this word tough, I am not quite sure why, 'as we saw in the vajra family the crossed vajra represents the [316] area of all activities completely perceived in all directions, panoramic fulfilment;' that's a good expression, 'often it is described as a multi-coloured vajra.'

Virabhadra: We heard in the lecture this morning that the double vajra is concerned with the union of opposites.

S: Yes, one can certainly look at it like that.

Devamitra: You also said that it was a very complex symbol and that you didn't have time to go into it, [Laughter] on that particular occasion.

S: The union of opposites also comes out in the colour green. Because you could say that the blue is as it were masculine, the yellow is as it were feminine. Because blue is heaven and yellow is earth. So it is a sort of synthesis of the blue and the yellow, the masculine and the feminine. So it is as it were androgynous. This is not specifically brought out in the figure of Amoghasiddhi, but you could look at it in this way. In a sense all the Buddha figures are androgynous, they have, though predominantly masculine, slight feminine characteristics too. Their contours are sort of rounded in a slightly feminine way. And of course in the Tantric *Yab-Yum* figures the masculine-feminine components are made fully explicit as separate masculine and feminine or male and female figures. So things of this sort are suggested by the colour, the green colour of Amoghasiddhi. A union of the opposites. And the crossed vajra symbolises this too. There are two vajras so you could say each vajra doesn't represent a particular opposite but the directions are opposite, one is horizontal, the other is vertical. The horizontal is the feminine, the vertical is the masculine. So again you get a unity of opposites, especially those particular opposites which are the masculine and the feminine.

_____: Do you ever see crossed vajras, are they made, manufactured?

S: No, you don't get them as far as I know, I have never seen a crossed vajra actually as one single implement, as it were. You see a sort of crossed vajra at the top of the staff of Padmasambhava, but really there are only three heads there, not four. But they are represented two-dimensionally. I have never seen a three-dimensional representation.

The shang-shang is a typically Tibetan type of creature, a kind of garuda. It has got the head of a man, hasn't it? and the body as far as I remember of an eagle. But what the significance of the two cymbals is which he plays as he carries Amoghasiddhi on his back I am not sure. Clearly there is a sort of association with the wind, the air, because the bird flies through the air, but why a man/bird I am not quite sure. Except maybe that particular figure happens to be handy in Tibetan mythology. Also, yes, air transmits sound, doesn't it? Hence perhaps the cymbals, the clashing cymbals. Or perhaps you could say - I am being a bit imaginative here, not to say fanciful - the clashing cymbals represent the opposites which in their unintegrated state are clashing. But in the case of Amoghasiddhi the Buddha they are no longer clashing, they are integrated, they are reconciled, they are unified. One could very well look at it like that. One is **meant** to treat symbols in this way. They don't have straightforward, logical, scientific [317] meanings, one is meant to allow one's imagination to play around them and to discover as it were new meanings, hidden meanings, unsuspected meanings, esoteric meanings and all the rest of it. But not to take them too seriously in a factual scientific sort of way as though that is the one and only truth about those symbols. They are suggestive and evocative, not literally descriptive or factually informative. So you should let your imaginations play, and if nothing much seems to be coming up and maybe sometimes the study of these things seems a bit sterile, it's because you are not giving your imaginations play.

Subhuti: Garudas eat nagas, don't they?

S: Garudas as such, generically speaking, eat nagas. The garuda as compared with the naga - again we go off at a bit of a tangent here - a garuda is an air symbol and a naga is an earth symbol, so naturally in a way there is a certain hostility between them.

Sagaramati: But nagas are water symbols, surely?

S: Sorry, yes it's water, air and water - water rather than earth, yes. But two different elements.

Anyway, if you conjure up the figure of a great bird like an eagle with the head of a man, flying through the air with his arms - he seems to have arms as well as wings - clashing a pair of cymbals, what would this really convey to you? Or does it have no resonance in your psyche at all?

Devamitra: If anything it is quite nightmarish, actually.

S: Oh, I tend to think of it as rather quaint!

Sagaramati: It seems to be a calling up of something.

S: I believe, I am not sure whether this is the actual garuda or this kind of garuda too, that he has a parrot's beak. But perhaps it is only the garuda proper, not this particular kind of garuda, the shang-shang.

_____: It could be a bit of Victoriana. [Pause]

_____: If you saw one you would think great events were about to take place.

S: But again these composite creatures also represent a unity of opposites. I don't know whether the shang-shang is included but there are pairs of animals in Indian mythology that have a natural antipathy to each other. For instance there is the garuda and the naga. What are others?

_____: The mongoose and snake?

S: The mongoose and the snake, the otter and the fish. Especially the otter and the fish. But then it is said that at the time of the Buddha's Enlightenment that such a wave of love went through the universe that even inveterate enemies became reconciled and these mutually hostile beasts became reconciled to such an extent that they copulated with each other and produced a hybrid breed. And therefore the hybrid animals are symbols of *metta* and reconciliation, and unification. I don't remember that the shang-shang is among these but certainly there is a creature produced [318] by the union of the garuda and the naga, and the otter and the fish. And I remember these creatures feature in a coat of arms - if you can call it that - of Dharo Rimpoché's school, he deliberately included them there as symbols of *metta* and world peace, so to speak, through Buddhism. Do you get the idea?

Sagaramati: The snake and the eagle - they are enemies even in the West.

S: Yes, indeed yes. In Shelley, don't you remember the opening of *The Revolt of Islam*, the vision of the eagle and the serpent fighting in the air?

_____: They're reconciled in Zarathustra.

S: Right, yes.

_____: What about the lion and the lamb?

S: The lion and the lamb. Well they are not exactly enemies - poor lamb, he doesn't stand a chance, does he?

But I don't know whether the shang-shang is the product of such a union between, say, an eagle and a human being. I don't think it is actually included. But there is a sort of suggestion of the union of - if not of opposites, of different things, disparate things. And this seems to tie up in a way with the symbolism of Amoghasiddhi himself, his colour which is a product of blue and yellow, and his double vajra which represents a union of opposites, the vertical and the horizontal, the masculine and the feminine.

Sagaramati: So the action of the unification of opposites would be subtler.

S: Yes, would be subtler. And also action which is an action of something which is unified and not one-sided is subtler. The action of a man is pretty overt, the action of a woman as such is pretty overt, but the androgynous being, one would imagine, acted in a more subtle indirect sort of way. Was less easily identifiable as this or that because less one-sided, less polarised. It's action which is not polarised, non-polarised action.

I have just looked here, we are going to have to back-track a bit. Anyway, let's wait until we come to it, never mind. Let's carry on reading about the consort.

His consort is Samaya-Tara, the Saviour of Sacred Word or Samaya. There are different interpretations of samaya in the Tantric teachings, but in this case it is the actual fulfilment of the living situation at that moment.

S: Actually, according to the Tantric tradition it is not Samaya-Tara but Shama-Tara. [*Transcriber's note: I can find no reference to Shamatarā (Samatara) anywhere to date. Most reference works on the Tibetan Book of the Dead still speak of Amoghasiddhi's consort as being Samayatarā*] Shama meaning dark, especially in the sense of green or greeny-blue. So I think this is a misunderstanding on the part of the Tibetans generally, mixing up Samaya with Shama. It is definitely Shama-Tara in the Tantric texts, the dark green Tara and that, of course, seems appropriate. The connection with Samaya here in a way does seem a little forced anyway.

The green Tara, so called Shama-Tara is of course one of the most popular figures in the entire Buddhist, especially Tibetan Buddhist, pantheon, to use that expression. And it is interesting [319] to note that the green Tara doesn't simply represent compassion, she is especially associated with Wisdom speedily attained. And the wisdom speedily attained would appear to be connected with the fact that she belongs to the family of Amoghasiddhi, the karma family, action family. She represents especially Wisdom speedily or swiftly attained.

Incidentally, somebody did ask me the other day about the meaning of the Tara mantra, the *om tare tuttare ture svaha*. The word Tara itself comes from a verb meaning 'to ferry across', to ferry across means to save. So Tara, the proper name, the noun, represents the one who saves. The *Tare Tuttare Ture* represents playing around with that that noun, so it is sort of variations upon the theme of saving. So the usual explanation that is given is that the mantra represents the three stages of salvation, or being saved, or for saving oneself. The

Tare represents being delivered from the sufferings of the *samsara* into a happy, heavenly world. That is the first deliverance. The second deliverance is being delivered from the *samsara* itself, including the happy or heavenly world, delivered onto or into the definitely spiritual path, but the path of individual salvation, that is to say the Hinayana path. That is represented by the *Tuttare*. Then the *Ture*, the third, represents the deliverance from the path of individual salvation, that is to say the Arhant path, into the path of universal salvation, i.e. the Bodhisattva path. Do you see what I mean? This is the explanation that is usually given. These three stages of deliverance.

So from unhappy to happy worldly life, from worldly life to spiritual life in the slightly individualistic sense and from the individualistic spiritual life to the altruistic spiritual life.

Sagaramati: I heard that you had said that every male Order Member should do the Tara practice, or it would be good that every male Order Member did it.

S: Well, yes and no. I don't know whether it was this group or the other group I suggested that chairmen especially should do it.

Sagaramati: That was in this group the other day, the White Tara practice.

S: Did I? Well, no, I think I was referring to Tara practice in general, I don't think I specifically mentioned White Tara practice.

_____: You did mention that there was a White Tara practice where you visualised yourself as the White Tara worshipping Amitabha.

S: Yes. But I didn't mean to suggest that I was especially recommending the White Tara practice. That is a particularly graphic form of Tara practice, or especially White Tara practice, that one. But it is obvious that if you, especially as a man and above all as a chairman, which represents a sort of super-man [Laughter], always a party to taking the initiative, to lead, and never in the position of being receptive, at least in your spiritual practice you can make yourself receptive to sort of balance things out, by adopting, as it were, on a spiritual level, the feminine stance, the feminine attitude of receptivity, devotion, etc. And therefore do the Tara practice and in the Green [320] Tara practice which is in circulation, which a number of people do, you actually identify yourself with Tara. Do you see what I mean? And as Tara, through your offering goddesses which emanate from you, you worship all the Bodhisattvas who are in the Zenith. So if you are in that position of always having to take the initiative, and be active, and tell people what to do in that as it were masculine position, well, complement that in your spiritual practice, at least sometimes adopting that as it were feminine position. So that you have in the end a more balanced development of the so-called masculine and so-called feminine sides of your character within the spiritual context. This is what I meant to say. Not that I especially recommended the White Tara practice or that particular form of it.

There is another practice in which you visualise yourself as the Red Dakini and as it were worship Amitabha. She is of course a light red colour and he is a deep red colour.

Sagaramati: Does that mean that in your dealings with people etc., like on a psychological level, you can be operating psychologically in a masculine mode? And you'd balance it by a spiritual practice and be [unclear] in that spiritual practice?

S: I think yes. If you are always having to take responsibility and exercise initiative you might feel yourself that you are functioning in a quite one-sided sort of way, and be quite happy to complement that by at least sometimes in your spiritual practice adopting a quite different approach.

Right, on to Vajrapani.

Then there is the bodhisattva Vajrapani, which means the Vajra-holder. Again it symbolises tremendous energy; he is the bodhisattva of energy. And also Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, the Purifier of all Hindrances. If any hindrance happens in the process of karmic action, it comes from misunderstanding or inability to be in contact with the actual living situation, so the bodhisattva clears away these hindrances. In other words, this karma family contains both the absence of any hindrance, and the power of fulfilment.

S: Here these two Bodhisattvas are clearly complementary and very appropriate to the function of that particular Buddha. This seems quite well and clearly put. 'Vajrapani which means Vajra-holder'. Literally vajra hand, that is to say vajra in hand. 'Again it symbolises tremendous energy, he is the Bodhisattva of energy. And also Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, the Purifier of all Hindrances. If any hindrance happens in the process of karmic action, it comes from misunderstanding or inability to be in contact with the actual living situation, so the Bodhisattva clears away these hindrances.' Look at this name Sarvanivaranaviskambhin. The *nivaraṇa* here, the hindrance, is exactly the same word that we get when we speak of the five *nivaraṇas*, or five hindrances -

you remember very well what those are don't you? - like greed and anger and so on. Distinct from the five poisons, the five hindrances. Greed, anger, restlessness, sloth and torpor, and doubt. These are the five *nivaranas*. I don't think that these specifically included are intended here but hindrances of all sorts occurring in the course of the spiritual life.

So Sarvanivaranaviskambhin is the purifier, or better still clearer away, of all hindrances. [321]

Anandajyoti: Because Vajrapani is the clearer away of all hindrances and the hindrances are pretty basic to meditation, how come we are not doing the Vajrapani practice just to clear away these hindrances?

S: Well, there are one or two reasons. One is that I have been trying to persuade a friend of mine for several years to translate a Tibetan text of the practice which I have. He keeps on promising but I haven't got it yet. That's one reason, it is the sort of thing that often happens with people. But also to some extent that Padmasambhava takes the place of Vajrapani as symbolising the energy aspect, because he's so very Tantric, so to speak, and the Vajrayana being the vehicle of energy, Padmasambhava for many people is the more attractive embodiment of the energy principle of Enlightenment.

Vajrapani, actually, is a slightly shadowy figure, hasn't got quite the same vivid, individual personality so to speak, as either Avalokiteshvara or Manjushri. That is simply because he hasn't become in the same way the object of a cult.

Virabhadra: I was very struck when I visited Ajanta and Ellora. In quite a lot of the shrines the central Buddha figure was flanked by Vajrapani and Padmapani.

S: Yes, again the correlative aspect, and peaceful forms. The vajra and the padma, the masculine and the feminine.

Virabhadra: I was very struck by them, especially seeing the peaceful form of Vajrapani.

S: Yes, people tend to think automatically almost of the wrathful form, which of course is frequently shown in Tibetan art. Though the original form is the peaceful form.

Virabhadra: Yes, you get the feeling of power but it is also subtle, I found that quite attractive.

_____: There are a lot of peaceful forms in the British Museum.

S: Ah, yes. Of course they grew out of the figures of the god Indra, sometimes you can hardly distinguish them. I have got one upstairs, by the way, that you can see, top left-hand side, holding a vajra. That strictly speaking is Indra but can be taken as Vajrapani.

Anandajyoti: I came to a realisation on solitary that the word hindrance in connection with the five mental hindrances was perhaps too weak a word. (**S:** Yes.) And that really I had only experienced on solitary the hindrances for the first time. As great mountain walls rising before one. The hindrances, I had assumed, were extra luggage that you take on your back, a bit of a bind but you can shed them off quite easily. But in fact I saw...

S: Also it's as though the hindrances have got a will or a life of their own, they are not just passive obstacles just there in front of your path.

Anandajyoti: You definitely do need something of the energy quality of Vajrapani or Padmasambhava to overcome, them. [322]

S: You need *virya*.

_____: They are more like blockages.

S: Blockages, yes, yes. The remover of all blockages.

Sagaramati: Is the *skandha* here volition? It doesn't actually say.

S: No, it is the *skandha* of concept, we are going to come to that, and that is where we are going to have to do a bit of back-tracking.

Let's have the female Bodhisattvas first. Could we have that long 'a' pronounced, please? Wherever you see a stroke above a vowel it means it is a **long** vowel.

Then there are the female Bodhisattvas Gandha and Naivedya. Gandha is the bodhisattva of perfume, she carries essence made out of all sorts of herbs, which represents the sense-perceptions or feelings; in order to have efficient skilful activity you need developed sense-perception. Naivedya offers food, the food of meditation which nourishes skilful action.

S: Well, you can work them into the pattern in that way. Gandha, Gandha is not just perfume, strictly speaking it's perfumed water, it's liquid perfume, as you have in the eight external offerings. 'She carries essence made out of all sorts of herbs', well, lavender water if you like and things like that, which represent the sense perceptions or feelings. 'In order to have efficient skilful activity you need developed sense perception. Naivedya offers food, the food of meditation which nourishes skilful action.' Well, certainly meditation nourishes skilful action, one could look at it in that way.

Actually the ten female Bodhisattvas seem to be rather arbitrarily distributed, and I think you could make out a plausible association of any pair with any particular Buddha realm.

Sagaramati: That seems an interesting statement, that he says that in order to have efficient skilful activity you need developed sense perception.

S: Well, it depends upon the sphere within which you are acting. If you are acting in the physical world you need developed **sense** perception. If you are operating in the abstract mental field you need developed mental intelligence. It just depends where you are operating. If you are trying to hit with a rifle a mark seven hundred and fifty yards away you need developed sense perception, but not if you are trying to think out a mathematical problem. It depends on the field of operation.

All right, let's go on to the last paragraph, there is something to clear up there. Would someone like to read that whole paragraph? [323]

The karma family transcends the skandha of concept, and is connected with the realm of the jealous gods. Again, as in any experience of wisdom as opposed to confusion, they both have the same quality. In this case they both have the quality of occupation, but wisdom completely covers the ground of all possibilities, seeing all possible ways of dealing with the situation in terms of subject and object, energy, texture, temperament, speed, space and so on, whereas confusion has a very limited way of dealing with situations, because it has never expanded itself or developed at all. Confusion is underdeveloped wisdom, primitive wisdom, while wisdom is completely developed.

S: I think that 'confusion is primitive wisdom' is saying a bit too **much** for confusion. But anyway, let's get our *skandhas* sorted out, we seem to have gone a bit astray. Let's try to recall which *skandha* is correlated with which realm.

First of all there is the realm of Vairocana, well that is clearly *rupa*, *rupa skandha*, he is correlated with *rupa skandha* because light falls upon form and illumines it.

Sagaramati: He mentions in here it was consciousness.

S: Oh! Well, there are different sets. Very often it is *rupa*, it was consciousness here, was it? All right, let it be consciousness. OK. Would someone like to write these down so we get them?

Vairocana is ... usually Aksobhya is consciousness. Ah, but again, that is perhaps when Aksobhya is in the **middle** of the mandala as he sometimes is, these figures do shift around a bit and that upsets the correlations sometimes.

But anyway, what correlations have we had so far between the Buddhas or Buddha realms and the *skandhas*? Vairocana and *vijnana*. Then, who did we have after Vairocana - after Vairocana we had Aksobhya.

_____: And I think that was *rupa*.

S: Aksobhya and *rupa*. Well, they can be reversed, presumably when they exchange their positions within the mandala. They seem almost to compete for the centre of the mandala.

All right, Ratnasambhava is associated with the *skandha* of?

_____: *Vedana*.

S: Was it *vedana*, was it feeling? Yes, it was feeling, wasn't it? *Vedana* is feeling.

Then Amitabha is perception. So concept must be the *samskaras*, that would make sense but that is completely wrong. I think Trungpa has got his *skandhas* mixed up. Because sometimes concept is used to translate *samjna*, instead of perception they say concepts. But actually it is volition here, it is not concepts. That is actually a mistake.

_____: In the introduction written by Fremantle she does give concepts and in brackets *samskaras*, so apparently the word concept is used as a translation.

S: Well, she probably takes the view that Trungpa cannot possibly be wrong.

_____: She says, 'it's covering the intellectual and emotional activity of interpretation, which follows perception.' [324]

S: No, that's completely wrong. It's *samskara* which covers volition and that links it up with being the karma family because you act out of volition. No, concept is definitely wrong, it is volition, the *skandha* of volition, of *samskara*.

So the reason this particular *skandha* is associated with the karma family of Amoghasiddhi is quite obvious, it is relatively simple and straightforward.

So wisdom is opposed to confusion, that is fair enough, but to try to present confusion certainly in an ordinary common sense way as under-developed wisdom, primitive wisdom, is I think rather misleading, to say the least.

_____: Confusion isn't really a feature of the *asura* realm is it? (**S:** No) *Asuras* are very bright.

S: Well organised, you could say, you can't compete unless you are pretty well organised. Especially compete on a large scale, involving armies, as it were.

All right, consider, to conclude, these two alternatives. Following the pure, bright green light coming from Amoghasiddhi back into that particular Buddha world, or following the dull green light going into the world of the *asuras*. Why are these two connected, the *asura* realm representing jealousy among the poisons? Well, it is activity, it's a different kind of activity. So what is the difference between the activity represented by Amoghasiddhi and the activity of the *asuras*? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? In a way it hardly needs verbalisation.

_____: Well, *asuras* aren't developing.

S: *Asuras* aren't developing.

_____: It's appropriation.

S: It's appropriation, yes.

_____: It's also subtle and gross, isn't it?

S: Subtle and gross, and skilful and unskilful, selfless and selfish, spontaneous and compulsive. [Pause]

Perhaps before we finish with this day, this fifth day, just maybe a few general words about the male and female Bodhisattvas. It's as though the masculine Bodhisattvas, regardless of differentiations among them, represent the more masculine side of the Enlightenment experience and the female Bodhisattvas, collectively, the more as it were feminine side. And the feminine Bodhisattvas are at the same time goddesses of worship, they are offering goddesses, so to speak. So they represent faith and devotion and reverence, which of course are very important qualities of the spiritual life.

Devamitra: Actually there seem to be quite a few feminine Bodhisattvas that I've not come across before, you normally don't tend to hear of them.

S: Which ones?

Devamitra: Well, the female Bodhisattvas Gandha and Naivedya. [325]

S: Well, they are personifications of offerings, you must realise that, they haven't a very definite, concrete existence. Their names are the same as the names of the offerings. It is like..., you should spell their names with, for instance, one is called perfume and the other is food. They are a bit allegorical, as it were. But they represent, essentially, the impulses, the devotional impulse, behind the offering of that particular article.

Devamitra: In terms of what you have just said there are an incredible number of male Bodhisattvas as compared to female Bodhisattvas. There seems to be an overbalance in fact.

S: Well, this is partly because the Mahayana developed before the Vajrayana, and it was only in the Vajrayana - the Vajrayana being the latest development of the Mantrayana - that the practice developed of envisaging female counterparts. Before that the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures tended to be predominantly masculine in form, with the exception of figures like Tara and Vijaya and so on. But during the more Tantric, or perhaps I should say the most Tantric phase later on, all the male Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were provided with female counterparts as if to emphasise the as it were spiritually androgynous nature of the Enlightenment experience. But that **can** cause great confusion and misunderstanding, especially in the West. I think we have to deal with that very cautiously, or present that very cautiously.

Supposing, say, at Sukhavati we had a *Yab-Yum* image instead of Shakyamuni or Amitabha, what sort of impression do you think that would produce? What sort of a message would that seem to be conveying? So I am not at all in favour of our having even these *Yab-Yum* Tantric posters prominently displayed, or even on sale at centres. Let them be for people's private inspiration, if in fact people do get genuine spiritual inspiration from representations of that sort. You end up almost having Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appearing like gods with their consorts, with their wives. You have almost married gods and goddesses. In Hindu mythology you come down almost to a sort of strip cartoon level where you get the Hindu gods and goddesses having quarrels and misunderstandings just like the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology on Mount Olympus.

Subhuti: We use the word deity for Bodhisattvas sometimes (**S:** Yes.) But it isn't...

S: Well, this is in accordance with Tibetan usage, which has a very general term '*lha*' to cover Buddhas, Bodhisattvas; indigenous gods and demons of all kinds. They are all called '*lha*' which doesn't correspond to any Sanskrit word really. In Pali, even, though, the Buddha is sometimes called *devatideva*, the god of gods. And you have even in Pali the expression, *visuddhideva*, which means a purified god. And all those on the path, the transcendental path, are regarded as purified gods, *visuddhideva*, as distinguished from *devas* and *devatas* in the ordinary sense.

Yes, and there are *devas* and there are *samuttidevas* also, *devas* by convention. *Devas* by convention are kings and powerful and prominent persons. The king in Pali is addressed, where we would say 'Your majesty', as '*deva*'. Even now, in India, a respectable woman is referred to as *devi*. They have dropped the *deva* for men but they have kept the *devi* for women. If you wish to enquire very politely of someone how his wife is you [326] ask, 'how is your *devi*?'. Or if you want to say 'the women folk' very politely, the ladies, you say, 'the *devis*'. Do you see what I mean? But for some reason or other the corresponding use of *deva* for men has dropped out. Sometimes you get *devi* as a suffix to a woman's name. That is quite common.

But Tibetans sometimes distinguish between, in English, deities of the path and deities of the round. Or I try sometimes to distinguish between divinities and deities. You could say **divinities** of the path and **deities** of the round. It of course goes back to the same etymological root, *deva* - divinity. Also of course devil to give you a nice little sort of ambivalence. Some Christian missionary writers used to describe wrathful Buddha forms as Buddha devils.

_____: They were right in a way, weren't they?

S: In a way, etymologically, if not in any other way. Etymologically but not semantically.

All right, any more general points about the fifth day and Amoghasiddhi's karma family? The *asuras* or envy or jealousy. Perhaps we could conclude with a few general words about envy or jealousy. Did we deal with this a bit?

Sagaramati: We didn't actually go into jealousy much.

S: It seems to be one of the least fortunate of all the passions.

Subhuti: Least fortunate?

S: Least fortunate. You get a certain amount of satisfaction out of passion, even a certain amount of satisfaction out of anger, but you get no satisfaction whatever out of jealousy, do you? - by indulging in jealousy, by experiencing jealousy. It's **only** painful. It's even worse than having the toothache. It is a very unpleasant emotion to experience indeed. And it is linked with exclusiveness and possessiveness and all that sort of thing. When you are jealous with regard to another person it really means that you believe that that other person actually **belongs** to you, is a part of you, and therefore cannot have anything to do with any **other** person. If that person has anything to do with any other person it is as though you are being betrayed, you are being bereaved, you are being deprived of something. Even sometimes the fact that they exchange a few **words** with another person you won't like, you will feel the pangs of jealousy, because you want that particular person to

belong to you completely. To be incorporated into you, as it were, completely, as an integral part of yourself, which it is quite impossible for another person to be. Even if they **want** to incorporate themselves in that way they can't. Even if your infatuation is mutual and you are jealous of each other even without reason or cause, it's still not possible, really, for you to incorporate yourself with each other, any more than you can literally get inside each other. Though sometimes people try hard enough! But they find that they can't. It's like two empty sacks, each one trying to get into the other [Laughter]. Isn't it?

People do tie themselves into these terrible knots, to change the metaphor.

Sagaramati: Is jealousy, then, an emotion peculiar to a certain temperament? [327]

S: Some people are more jealous than others, are more **prone** to jealousy than others, but whether jealousy is the prerogative of a particular temperament I wouldn't like to say. I had thought that jealousy was associated more with the greed temperament, but I'm not so sure of that now. Perhaps it's a special, separate, particularly nasty temperament on its own account. Jealousy is certainly associated with a feeling of inner poverty and really needing other things, especially other people, in order to be able, or just to exist oneself, to be oneself. Extreme jealousy means that you are others, you are not yourself.

Anandajyoti: So the *asura* who is very one-sided, who is very cut off from his femininity, is going to need someone else, project that femininity on to someone else (**S:** Yes, right.) and so as a result is liable to be jealous because he would want to possess that other person to make himself a whole.

S: Yes, indeed. Well, you can imagine, thinking of the ugly male *asura* and the seductive, voluptuous female *asura*, can't you imagine jealousy arising very easily between people of that sort?

Subhuti: There is also something slightly demonic about it.

S: Yes, because it's so devouring, and possessive and clutching, as it were. Doesn't Shakespeare say, 'Jealousy, thou green-eyed monster'? Well, Shakespeare clearly sees jealousy as a **monster**, a green-eyed monster. It is interesting that he says green-eyed. Why is this, we use this expression, this idiom?

Subhuti: Green with envy.

S: Green with envy. Why? It's as though the colour symbolism is somehow grounded on the facts of psychology.

Subhuti: I think Gollum had green eyes, in *The Lord of the Rings*

_____: It definitely harks back to something quite deep, doesn't it.

Sagaramati: Again, in the *asura* realm, the *asura* fights for a trophy and things like that, so you could see other people as being like values, like trophies to be battled about. (**S:** Yes you could.) I think that has probably got something to do with it.

S: You speak of winning and you also speak of winning over people, winning them over to your side.

Sagaramati: The skilful way to go about it is very subtle.

S: Right, yes.

All right, let's leave it there for today. We have exciting things awaiting us tomorrow.

[Recording starts in the middle of general conversation before moving on to the text] [328]

Subhuti: ...actual control over what happens and what you do, sometimes.

S: Well, in a sense you don't in the bardo state, except that you do have that possibility of active choice. And also it is possible to have choice in the dream state, when it is as it were conscious, you can choose what to dream, and you can mould and direct the dream.

Subhuti: So it's a roughly equivalent kind of experience?

S: A roughly equivalent kind of experience. Because your experiences in the bardo state are *vipakas* arising as a result of karmas committed in previous lives, especially **the** previous life.

Subhuti: But how can you have the possibility of karma with respect of those *vipakas*, if you are just experiencing effects?

S: Well, you can't have any karma except to the extent that you respond or react to those *vipakas*. (**Subhuti:** Aha, yes.) And in the bardo state there is that possibility, which is the possibility of choice. Otherwise *vipakas* multiply, and you get further *vipakas*, but you can even at that late stage intervene, as it were, by choosing between these, ... well, it's not exactly *vipakas*, because you have got a set of *vipakas* on the one hand and on the other hand you have got the possibility of transcending karmas and *vipakas* all together, that possibility being represented by the Buddha realms. Involuntarily, you are sort of free from karmas and *vipakas*, and could respond to that with a 'karma', inverted commas, which would result in your being free from all karmas and *vipakas*. It's as though karma is not all-engulfing, that when you die and the physical body is not there for an instant you are free from it all. It depends how you respond to that experience.

Subhuti: So there are really three possibilities, are there? First of all that there is just the result which sort of flushes you into the next life. (**S:** Yes, right.) Then there is the possibility that you take some sort of positive stand with respect to those results (**S:** Yes.) and you can sort of at least go to a slightly higher plane. Then there is the possibility that you just go outside that process altogether.

S: Yes, you could say that, yes.

Though of course in another way, really, unless you are a Bodhisattva, there is the possibility either of being flushed out, as you say, into one or another of the realms, including the heavenly realm, or of resisting the flushing-out process altogether by turning in the opposite direction, or the corresponding direction at each of the succeeding levels. It is more like that.

Subhuti: So there is the possibility of [unclear due to fault on tape]

S: Really, in a way, there are two possibilities rather than three. You don't choose to be drawn into one or other of the six realms. You just are helplessly drawn there because you are not in the position to choose at all.

Subhuti: It's a reaction. [329]

S: It is just *vipaka*. So either you allow the *vipaka* process to continue or you take advantage of the opportunity of getting out of the karma *vipaka* process altogether. So there aren't three possibilities, really there are only two. Because your being reborn in one or another of the six realms doesn't come about as the result of choice. That is actually *vipaka*. Choice lies only in the direction of the transcendental so far as the bardo is concerned.

Subhuti: In the twelve *nidanas* bardo is part of the cause process, isn't it?

S: Bardo is part of the cause process, yes.

Subhuti: So that would seem to imply some sort of volition in the process of choosing a new birth.

S: In a sense, yes. It is, maybe, largely a matter of terminology. In a sense you do choose, well, you have chosen, but once you have chosen you can't stop the effects of your choice becoming manifest.

Some say, the Sarvastivadins say, that *bhava* refers, actually, to the *antarabhava* but that wasn't agreed by other schools.

[Long Pause - to prepare for the Sixth Day!]

We are on the sixth day but it occurred to me just to say a little bit more about something that we touched upon yesterday and I think the day before. We talked about the figures of the Buddhas, or rather we saw that the figures of the Buddhas, that is to say the Buddhas who are the heads of the five Buddha families, are flanked in each case by two Bodhisattvas who represent as it were complementary aspects of the Enlightenment experience. It's as though the Buddha figure himself represents, so to speak, the impartite principle and the Bodhisattvas represent the two aspects into which, the two principal aspects into which that principle can be, so to speak, divided. Either wisdom and compassion, or wisdom and action, and so on. But what occurred to me was that you get this even earlier on in respect of the figure of the historical Buddha himself. For instance there are some representations of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, especially those showing him coming down from the (Dratrimsa?) heaven, down the staircase of gold, silver and crystal after - according to later tradition - teaching his deceased mother the Abhidharma there. And he is flanked by the two gods Indra and Brahma. Indra of course always represents power but here of course it is in the more worldly sense; Brahma, you could say, represented compassion, because it was he, Brahmasahampati, who had invited the Buddha to teach the Dharma in the first place immediately after the Enlightenment. But even leaving aside that, in early pre-Mahayana iconography one sees the Buddha flanked by two monks, two disciples. And they seem, as it were, so selected as to suggest the same sort of division of aspect. Do you see what I mean?

There are two principles. There is the one of the Theravada, one of the Mahayana - and one of the Sarvastivada which was of course inherited by the Mahayana countries like Tibet. The two pairs of disciples who usually flank the figure of Shakyamuni are, in the case of the Theravada tradition, Sariputra and Moggallana who are the two chief disciples, who did not survive the Buddha himself. They were his two chief disciples so long as they were alive. So Sariputra always is associated with wisdom [330] - he was the wisest of the disciples, pre-eminent for wisdom, *prajna*. And what was Moggallana pre-eminent for?

_____: His psychic-powers.

S: Psychic powers, *iddhi or riddhi*. So you get these two complementary aspects of wisdom and power. But after the passing away of Sariputra and Moggallana the chief disciples, although not actually called that, seem to have been Ananda and Kasyapa, who were of quite complementary, almost opposed types. What do you think Ananda probably represented?

_____: Love?

S: Love, yes, love even rather than compassion, emotion. He interceded, for instance, for the women who wanted to go forth and to be ordained, and was taken severely to task for that after the Buddha's *parinirvana*, as well as for various other things which some of the other bhikkhus, especially Mahakasyapa, considered misdemeanours.

Then of course the other figure was Mahakasyapa himself, who represented extreme austerity. So you get these two different aspects with these two disciples. In Tibetan monasteries, in Tibetan temples the figure of Shakyamuni is always flanked by Ananda and Kasyapa, not by Sariputra and Moggallana. So, love and severity you could say. Again the feminine and the masculine, the soft and the hard. And this is, as it were, continued on the archetypal level with regard to the, in the case of the five *Jinas* as they are called and their respective pairs of Bodhisattvas, who usually reflect that sort of division. They as it were unfold explicitly in two independent forms the two principal aspects of the Buddha nature. Which of course can be considered in various ways, either wisdom and compassion or wisdom and strength, and so on. Inward-looking and outward-looking.

Sagaramati: Could you trace that duality back to the centre of the wheel of life, and say greed and hatred are like these two complementary aspects at their grossest form?

S: Yes, you could say that. You could say, as it were, that ignorance was in alignment with the Buddha, greed was in alignment with Avalokitesvara and hatred in alignment with Manjughosa or Manjusri. You could look at it in that way.

Sagaramati: The unfoldment of ignorance would be greed and hatred.

S: Yes, ignorance is primary in relation to greed and hatred.

All right then, let's go on to the sixth day.

THE SIXTH DAY

Next there is a crescendo of all the forty-two peaceful divinities. The five Tathagatas, the four guardians of the gates, the four goddesses and the six realms of the world appear simultaneously. We have a situation of basic bewilderment within which the five Tathagatas fill up all the space, all the directions, as well as any corners of emotional situations; there is no gap, no escape or side-track of any kind, because the four gates are also guarded by the four types of herukas. [331]

S: Have I miscalculated or not remembered correctly, but with regard to these forty-two peaceful divinities four goddesses are mentioned, but haven't we had eight goddesses? Or have I got it wrong?

Subhuti: We've actually had ten goddesses, two for each.

_____: I think these four goddesses are over and above the ones that are mentioned, that we have seen already.

S: But why should those who have already been mentioned not be included here? We haven't had guardians of the gates before, have we? If you add it, five plus four is nine, plus four is thirteen, plus... Ah, he hasn't enumerated them all, has he? Well, let's look at the text and see what actually does happen. [Pause]

Sagaramati: I think it's page 50. [Pause] They are female guardians.

S: Also one has got, according to the text, the Buddhas who appear in the six realms.

_____: And I think there is also Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri.

S: Yes. So there is a certain - one shouldn't perhaps say inconsistency, there is a certain exuberance, let us say. The Buddhas and so on here seem to overlap, go beyond the previous listing. Do you see what I mean? There is not a complete correspondence.

Forty-two peaceful divinities are generally reckoned up. There is, I believe, as far as I remember, an overall listing of a hundred and eight altogether, divinities of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Isn't this so? All the mandalas. But sometimes these frameworks are burst a little bit. And in any case one mustn't take these numbers of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas too literally. You could conceivably enumerate the **consorts** of the Buddhas separately because in fact all these different Buddha and Bodhisattva figures are aspects of the one primordial Buddha figure. Do you see what I mean?

Anandajyoti: I think they are enumerated separately in that enumeration of forty-two. There's the illustration of the *thangka* on the front cover and if you add them up they come to forty-two. I did it a couple of weeks ago.

S: So you have got four goddesses, that is to say four offering goddesses in that front cover *thangka*, haven't you? But actually more were listed, or more appeared in the mandalas of the five Buddhas.

_____: In the text it talks about the four female guardians of the doors. I think those are the four goddesses that are referred to there.

S: In that case the other set of female Bodhisattvas have not been included.

_____: I think they are included in the forty-two, actually.

S: Well, where do they come in the iconography? [332]

_____: Apart from Vairocana who doesn't have any, there is just Vairocana and his consort and no Bodhisattvas, all the other four are flanked by four figures. The two top will be the Bodhisattvas and the two bottom would be the offering goddesses. And then in the corners you have got the guardians.

S: Yes, right.

There seems to be something missed out actually, in a way. 'The five Tathagatas, the four guardians of the gates, the four goddesses and the six realms of the world appear simultaneously.' It's the Buddhas of the six realms of the world appear simultaneously, really, isn't it?

_____: They are in that picture though, they are in the iconography.

S: They are in the iconography, yes, the one with the lute, the other with the ambrosia. They appear quite clearly. At least four of them do ...

_____: Just above Samantabhadra.

S: Yes, that's right, then there are four side by side lower down, a little bit cut off by the border.

Ah, there are some little female figures on either side of Samantabhadri, you see? And there are some others higher up also. You seem to have these offering goddesses tucked away in here.

So make a list, who have we got? Try and make up the proper list of the forty-two. You've got the five Tathagatas, including their consorts presumably.

_____: In fact if you want to enumerate them it is best to think of not Vairocana but four, the other four, the four major aspects, and there would be six if you include the consort of the Buddha. So that gives you twenty-four. Then you have got Vairocana and his consort, which is two more. Then Samantabhadra and his consort, which is two more - which gives us twenty-eight.

Then the four guardians and their consorts which is another eight.

_____: Can you start at the beginning?

_____: You have got four major aspects of Vairocana, the four Tathagatas with their consort, with two Bodhisattvas and two offering goddesses. So that is a group of six. So you have got four groups of six there which is twenty-four. Then you have got Vairocana and his consort which is two, Samantabhadra and his consort, which is another two which takes us to twenty-eight. Then we have got the Buddhas of the six realms, which is another six, which takes us to thirty-four. Then we have got another eight made up of the four guardians and the four female guardians which are referred to, I think, as the four goddesses, which is another eight, which brings us to forty-two.

S: Good.

_____: It took a fair bit of time to work out.

S: So, 'We have a situation of basic bewilderment within which the five Tathagatas fill up all the space, all the directions, as well as any corners of emotional situations; there is no gap, no escape or sidetrack of any kind because the four gates are also guarded by the four types of herukas.' So the sort of situation which is envisaged here, the sort of vision that appears is quite clear,[333] isn't it; or the meaning of it is quite clear. What sort of situation do you think this represents?

I think the key is 'the five Tathagatas fill up the space, all the directions, as well as any corners of emotional situations. There is no gap, no escape, or sidetrack of any kind'. In other words you can't get away from the Buddhas. The Buddhas in their respective aspects and forms and manifestations are so numerous they seem to fill the whole of space. There is no corner which does not contain Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Wherever you turn, in whatever direction, you only encounter Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You cannot get away from them. So what sort of situation does **this** represent?

Leave aside the context of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, but consider it in terms of one's own individual as it were spiritual experience. What sort of situation is that when you feel that you can't get away from the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, and whichever direction you turn you are confronted by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? What do they represent? If there are actually Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in front of you what is the appropriate action on your part?

Subhuti: To go for Refuge.

S: To go for refuge. Wherever you turn you see only Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, what does that suggest? There is only one thing for you to do, and what is that?

_____: Go for refuge.

S: Yes. So what sort of situation does that represent when wherever you turn there is only Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? Well, you even hear people say this, after a preliminary period of dithering before they actually do go for Refuge or they are ordained etc., and what is that? Well, they actually say that I saw, or that I see, that there is ... what do they say?

_____: No choice.

S: No choice! That's the only thing that I can do. Do you see what I mean? So this sort of overwhelming panoramic vision of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas etc., filling all space, all the nooks, all the corners, suggests that one then has to come to a point where one will feel that there is no real alternative. That all that one can do as a result of what you have seen and heard and understood, is simply to go for Refuge. There is no question of any choice. This again is what people sometimes say, there is not the question of any choice. Because you can't even go into the six realms, there are Buddhas there waiting for you. [Laughter] You see? In each of those realms there is a Buddha figure standing, and those Buddhas too have appeared here.

Tape17

I am not quite sure of the significance of this experience happening on the sixth day, perhaps we shouldn't look too closely into that. It's as though it could happen at almost any time.

Or again, yes, it is cumulative, there is a sort of building up, you have before that seen the possibility of choice. [334] You have seen that you could go in the direction of the five Buddha families, or you could go in the direction of the six realms, but here it's as though there's no choice. One's experience of the spiritual life has become cumulative to that extent, to that point. How this ties up with the after-death experience is perhaps rather more difficult to say. Or why there should be a crescendo of all the forty-two peaceful divinities on that sixth day. Perhaps we aren't to take that too literally. But the general significance is clear, isn't it?

Do you think there is anything corresponding to this in Christianity, or any other religion?

Sagaramati: There's a painting of Blake, isn't there, about God and he is just surrounded by hordes and hordes of angels and things like that.

S: Yes, but I am thinking of something more specific than that. Actually there is a famous poem which embodies this line of thought. I am sure you have all heard of it.

_____ : Dante.

S: No, not Dante.

_____ : Is it Blake?

S: It's not Blake, nearer to our own time. It's Francis Thompson, his famous poem [Laughter], *The Hound of Heaven*.

The Hound of Heaven. Beginning, 'I fled him down the nights and down the days'. Actually I find it a rather awful poem. [Laughter] It describes the soul's flight from Christ and how it tries to hide itself in all sorts of nooks and corners but Christ is following it and hunting it down all the time. Actually it's a rather sort of sado-masochistic approach to my way of thinking, because eventually he is left there lying on his back, Christ has hunted him down at last and has ripped his armour away and he is just going to spear him, as it were, and he surrenders at the last moment. This really illustrates as it were the difference between Buddhism and Christianity. Here you have got just a process of being naturally overwhelmed by these accumulating spiritual experiences and visions, but here there is one specific figure literally hunting you down and getting you in the end. You see the difference, the difference of emphasis? There could be a very constructive sort of literary comparison between these two.

I read this poem when I was in New Zealand, I think it just happened to be around and I was reading a selection of Francis Thompson's poems. The poetry was quite beautiful even though it was very lush and very over-ripe, so to speak. But it did seem as though the basic spiritual experience which it represented had been really distorted by the Christian medium. It didn't really represent the fact that there was no choice, but you were **given** no choice, do you see what I mean? That seems to be the big difference, you were **given** no choice, Christ didn't let you get away, he had no intention of letting you get away, you had no freedom, you were just like an animal being hunted down by this remorseless saviour figure. You couldn't help feeling, as you read the poem with an open mind, quite sorry for the poor soul. You couldn't help wishing sometimes that he'd get away and that [335] Christ would be foiled. But no, it's as though the soul has no freedom, it is not allowed to get away. And of course there is the dualism of the hunter and the hunted. Whereas in the case of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, in the case of Buddhism generally, all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they are your own thought forms. This point, of course, isn't even remotely dreamt of within the context of Francis Thompson's poem or the context of Catholic Christianity, or Christianity at all of any kind. It's quite useful, I think, to make these sort of comparisons. Do you see what I am getting at?

Try reading that poem aloud and see what it sort of does to you, or what sort of feeling you get.

Devamitra: I actually get that sort of feeling from a lot of Christian verse.

S: That is true, yes.

Devamitra: That sado-masochistic thing. There's Donne's famous, 'in my heart three persons'. It's a similar kind of thing.

S: Yes. There is a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins where he refers to the soul, or God is represented as referring to the soul as 'my dear nonentity'. [*Laughter*] Which seems really dreadful, doesn't it? In the eyes of God you are just 'my dear nonentity'.

In the context of this poem, which is sort of autobiographical as it were, Francis Thompson says, 'I pleaded outlaw-ward at many a hearted casement curtained red.' 'Outlaw-ward', you are an outlaw. You see the sort of feeling that comes across. You are an outlaw, you are running away from the law, running away from your master, running away from God, but he's on your track. And you get to the end of every strophe - I don't remember the words exactly but, 'with unhurried pace, an unperturbed chase, deliberate speed, majestic instancy, the feet beat and more dreadful than the beat there came a voice saying, "Why fleest thou me?"'. As if to say why bother to run away - you have no choice, I am going to get you, I don't even have to try, I am on your track all the time. And this really does seem quite horrific, if you see Christ, if you see God, in that grisly sort of way. And of course he does win in the end, he hunts you down.

So you could say that yes, that is a very genuine metaphor, you can sort of feel pursued by the spiritual life, the spiritual experience, even a Buddhist could say that, that he can't get away from Buddhism. He might even say that he wasn't able to get away from the Buddha. But the whole way in which it is presented, the whole feeling that is given to the experience seems almost morbid.

Devamitra: I can't quite understand why someone with that kind of sensitivity and insight into life and experience should fall prey to that kind of authority.

S: Someone like Francis Thompson. Well he seems to have been a very weak person, just as an individual, and he had no experience, apparently, of any other religion other than Catholicism. He fell into the hands of quite orthodox Catholics, that is to say, Alice and Phillip Meynell who looked after him, he wasn't able to look after himself, it seems. And they were very staunch [336] Catholics and he was very much under their influence, and I believe he had been, if I remember rightly, I am not quite sure here, I believe he had been born a Catholic anyway. So he seems to have had this experience of being hunted down by something greater than himself that he couldn't get away from, some kind of fate, some sort of destiny. And to have given this very rich and lush, almost tropical, Catholic expression. It certainly is his greatest poem but you can't help feeling, reading it, I couldn't help feeling it quite recently, that it was basically a sick poem. And the lushness and the ripeness of the imagery was a sort of lushness and ripeness of sickness. There was something not quite clean about it, it was almost an over healthy growth. It was so rich and all that that it was like the sort of flush of fever, not like the rosy colour of health, it was more like that. It was rank rather than rich, the language.

When you get back to your respective centres and communities maybe read it if you get the chance. *The Hound of Heaven*, by Francis Thompson. God as a bloodhound sniffing on your track! [*Laughter*] It's almost like God the Securicor man. [*Laughter*] But it is really strange, it is really a very serious matter if you think we have got at the back of our consciousness these sort of images of the spiritual life. Because we can respond to that poem of Francis Thompson's because it is very near to our ex-Christian experience.

So we can begin to see more clearly, perhaps, what Trungpa is talking about. 'We have a situation of basic bewilderment within which the five Tathagatas fill up all the space, all the directions, as well as any corners of emotional situations. There is no gap, no escape or sidetrack of any kind because the four gates are also guarded by the four types of Herukas.' You don't get a single figure pursuing you, you get four gates guarded by four types of Herukas, or Herukas of four different types, perhaps he means.

So what sort of principle do these Herukas in this respect, the Herukas of this kind or these kind, represent here? They seem to embody in individual figures, four individual figures, the whole situation. Do you see what I mean? It's as though they sum up the whole situation. Because there are the forty-two peaceful divinities collectively filling the whole of space so they are preventing you from escaping, so that basic fact, that they are preventing you from escaping - well, not preventing you, they make it impossible for you to escape, there is nowhere for you to escape to - so that fact seems to be embodied in, or symbolised by, the individual figures of the Herukas. So they are symbolised, or they are represented as these sort of figures standing at the gates and preventing you from escaping. But strictly speaking there's no gate, because a gate would represent the possibility of somewhere outside the gate that you could escape into. It's not as though they're preventing you from getting in, they are more like preventing you from getting out. Except that there is no possibility, even, of getting out. There is nowhere you can get out to because the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fill all space. But looking at it, say, more narrowly, more literally, these Herukas represent the principle of your being unable to escape. And it may appear to you as though you are being **prevented** from escaping. Actually you are not being prevented from escaping by anything outside yourself; your own experience, your own understanding, your own insight have made it impossible for you to think seriously in terms of escaping into any one of the six [337] realms. But you are still not willing to accept the situation, you still see it as slightly threatening, as though you are being prevented, as though you are being held prisoner against your will. Prevented from

breaking out or going out of the gate, and the Heruka figure seems to represent that sort of fact, that sort of experience, in various ways.

_____: Will they represent your awareness?

S: They are aspects of your own mind. But still, even though they are aspects of your own mind, even though it's one's own insight here that you are concerned with, you as a total personality, a total being, are not yet ready to accept that. You still feel in a way as though you are being prevented from escaping, you are being held against your will, because there is a conflict within you, a conflict within your own being. Part of you is, as it were, quite happy to be held prisoner, part of you wants to get away. Part of you sees that there is nowhere to escape to, but on the other hand part of you still wants to escape. I am sure a lot of people can recognise that sort of situation. What do you think actually happens, or has happened when you get into a situation where you see... I'll read you an example, I got a letter from somebody this morning, it's from an Order Member, I won't tell you who it is but he just writes about this very thing in connection with a film that he went to see. I'll see if I can dig this bit out. *[Pause]*

'Last Saturday I saw a movie called *The Deer Hunter*' - I expect some of you have seen that - 'which affected me like no movie has done before. The film is an anti-war story but the way I saw it it was an anti-life film' - he seems to mean anti-worldly life film - 'I came out of the theatre feeling that all life is meaningless, pointless and futile unless it is directed towards the Three Jewels. I really felt like going for Refuge, so I did, and I vow to try my hardest - if that is the right word - to become Enlightened.' And he goes on a little bit more along those lines.

So you see what that represented for him. It is much that same sort of experience, you see that there is nothing else for you to do, worldly life is meaningless and futile, the only meaningful and non-futile thing that is there for you to do is to go for Refuge or to devote yourself to your own individual development. So this sort of realisation can come in various ways. It isn't that you see even that you don't want to do certain things, perhaps you still do want to do them but you see actually that you cannot do them, there's no point in doing them, even though the urge to do them has not yet been fully overcome.

So, as I put it, there is the gatekeeper, he represents the situation that you see that there is nowhere to escape to but you still want to escape. So therefore you see someone as preventing you from escaping, even though actually there is nobody doing that. And that is what the Heruka figure seems to represent. Can anybody else throw any light on this kind of experience? When you see that in fact there is nothing else to do, in a way you wish that there was, but you are very sorry you really see that there is nothing else that you can do. So all right, you eventually make up your mind not that you had better do it but you can't really do anything else in view of what you have seen and understood. [338]

Sagaramati: I imagine that is much harder to carry through when you go as it were into the god realm.

S: Yes, to see the futility of life in the realm of the gods. But then some people would find it more easy, it might depend upon temperament. If you are a really active, slightly aggressive person life in the world of the gods might seem pretty boring anyway, it might be the *asura* world that would attract you more. After all they do seem to be doing something!

Virabhadra: One experience I've had since I have been ordained is I tend to almost fantasise alternatives to the spiritual life which are more real than real life, if you see what I mean. Then I will sort of realise that life isn't really like that, it doesn't really work so well as that, and that sort of brings me back to the fact that there isn't really any alternative. I sort of imagine ordinary life working better than it actually does.

S: Yes.

Right, let's go into the descriptions of these gatekeepers one by one. It will give us more of a feeling of that sort of situation. Would someone like to read the description of the first one?

The eastern gate-keeper is known as the Victorious One, which is connected with pacifying, but he appears in a wrathful form to provide an awe-inspiring situation at the gate, so that you do not even think of getting out. He represents the indestructible, invincible quality of peace, that is why he is victorious.

S: What do you make of this?

Sagaramati: Could it be a sort of equivalent to *ottapa*? (S. Ah, yes.) You are confronted, say, with somebody who is so strong in their spiritual practice that that is pacified in you, as it were.

S: Yes he is the victorious one, *vijaya*. You don't even think of getting out. 'He represents the indestructible, invincible quality of peace, that is why he is victorious.' We saw something about this indestructible invincible

quality of peace when discussing the peaceful Buddhas generally, didn't we? It's almost as though the awe-inspiring sublime quality of the experience of the situation almost paralyses you. You just can't do anything else, you see the utter futility of even trying to do anything else. You are overpowered by the prospect before you, you can't think of doing anything else or of going against that. It's so overpowering that it excludes all other possibilities, it's more like that, it seems.

Devamitra: To really experience that in any great depth is quite a profound experience.

S: Yes indeed, it could almost amount to Stream Entry if it went deep enough, it could really do that.

Devamitra: There are, for instance, people who even get ordained and then drift away from spiritual practice. [339]

S: Yes. But perhaps you could say that sort of thing tends to happen when people still think that they actually have a choice. You are much firmer in your commitment when you see that you don't actually have a choice. And that also links up with the vow, the vow in the real sense. You cannot break the vow because there's no possibility of breaking it. It's not that when you make the vow you resolve to be very careful and to try your best not to break it. The vow is as it were simultaneous with the realisation that it cannot be broken. Paradoxically it cannot be broken because now of course you have taken it. But there is more of **that** sort of quality about the vow. Not that you vow that you won't do something but you realise that you cannot do something. If you are, say, to continue to follow the spiritual path you cannot do something, that particular thing you just cannot do, not that you make up your mind not to do it, you realise that you **cannot** do it. The vow expresses that sort of attitude as it were, that sort of experience. So it goes beyond a resolution.

Sagaramati: It could say that it expresses that if you do do it then you really have fallen. You really are in the murky depths if you actually do that thing.

S: Yes. Though you don't actually think that because the possibility of breaking of it doesn't occur to you by the very nature of the vow itself. But if it can be broken it is just a resolution, a strong resolution which you hope to keep, or which you are trying to keep, but it's not a vow in the real sense.

Sagaramati: So that means a vow should be made after, rather than to help you to attain a state a vow is an affirmation that you are in that state.

S: Well, yes, in a way, but on the other hand the two things become one, as it were. In making the vow you become unable to break it. But one could say, going back to the question of say the going for Refuge, if you really do have the experience that there is nothing else to do except to go for Refuge, that could, if it is of sufficient depth, be an experience not only of Going for Refuge but also of entering the stream. And it seems that this did sometimes happen in the Buddha's day with some of those people who came in contact with him. At one and the same instant, as it were, they went for Refuge, they entered the stream, and externally, formally, they became monks - that as it were being the least important aspect of the whole process.

Devamitra: So Stream Entry is realising, **really** realising that you don't have any choice.

S: One could look at it like that, but Going for Refuge, also, you could look at in the same way. In that way Going for Refuge and Stream Entry start becoming very close to each other. It seems that in the Buddha's day they were closer, or that one followed more closely from the other than is usually the case nowadays. And in the case of some fortunate people, or some spiritually prepared and receptive people, they actually were simultaneous, the Going for Refuge and the entering the stream.

Devamitra: That is quite a useful quality to look for in people who are requesting ordination. [340]

S: Yes. It's in a way, perhaps with a slightly negative tinge, a quality of desperation. Even if you want to do something, or would like to do something, or have a happy comfortable life you just can't do that, it is impossible, even though maybe there is quite a large part of you which would **like** that to be possible, but you see that it isn't, that you cannot do that, that that possibility doesn't really exist for you. So there's no question of leading any kind of life. Yes, so one could say that that is a very useful or significant quality to look for.

Virabhadra: It seems to tie in with the way people's - to use the word - lifestyle changes as they become involved in the movement. Certainly my experience is that you feel things falling away and you feel that you just can't do certain things any more, rather than consciously giving things up or trying to ...

S: Yes, right. It is very much like that with drinking, regular habitual drinking, it is not so much that a great moral struggle goes on ending in your being victorious and renouncing demon drink and all his ways forever. It usually doesn't happen like that, a time comes when you just feel that you can't, in a way you don't want to. It's more than that, you can't. You might wish you could, or even say it would be rather nice **if** I could, but fortunately or unfortunately I just can't any more. It is very much more like that, quite often.

Sagaramati: You do seem to get a sort of no-man's-land sometimes. Where you can't get fully into *samsara* but you are not emotionally motivated to Nirvana.

S: Yes. This is what some of the Christian mystics call the 'dark night of sense'. Not to be confused with the dark night of the soul. You are unable to enjoy sense pleasures, you are sufficiently advanced for that - well, this is looking at matters from a slightly different point of view that we adopted yesterday in the other group - sense pleasures don't give you the satisfaction that they used to, put it in that way. On the other hand you haven't really started experiencing any very great pleasure in anything of a spiritual nature. Worldly life seems very insipid but you don't really enjoy spiritual life yet. And one can be in that doldrum-like state for quite a while, sometimes.

Devamitra: Do you think possibly, say, appreciation of the fine arts could be the bridge between the two?

S: I think very often it can be, yes.

Devamitra: Because I think Virabhadra and I were commenting on this yesterday, it's like a lot of us read very little Dharma but we do read quite a bit of poetry etc. etc.

S: Yes. We shall come on to this from another point of view a little bit later on when we come to the *vidyadharas*, but leave it for then. (**Devamitra:** OK!)

All right, read about the second, the wrathful guardian of the gates. [341]

Then the second one, in the southern gate, is the Enemy of Yama the Lord of Death. He is associated with the karmic activity of increasing wealth. Wealth in terms of time and space is very limited, rationed, so he who goes beyond that limitation is the Lord of the Lord of Death.

S: What do you think is the connection here, exactly? It is Yamantaka, Yama is the Lord of Death, let's say, the king of the dead. *Antaka* means the ender, the one who ends, that is to say the one who kills, actually, the lord of death, the one who kills death. It is not the enemy of death, it's the ender, the killer of death, the destroyer of death. So what is the significance here, if in fact there is a significance, of this particular gatekeeper, bearing in mind what gatekeeper means here? What is the significance of his being called the Lord of the Lord of Death?

Virabhadra: When you've realised that you can't take the samsaric option, as it were, then in a way you have destroyed death.

S: Yes, you have destroyed the fear of death.

Virabhadra: So all that is left of you is growth, really.

S: Yes, it is as though when someone is in a very desperate situation they don't even care about death any more. Do you see what I mean? So in a way you overcome death out of the sheer desperateness of the situation. You say, 'I don't care if I live or if I die,' it just doesn't have any significance any more, it is more like that.

Devamitra: Is there any connection here with Ratnasambhava?

S: I don't know, there should be because he is at the southern gate. Oh, riches.

Devamitra: That is what I was thinking.

S: 'Karmic activity of increasing wealth. Wealth in terms of time and space is very limited, rationed, so he who goes beyond the limitation is the Lord of the Lord of Death.' Trungpa is trying to tie them all up together but perhaps not all that successfully unless we can probe deeper and get a bit more sense or significance out of it.

Well, maybe this heaping up of riches is connected with the theory that you are not going to die. But when you realise that you are going to die even then you don't heap up any more, and much less still when you don't even care whether you die or not, you are not very likely to be heaping up wealth under those sort of conditions. But it's as though you see that the only thing for you to do is to go for Refuge, and even if you die for that you just don't care, you can't care, you've no choice. Even if you were to be killed for Going for Refuge, even that wouldn't stop you from Going for Refuge because there is nothing else you can do anyway. So in that way you overcome your fear of death, you conquer death, you destroy death.

Kuladeva: There's a quote in Plato's *Republic*, apparently, that for a righteous man death is not to be feared. [342]

S: Yes. Well, this is more than the righteous man, because the righteous man is sure of a reward after death, so that's why he doesn't fear death, that's a rather different situation. It's as though the **desperate** man doesn't fear death. It has ceased to matter, it is not an option in a way, it doesn't make any difference one way or the other.

Devamitra: You can see that in a negative context as well as in the spiritual one. The terrorists.

S: Yes, that's true.

_____: Couldn't the other side of that be confidence? - the confident man doesn't fear death. Like riches.

S: It depends in what his confidence consists. If it's a confidence that he is not going to really die, well maybe.

All right, go on to the guardian of the western gate.

In the western gate is the Horse-headed Hayagriva. He is the equivalent of an alarm system, as the neigh of the horse can wake you up in any unprepared situations. It is connected with magnetizing, which is a kind of intelligent passion, so that you do not get involved in passion but it wakes you up.

S: The western gate, this is of course associated with the western direction, Amitabha, hence passion, of course. So how does this work? 'He is the equivalent of an alarm system, because the neigh of the horse can wake you up'. So you have got a horse tethered in the stable and there is a thief or marauder prowling around, the neigh of the horse may wake you up and alert you to the dangerousness of the situation.

So supposing you do try to get out of the gate. Well, this gatekeeper just sets off the alarm so that you can't get out. So this suggests a situation in which even the slightest motion to escape triggers off a sort of alarm that **prevents** you from escaping. This is though there is a slight movement in the direction of escape, you can just about make that, but that movement itself triggers off an alarm which prevents you from escaping. So it's especially connected with passion. So how does passion function in that way? Let's give a concrete example. You might be in this sort of existential situation of seeing that there is just one thing to do, and that is to go for Refuge, nothing else is really a possibility. But anyway while you are in that sort of mood you meet, say, a beautiful woman, and you really are strongly attracted, so the strong attraction, there is just that movement to escape but at that very instant you see all the stages that are going to succeed and where it is going to end, it sets off the alarm, so you can't escape. You realise there's no use following up that particular line, that particular attraction, there's no escape in that direction. So the very movement to escape itself triggers off the alarm system which prevents you from escaping. And it's allegedly especially connected with passion. Though it could no doubt, I think, be associated with other poisons as well. So if you feel yourself about to get angry in a certain situation, that could trigger off the alarm - what is the use of getting angry? I am only going to start fighting, quarrelling, it will lead to misunderstanding, enmity, suffering, there is no use, so you just can't get into it, [343] getting angry or getting into anger is not an escape. You could look at it like that too.

Devamitra: So all you can do is just be passive to your own passion, in a way, just experience it.

S: Yes. Well, once the alarm system has been triggered off you stop trying to escape. In the case of the first illustration I gave the passion just subsides, it's discouraged.

So this is why Trungpa says, 'it is connected with magnetizing which is a kind of intelligent passion so that you do not get involved in passion but it wakes you up.' Do you see what I mean, the waking up is what happens when you just see the consequences of that passion, or you foresee and you just don't want to get into those sort of consequences any more, don't want to experience them.

Sagaramati: It's as if that passion acts as a magnet and it attracts all that you've built up in terms of experience. (**S:** Yes.) I imagine that's like a battle ground, isn't it? I imagine for a while it might not be enough, although there are two factors present - the one getting angry might still be strong enough to occasionally get out, as it were.

S: Ignoring the alarm system!

Sagaramati: Yes, ignoring the alarms.

S: Then they have to crawl back. Or maybe due to some thought the alarm doesn't sound very loudly so you can ignore it.

All right, northern gates, someone read that paragraph.

In the northern gate is Amrtakundali, the Coil of Amrta or anti-death potion. He is particularly associated with death. If there is any suicidal impulse of giving up hope, the anti-death medicine revives you; suicide is not the answer at all. You have the peaceful presence of victory, the increasing one which conquers any extreme concept of time and space, the magnetizing principle which sends out an alarm, and the suicidal principle which gives you the anti-death potion. Fundamentally you are completely locked in without any sidetracks.

S: 'Suicide is not the answer at all.' Here is the key sentence with regard to this particular gatekeeper. Sometimes people in this sort of situation say life is not worth living, everything is completely futile, the only thing you can do is go for Refuge, so they think 'I might as well commit suicide.' Then they think no, even suicide doesn't give you a way out - so you are given, as it were, the anti-death potion, you are not permitted to commit suicide, you are not permitted to die. And that is Amritakundali, the call of *amrta* or anti-death potion. You see the futility of committing suicide also, you can't get away from the spiritual life even by doing that because if you die you'll go to any one of the six realms, and what happens? - you meet one or another of the Buddhas there. You can't get away even if you go to hell, there will be a Buddha waiting for you and patiently pointing out the spiritual path. So even committing [344] suicide won't help you, won't enable you to get away.

Virabhadra: I think I used to think about suicide quite a lot when I was younger, and it seemed to be quite attractive. That you could just blot everything out, you could just sort of completely finish, and that was the attraction of it.

S: There is an aphorism in a book of aphorisms I have which says that the thought of suicide has helped many a person get through an uncomfortable night. Or the thought of the possibility of suicide, it sometimes make life quite a bit easier to live, so it is said.

Virabhadra: But it doesn't really seem practicable any more.

S: So all the exits are blocked. It's as though the spiritual life is bound to win, first of all, and then what does the second one really represent? If you say that Vijaya the Victorious one, that particular gatekeeper, represents that fact that the spiritual life is bound to win, and you will have to follow that, what does the second one, the destroyer of the Lord of Death, represent? Trungpa says here, 'the increasing one which conquers any extreme concept of time and space'. What really is that? That isn't very clear, is it, as he puts it? Perhaps it can't really be summarised in that way.

Subhuti: Perhaps it's that there isn't the serious option of indulgence in accumulation of material or phenomenal wealth.

S: Yes, maybe it is that the limitations of finite existence itself preclude any real option in that direction, yes.

Then, 'the magnetizing principle which sends out an alarm', it's as though even your very efforts to escape will cause you almost immediately to realise the impossibility of escaping. In other words will trigger off the alarm system which just prevents you from getting out. 'And the suicidal principle which gives you the anti-death potion'. Even your very thought of committing suicide makes you realise that suicide is not the way out and gives you as it were the anti-death potion. So as soon as you try to commit suicide you are brought back to life.

So, 'Fundamentally you are completely locked in without any sidetracks.' I have expressed that in a different way in an earlier lecture, I don't know if you remember, when I have said in connection, I think, with Zen, that you suddenly realise there's only one direction in which you can go, there's only one direction left, and that is **up**. It's much the same thing, isn't it?

Devamitra: You went into it a bit in the Golden Light lectures too. As soon as you have had a glimpse of the Golden Light you never forget it.

S: Yes, it haunts you as it were.

All right, someone read that next paragraph about the female principles of the gatekeepers. [345]

Moreover, there are the female principles of the gate-keepers. There is the female principle with a hook, to catch you like a fish if you try to run away. Or if you try to escape in terms of pride, to fill up all the space and not allow any other possibilities, the goddess with a lasso ties you from head to toe leaving you without any chance to expand. Another possibility is to run away through passion which is based on speed, but then the goddess with the chain chains you down so that you cannot move your feet and run away. And if you try to frighten anybody by aggression and make your way out, then the goddess with a very loud bell subdues your loud scream of aggression and your deep voice of anger.

S: So these are other aspects, as it were more feminine aspects, though they seem terrifying enough, of the experience of being just unable to escape from the spiritual life.

First of all there is 'the female principle with a hook to catch you like a fish if you try to run away'. Actually it is not hook, it is *ankusha*. *Ankusha* is the elephant hook, strictly speaking, it's the hook with which the mahout controls the elephant. Do you know about that, have you seen one? Like a great big sort of curved hook, so you can tap the elephant on the head with one side and also prick him with the other, kind of thing. The *ankusha* is actually that sort of hook, the hook that controls the elephant. Trungpa takes it in the sense of a fish hook. You can also do that, because you get just hooks on the spiritual life. Do you see what I mean? Maybe that is more idiomatic for us and therefore more meaningful. So that is *ankusha*.

And then *pasha*, the noose or the lasso, it is more like a lasso in a way because there is a corollary here because she can throw it, if you are just running fast, even if you have got quite a long way, she can throw her noose. It's as though you might have even got quite a long way from the spiritual life, you might even have thought that you had left it quite a long way behind, maybe you haven't been along to the centre for several weeks or months or you haven't meditated for a long time, but then one day quite unexpectedly the noose just catches you. Something happens or you remember something and yes, you are caught, you hadn't been able to get away. Do you see what I mean?

And then *srnkhala* the chain. It's as though, yes, you get away, you get a certain distance, you are doing certain things, maybe you have still got your job and you have still got your family, but you are not really free from the spiritual life, you are sort of chained. There is a long chain going from the centre to you and it's as though you can be hauled back at any time. It is not even like the noose, because when it's a question of the lasso you think that you have broken free and then the noose or the lasso comes just snaking through the air and catches you. But in the case of the chain it is as though you may be involved in all sorts of non-spiritual activities, so to speak, but you know at the same time, you know all the time that you are chained to the spiritual life. You may be sort of eating and drinking and boozing and womanising - it's going on for a little bit longer but you know that that chain is there and that in the long run you are just going to be hauled back, you haven't really got the freedom, you haven't got any real option of going on like that in the old way. So the goddess with the chain seems to represent that, [346] you really are shackled to the spiritual life.

Tony Wharton: So this is something you realise within yourself rather than the Securicor god figure chasing after you.

S: Right, exactly, yes. You may see it in entirely psychological terms, you may not feel that any body, whether it is Christ or anyone else, is actually after you, individually, but you yourself feel tied to the spiritual life even though you are at the same time doing all sorts of other things. You know you haven't really got any freedom, you can't really get away from the spiritual option, it's the only one really, you know that. You just try to pretend that you are free by doing various other things, but at the same time you know that you are not.

In the case of the noose or the lasso you actually thought that you had got away, but in the case of the chain you don't even think that you have got away, even though you act as though you have got away you know that really you haven't, that you haven't been able to. So, a subtle difference.

And what about this last one, *ghanta*, the bell? 'If you try to frighten anybody by aggression and make your way out then the goddess with a very loud bell subdues your loud screams of aggression and your deep voice of anger.' What sort of phase of the experience do you think this represents?

_____: Is it reacting?

S: Yes, it's as if, say, you react against the spiritual life, the spiritual life is capable of reacting against you still more powerfully!

Sagaramati: In what way would the spiritual life react?

S: Well, within your own consciousness. You start saying, 'the spiritual life, it's just a load of rubbish, it's just a waste of time, it's foolish', and then a big booming voice comes back and says, 'you're the foolish one, you are just a load of rubbish trying to get away'. But it's your own conscience, as it were, getting back at you. You are the stupid one. And she rings her bell louder than you can shout.

_____: They are very good images, these.

S: They are, aren't they? I think the images of these female principles are in a way more effective. It's as though they have been specially created, these figures, to illustrate the situation, whereas the four other figures were figures already existing in the mythology, so to speak, and had to be incorporated somehow, or put into correspondence somehow. Whereas the female figures seem to be specially created for the occasion and therefore to fit much better, that is the impression one gets. Though clearly it isn't a literary creation or

anything, it is a set of more spontaneous spiritual things. Though I must say I rather liked the alarm bell. That seemed very appropriate indeed. In the case of passion especially.

So the next paragraph about the six realms of the world. [347]

Then you are reduced to facing the six realms of the world: the Buddha of the gods, the Buddha of the jealous gods, the Buddha of the human beings, the Buddha of the animals, the Buddha of the hungry ghosts and the Buddha of the hell realm. All these visions appear from your heart centre, which is associated with emotion, passion and pleasure.

_____: Are you actually facing the Buddhas rather than the actual realms here? It says you are facing the six realms.

S: According to the text, page 50, you are facing the six *munis*, the six Buddhas. Indra, who is not the god Indra but the Buddha Indra, Vemacitra, Sakyasinha, Dhruvasinha, the Jvalamukha and Dharmaraja. So what does that represent? In what way do these six Buddhas of these realms represent the inescapability of the spiritual life?

_____: Well, as you said earlier, whatever aspect of life you go into there is the spiritual life ...

S: Yes, sooner or later you encounter that spiritual possibility or spiritual potential.

Devamitra: Could you also see it in terms of the interpenetration of reality into every...?

S: You could see it in that way, yes, you could. That's a quite interesting thought, in a way, that if you follow up the implications even of a worldly experience, sufficiently far or sufficiently deep, you start bordering upon the spiritual realm. Do you see what I mean?

Subhuti: 'If a fool would persist in his folly..'

S: Yes, 'he would become wise', yes. Blake.

_____: Do you think also that you could make sense of the - is it 'the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom', in those sort of terms? (**S:** You could, yes.) Say if you push *samsara* hard enough you will realise in the end that it is fruitless rather than seeing it as excess is actually the same as wisdom.

S: Yes. I think this is illustrated by quite a lot of the best modern literature. An exploration in depth of ordinary worldly life leads to some sort of wisdom. You get this sometimes if you read a really good novel, I mean by one of the great classical novelists. After all, what have they been writing about? They have only been writing about ordinary men and women eating and drinking and growing up and getting married and dying and getting disappointed, and running their businesses etc., etc. Say a Hardy novel, this is all he is writing about, but none the less he goes into it so deeply you start feeling that there is a sort of wisdom there, there is a vision of human existence. And you see beyond that, on the borders of that just a glimpse of something more, something much more, or you see that something more hovering over the whole of that experience, the whole of human life. Do you see what I mean? [348]

Devamitra: The trouble is that though a lot of contemporary writers, say, that have got that kind of vision, they can see the futility of life, but they have got no vision to back it up with, nothing that goes beyond that.

S: I mean the great novelists of whom I am speaking don't simply show straightforwardly, in a simple way, the futility of human life. Maybe some modern novelists do, or they make you feel the futility of human life. But the great novelists of whom I am thinking, like Hardy or George Eliot, don't leave you with that sort of feeling. Everybody might have been unsuccessful or disappointed in the context of a certain story but you are not left with the feeling of the futility of human life, because in the course of those disappointments and frustrations they have as it were explored human life to such a depth they have touched something **beyond** human life, beyond conditioned existence itself. So it isn't straightforward futility in an empty, negative, cynical sense, it's not just a sort of wasteland experience.

Devamitra: That actually may be true of those people, I am thinking more in terms of quite contemporary writers, especially more ...

S: I would not say that that was the sort of thing I was thinking of. That sort of sense of futility might make you **feel** like going and committing suicide.

Devamitra: Well, actually, that is what I think a lot of the contemporary writing does do.

_____: I'm reading *De Profundis* at the moment, Oscar Wilde. That's real spiritual revelation based on his experience of life, it seems to come through. It's very moving.

S: Yes, right. So you get the same sort of experience from a Greek tragedy. In human terms, yes, it is a tragedy, a disaster, everybody ends up getting killed, but none the less you feel something beyond that, it doesn't merely illustrate the futility of human life. Because the human doesn't comprise simply the worldly, as it were, it's in the very failure of the worldly that you experience the beyond the worldly. This is what Jaspers calls foundering, you founder from a worldly point of view but at the moment of foundering you have an experience of what he calls the encompassing - the encompassing being just a little bit like the Buddhist *anyata*. He was familiar with Buddhist thought, actually.

I think this is what gives some of these great classic novels their appeal, especially for people who can't derive any sort of comfort or inspiration from Christianity but who don't have much sympathy with or even knowledge of any Eastern spiritual tradition. Or even in the case of those who do, they seem to get quite a lot out of some of these classic western novels, and they are not just reading them for fun or to pass the time, it isn't as simple as that, is it? - or at least I hope it isn't.

So perhaps the fact that one also has to confront the Buddhas of the six realms signifies that sort of thing. You can't even here take up an ordinary - well, I say ordinary - you can't even take up a good novel and read it without being brought face to [349] face with some kind of spiritual significance. You can't even just have a good read and enjoy the story and leave it at that.

Devamitra: It's as if, if you have a certain depth of experience of life, it's only anything which gives expression to that depth which is going to give you any satisfaction whatsoever, and whatever that is you are going to have that experience of brushing up against reality in one form or another.

S: Yes.

Just one point before we close for the day. 'All these visions appear from your heart centre which is associated with emotion, passion and pleasure.' What do you think is the significance of this? It's almost as though the peaceful divinities represent reality as seen through the thin mist, so to speak, or the iridescent mist of the positive emotions. Do you think there is anything more to it than that?

Heart here would seem to mean positive emotions, or perhaps we could say more than that, the positive **spiritual** emotions. If you look out at reality, so to speak, with a heart full of positive spiritual emotions you see reality in the form of these benign peaceful figures. You are alienated from them to a degree, but only to a slight degree. You are alienated from them in the sense that you see them externally and perhaps don't at first recognise them as your own thought forms, but the alienation is relatively slight, and on the subjective side is accompanied by very positive spiritual emotions. So therefore you see reality, when you see it in the form of these Buddha figures, you see it in the form of very benign and peaceful Buddha figures, very reassuring and very enthralling and fascinating and inspiring. That's why perhaps, even among Christians, if you find a Christian who is really good-natured and hasn't been brought up very strictly as a Christian, you find he sometimes has a quite positive conception of God, he doesn't think about God as the avenger and the punisher and the judge, he doesn't see God like that at all, he just sees God as the benign father figure. Just because his own emotions are relatively positive.

Subhuti: We usually say that the six sages are all Avalokitesvara. I think that is what you said .

S: That is also said, yes.

Subhuti: But here they all have got different names, one of them is Shakyamuni.

S: That doesn't prevent them all being manifestations of Avalokitesvara, but, yes, they do have these different names. That raises an interesting point. We mentioned that Aksobhya and Vairocana were interchangeable so far as the centre of the mandala is concerned, that there is - as it were - competition between them for the centre of the mandala. But any of the Buddha or Bodhisattva figures can be made as it were relatively or temporarily for the time being central. If he is, say, your *yidam*, your special, as it were your favourite, Buddha or Bodhisattva you can put him, for practical purposes, in the centre of the mandala. So in the, say, spiritual life of Tibetan Buddhists Avalokitesvara has come to assume great importance, so it's as though he is **the** Bodhisattva, or even **the** Buddha. So everything is interpreted in relation to him or in terms of him. The Dalai Lama is the incarnation of Avalokitesvara. So it's [350] Avalokitesvara whose mantra is most recited in Tibet. He is the special protector of Tibet and of the Tibetan people. He is the special protector of the Dharma itself in the interregnum, so to speak, between Shakyamuni and Maitreya. In the same way it is Avalokitesvara who manifests in the six realms of sentient existence. It is Avalokitesvara who through his mantra, the six syllables, delivers from those six realms of sentient existence. But you could develop it all equally well in terms of Manjughosa, if Manjughosa was as important as that for you. And also it has been pointed out that iconographically there is a tendency, though this is by no means uniform, that when a deity - to use that term - a Buddha or Bodhisattva moves to the centre of the mandala he tends to assume the colour white. This happens with Tara. The green Tara therefore, Shamatarā, is the consort of Amoghasiddhi, but when she becomes all the more important and becomes a sort of central Buddha figure in her own right she becomes the

white Tara. The white Tara, though technically a Bodhisattva, and iconographically a Bodhisattva, in a sense is a female Buddha form occupying the centre of the mandala. Do you see what I mean?

This is why there was the ambiguity about the colour of Aksobhya: it is as though if he moves to the centre of the mandala he ought to take on the colour white, but if he remains in the east he has the colour blue. If Vairocana is in the centre of the mandala he has, he should have, and he usually has, the colour white, if he moves over to the east he takes on or should take on the colour blue. This isn't always observed, sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't, this creates further as it were confusion or you could say additional richness, it depends on your point of view.

So you could say that Vajrasattva is Aksobhya considered as the occupier of the centre of the mandala, even though it also is represented in Bodhisattva form.

_____: There is a white form of Manjushri, isn't there?

S: Oh yes there is a white Manjushri and a red Manjushri and a black Manjushri, whose cults enjoy varying degrees of popularity. In the same way there is a red Avalokitesvara. Strictly speaking, the colour of Avalokitesvara is red, as the Bodhisattva of Amitabha, but he is of such importance that he gravitates, as it were, to the centre of the mandala and he is almost always represented simply as white.

_____: Also in the cosmic refuge tree you have all the Buddhas and Shakyamuni as a manifestation of Padmasambhava, so that's Padmasambhava at the centre.

S: Yes, exactly.

The dominant Buddha family seems to be that of Amitabha with perhaps either Vairocana or Aksobhya coming next. Aksobhya certainly coming next in Tibet and in the Vajrayana generally, but Vairocana coming next so far as Far-Eastern Buddhism is concerned, especially the Shingon school.

John Wakeman: Is there a white Amitabha? Is he often in the centre of the mandala?

S: Amitayus is as it were a white Amitabha. Amitayus is a form of Amitabha and is usually represented as white.

All right, let's pause there and have our morning coffee. [351]

[Break]

S: All right, the seventh day.

Anandajyoti: Could I ask a question about the five Buddhas before we start? It is quite easy to see how Amitabha and Akshobhya would develop as the two aspects of Vairocana, as embodying the two major aspects of Enlightenment, wisdom on the one hand and compassion or love on the other, but in a way it seems a bit fortuitous that you should have wealth on one side and action on the other. Why them in particular and how did they develop?

S: Also of course Ratnasambhava is associated with the earth, and that is depth, and also is the southern, though actually of course the southern lies to your left, because when you sit facing the mandala you sit facing the west, you are in the east, the north is on your right and the south is on your left, so it doesn't quite fit from that point of view. I'm sure it does fit somehow, but it probably needs thinking about.

Subhuti: Is it potentiality and actuality?

S: It could be that, it could be that. Because Amoghasiddhi is, yes, the unobstructed success, the achieved action, you could say. Yes, you could say that Ratnasambhava represented potentiality, the potential riches as it were, the riches hidden in the earth. He's the jewel producer, and the earth is of course the jewel producer, so in that way, yes, potentiality as distinct from actuality. One could look at it like that.

Any other way, possibly, of looking at it?

I wonder if there is a possibility of co-ordinating with the five spiritual faculties. This is not traditionally done but you could say that in that case Amitabha is associated with meditation because he is in the *dhyana* mudra, but could you not associate him with positive emotion which is experienced *par excellence* in the context of meditation? And then of course Aksobhya would represent wisdom, Amoghasiddhi has to represent *virya*, so what does that leave Ratnasambhava?

Devamitra: *Sraddha*.

S: *Sraddha*. Well then, what stimulates *sraddha*? Beauty. So you could associate richness and beauty, the exuberance of beauty as it were. You could have Ratnasambhava covering the aesthetic. Do you see what I mean? He gives, you give out of faith, out of devotion. You could make that sort of connection. It is out of faith that you go forth, out of faith that you leave home - well, the horse is associated with that going forth from home, isn't it? It sounds a bit fanciful but then in a way you are meant to allow your imagination free play over these symbols to see suggestions or get hints you might otherwise not have got.

So who were the Bodhisattvas accompanying Amoghasiddhi?

_____: The clearer of hindrances.

S: Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, and who was the other one, was it Akasagarbha?

_____: It was Vajrapani.

S: It was Vajrapani, yes. I was trying to position Akasagarbha [352] and Ksitigarbha.

_____: They follow on. Akasagarbha is on the day after, so Akasagarbha is probably with Amitabha.

_____: No it's not, it's Vairocana. Akasagarbha is with Vairocana.

S: So he is immediately above Ksitigarbha.

_____: Oh sorry, Ratnasambhava, he's with Ratnasambhava.

S: Which one is with Ratnasambhava?

_____: Akasagarbha.

S: One would have thought that it would have been Ksitigarbha, wouldn't one? The earth and depth; but it isn't. So there is another sort of correlation there. Another sort of correspondence.

Sagaramati: You can't see space as a ground? (**S:** No.) That's where the potentialities come out of the void, which is symbolised by space.

S: I think perhaps it would be best, as I suggested, to correlate the five Buddhas with the five spiritual faculties. Though of course essentially, the essential correlation - and this brings me back to something I was going to say anyway - the essential correlation is with the four wisdoms, or five wisdoms. If you want to make real sense of it, extract from it the basic meaning, the five Buddhas are embodiments of the five wisdoms. That is to say the central wisdom, the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, and the four wisdoms which are aspects. And then they in turn are transformations of the eight *vijnanas*. So the order in which the *vijnanas* are transformed will be, as it were, the natural evolutionary order of the five Buddhas - or rather the four Buddhas because the fifth, the central one, does not evolve. So in that way you have to go round - I think - I worked all this out once - in a clockwise order. You have to end up with Amoghasiddhi. If the transformation starts in the *alaya* it must start with Aksobhya, it then descends to the *klisto-mano-vijnana* i.e. Ratnasambhava, it then goes on to the *mano-vijnana* i.e. Amitabha, and culminates in the sense *vijnanas*, i.e. Amoghasiddhi. Do you see what I mean? I said Amoghasiddhi first when I should have said Amitabha.

So that is the evolutionary order. If you retrace your steps, supposing that to be possible, transforming first of all the five sense *vijnanas* into the all-pervading wisdom then of course you would start from Amoghasiddhi. But the actual, as experienced, the actual process seems not to go in that direction. There is first of all the turning about in the deepest seat of the *alaya* and that transforms the *alaya* into the mirror-like wisdom which is symbolised by Aksobhya. Then descending, as it were, the *klisto mano-vijnana*, the soiled mind consciousness, is transformed into the *samatha-jnana*, the wisdom of equality, which is non-dualistic, not subdividing into subject and object. Then the *mano-vijnana* on the next level down is transformed into the *pratyaveksanajnana*, you don't just distinguish things with the mind, you actually see them in the light of wisdom in their unique particularity. That wisdom is symbolised by Amitabha. And then the five senses which are operating in the external world, [353] or rather the *vijnana* associated with those five senses is transformed into the all-performing wisdom which is symbolised by Amoghasiddhi.

So as you go in clockwise order round the mandala this represents the process of the transformation of the *vijnanas* into the *gnanas* - *vijnanas* into *gnanas*, you notice - discriminating awarenesses into awarenesses, as symbolised by the five Buddhas.

Similarly if you wanted to speak in terms of a fall, as for instance Blake speaks when he speaks of the four Zoas, you would have to go round in an anti-clockwise direction. So I have tried - this is something I amused myself with some time ago - to correlate the four Zoas with the four Buddhas, not including the central one,

because the four Zoas in Blake fall in a certain sequence, don't they? If you recapitulate in reverse order that sequence, that is the process of ascension and reintegration and spiritual evolution. I just touched on this in my *Buddhism and William Blake*, but that was just a word to the wise, it left you to work out the details yourself. But I mentioned there that Buddhism does not speak in terms of a fall, not even a primordial fall, so there is no question of the four Buddhas as it were falling into *samsara*. There is only the evolutionary order, not the involutionary order, so far as they are concerned.

So you must also remember that the sequence, the clockwise sequence of the four Buddhas, represents the process of the transformation of *vijñanas* into *jñanas*. And the fact that that is a process and that therefore in a way those four *jñanas* and four Buddhas represent stages in a process, to some extent affects the co-ordination with corresponding, or correspondent, factors which are as it were static. Do you see what I mean? Like the elements and *skandhas* and so on.

But basically one must remember that the meaning is really *vijñanas* and *jñanas*, conceptually speaking.

Tape 18

That gives you your basic key, when you start feeling a bit confused. So I don't know whether that would make any sense in terms of the spiritual faculties. You probably start off with mindfulness which is always necessary, and then you go on to wisdom - you could in a way say preliminary intellectual understanding, faith, emotions, start getting enlisted. And then meditation, yes, as a result of faith you get into deeper spiritual experience. And *virya*, well, that falls down a bit there, doesn't it?

Sagaramati: You could say up until then it is a bit subjective, a bit Hinayanistic, and *virya* would be the Bodhisattva.

S: The spontaneous.

Sagaramati: The activity.

S: Or you could say the process just speeds up. As you get deeply into meditation, all sorts of energies are liberated which carry you forward more vigorously. You could make some sort of sense of that correlation **in those terms**.

It's quite interesting to work all these things out. Maybe someone could give a talk on all these correlations one day.

Sagaramati: Purna gave a very good talk at Pundarika quite a while ago [354] about, I think, the five Buddhas related to five different ways of Going for Refuge. I can't remember exactly but it was very, very good.

S: That sounds interesting.

Sagaramati: He said he would write it out and put it in *Shabda* but he never did.

S: In a sense, the way in which a person naturally belonging to a particular Buddha family would tend to go for Refuge?

Sagaramati: Would tend to go for Refuge, Yes, I think that was it.

S: Yes, right, that sounds very interesting.

All right, let's go on to the seventh day. Would someone like to read through the whole of that?

THE SEVENTH DAY

Next, the *vidyadharas* begin to shine out from the throat centre, which is the essence of the communication principle. The peaceful divinities are associated with the heart, and the wrathful divinities with the brain. Speech is the link of communication between the two, which is the *vidyadharas*. *Vidyadhara* means holder of knowledge or insight. They are not quite peaceful and not quite wrathful, but intermediary; they are impressive, overpowering, majestic. They represent the divine form of the Tantric guru, possessing power over the magical aspects of the universe.

At the same time, the green light of the animal realm appears, symbolizing ignorance which needs the teaching of the guru to enlighten it. [355]

S: I think the main point to be discussed here is the fact that ‘the *vidyadharas* begin to shine out from the throat centre, which is the essence of the communication principle.’ In other words the fact that, as Trungpa says, ‘The peaceful divinities are associated with the heart, the wrathful divinities with the brain.’ And the *vidyadharas* with speech, the communication principle, which is the link between the two. I have touched upon something of this sort even as long ago as the lectures on *The Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path*. Do you remember?

Voices: Yes.

_____ : Om Ah Hum.

S: It as though head is associated with intellect, perhaps in a slightly narrow sense. Why do you think that is, exactly? Except, perhaps, apart from the fact it just is. But do you actually feel feelings here, do you actually think up here? It seems as though you do. It’s difficult to say whether this has any actual scientific foundation, but when you think too much you get a headache, you don’t get a heart ache. But if you feel very upset and sad you don’t get a headache, you get a heart ache. So in a sense the brain, the head, is the seat of thinking and the heart is the seat of feeling. But then again why should the brain, the head, the intellect, be associated with **wrathful** deities? When you see reality conceptually, in terms of thought, or through the medium of thought, why should reality as it were assume a wrathful aspect?

Devamitra: Could it be something to do with alienation?

S: Yes, it seems to be something to do with alienation. Because you are quite alienated from reality when you see it only through the thinking principle, through the intellect - we’re using ‘intellect’ in the more modern sense of the term. Thinking can probably become more easily alienated than any other function, for obvious reasons, and not necessarily negative ones, not exclusively negative ones. So in the same way the heart is the seat of feeling, and if you see reality in terms of, or through the medium, of positive, especially positive, spiritual emotion you will tend to see reality as loving and peaceful. In other words you will see it in a less alienated way.

But what about the speech principle, or speech centre, or throat centre, which comes literally in between the head and the heart, the brain and the heart, physiologically speaking? It seems to synthesise the two, because speech can give expression both to thought and emotions, or even just thought and emotion at the same time. It reconciles thought and emotion. And of course through speech you communicate with other people. So the throat centre is of the essence of the communication principle.

So just as the wrathful deities were associated with the head, the peaceful deities with the heart, so the *vidyadharas* are associated with the throat or throat centre. So they partake of the nature of both the peaceful and the wrathful, and therefore Trungpa describes them as ‘not quite peaceful and not quite wrathful, but intermediary; they are impressive, overpowering, majestic.’ Perhaps majestic is the best term, or even sublime. [356]

_____ : Are they Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, gods?

S: It seems to be a different category. They are gurus, it is as though it is an independent category, almost.

_____ : It’s surprising you don’t hear more about them.

S: Well, they are a specifically Tantric phenomenon. *Vidyadhara* means holder of knowledge or insight, *vidya*. *Vidya* has got an ambiguous meaning in the Tantra. *Vidya* can mean sort of magical knowledge, but also the knowledge of Enlightenment. So the *vidyadhara* who is, as Trungpa says, the Tantric guru, he is both the super magician, and also the Enlightened person together. The *vidyadhara* seems to have this sort of meaning, or this sort of feeling to it, as it were. Do you see what I mean? Because *vidya* means, originally, sort of magical knowledge. But inasmuch as the whole of existence is a magical display, Enlightenment itself is a sort of magical knowledge, a knowledge of magic, so to say. Perhaps it’s only the magician who sees through the

magic. So *vidyadhara* also means one who is the bearer of *vidya* in the highest sense. That is a quite easy connection to make, because the basic ignorance is called *avidya*. So one who overcomes *avidya* possesses *vidya* which is synonymous with Bodhi. But inasmuch as *vidya* is also used traditionally in the sense of magical knowledge even the *vidya* which is Enlightenment assumes a sort of magical tinge, do you see what I mean? So it is as though the *vidyadhara* is the great Enlightened magician guru. This is the sort of connotation of the term. 'The Great Enlightened Magician Guru'.

_____: Isn't it a general term for a Tantric practitioner as well?

S: Well, an adept practitioner, he is the *dhara*, the holder of the *vidya*.

Sagaramati: *Dhara* means holder?

S: Yes. One who holds, in the sense of one who has attained, one who has realised. Just as you get *Vajradhara*, the holder of the vajra.

So it is quite interesting that the Tantric guru is not just peaceful and not just wrathful. Padmasambhava is like that, it is as though he is also a sort of *vidyadhara*.

Sagaramati: Majestic.

S: Majestic. If the guru is too peaceful what would that mean? I will put it the other way around, if the guru was too wrathful what would that mean, what would happen? He would drive away all the disciples. But supposing he was too as it were peaceful, too loving?

_____: His disciples wouldn't progress.

S: Wouldn't progress. So it's important, so to speak, that the guru is sort of midway between the two. Also of course the throat centre represents the principle of communication, so also you could say the guru is the communicator. As far as the disciple is concerned he is midway between where the disciple [357] is and reality, so to speak. Where the Buddhas are. In a sense, yes, the Enlightened *vidyadhara* is a Buddha, in fact one is told that the Tantric guru is to be regarded as himself the Buddha, but in another sense, especially if he has human form, he is midway between the Buddhas and the disciples, the ordinary Buddhists, so to speak. So he is more closely in touch with the disciple than is the Buddha. So in a sense he's a more present, a more **effective** Buddha. So in that way you could say, for that reason, the guru is regarded as the esoteric Buddha refuge. But from this point of view the *vidyadhara* is the communicator between ultimate reality and the disciple. He is near enough to the disciple to be able to teach him and again near enough to reality to be able to teach the disciple, he's half way between the two, so to speak.

So this also, in a way, suggests, maybe indirectly, the importance of the arts. The arts, as I have said, come half way between, don't they? Do you see what I mean? Half way between the spiritual world and the ordinary world, they mediate certain spiritual values, as we saw when I was talking about the great classic novel. You could say it does that, it sort of mediates between the purely spiritual world and the mundane world, the ordinary world. It's as though in the great classical novel where human experience, human life, is seen in great depth there is just a sort of slight illumination of the spiritual over all of that. It is sort of in between, without ceasing to talk about worldly life and worldly activities it is conveying some hint of something beyond all that, even though it isn't at all clearly defined, or even insisted upon. But one does get a definite suggestion of that, which can be a clue to that higher spiritual world.

So yes, in a way the *vidyadhara* is the artist, is the poet, is the man of imagination, that is also a form of magic.

Also, 'at the same time the green light of the animal realm appears symbolising ignorance which needs the teaching of the guru to enlighten it.' I think we can say more than that. It almost suggests as though in relation to the guru the disciple is an animal. So what does **that** suggest as regards the guru? Well, from that point of view the guru is truly human.

_____: The bringer of culture.

S: The bringer of culture, yes. The bearer of culture. Again you get this word 'bearer', one who bears, *dhara*, the great culture heroes are bearers of culture. Padmasambhava seems to embody that rôle too.

In the Hindu Tantra, just to go off the path a little, there is a classification of disciples into *apassus*, *viras* and *divyas* Anybody ever heard of this?

_____: Yes, I think it's at the beginning of the (Tanjala's?) Aphorisms.

S: It's there too, is it?

_____: I'm not sure, I don't know the words, but the disciples can go at different lengths from the medium strength disciples.

S: Ah no, it isn't quite like that. *Apassu* means the beast or the brute. The disciple who is like the beast or the brute is one who has to be forcibly controlled with many rules [358] and regulations. Do you see what I mean? Just like the human being controls the animal. The *vira* is the heroic person who has much more of the initiative but is a bit in a way overconfident and aggressive in his spiritual life. And then the *divya* is the divine person who is naturally of a very highly spiritual disposition.

And the Tantra, again, is said to be especially suited for the *viras*. Sometimes it is said that the Tantric path is meant for those who are *viras*.

_____: I think it may be that distinction in the aphorisms.

S: This can also be related to the castes and the *gunas*, and even in Buddhism, according to one explanation, to the different kinds of Tantra. But this is perhaps another matter, going a bit too far astray.

In Tibet it is indeed, or was indeed sometimes said that if you had no teacher, if you hadn't a spiritual teacher, hadn't been initiated into any spiritual practice, you weren't really a human being, you were no better than an animal. This is putting it a bit strongly but you can see the point of that. And one can see a lot of people, in the absence of any specific spiritual interest, leading more or less animal-like lives. Right, anything more to be said about that topic?

_____: What do they look like iconographically?

S: They are represented more like Bodhisattvas, but not so young and with often the Tantric implements, the vajra and bell and so on. And again more often than not long hair, like Bodhisattvas, sometimes with bone ornaments, and with this slightly wrathful smile. Again, a bit like Padmasambhava. They are a bit like the *siddhas*, though the *siddhas* are more varied.

Of course the special significance within the bardo context of the fact that on the seventh day, so to speak, one has this sort of experience is perhaps not quite clear. Perhaps one could go into that a little - what is the significance of this sort of contrast? It's as though almost one has a sort of choice, again. Or the experience of the sixth day, or the experience which is described as the sixth day experience, doesn't allow one any choice, one sees that one has got no choice, one can only commit oneself to the spiritual life, one can only go up. But here there seems to be a choice again? It is as though, yes, there are the gurus, the *vidyadharas* on the one hand and the animal realm on the other. So what do you think this signifies, this sort of opposition? You have had the animal realm before, haven't you, in connection with which Buddha world was it?

_____: No, it's the one that's left over.

S: Oh, we haven't, it's left over. Well, that is more clear, if it wasn't included before it has got to be included somewhere. But it is significant then, in that case, isn't it, that it's in apposition to the *vidyadharas*. Because you can have five realms, but that is by taking the world of the *asuras* and the world of the gods as one, but very often they are taken as two, so that gives you six worlds. You have got five Buddha families so you have got to complete your correlations, so in a way it [359] is quite ingenious to correlate the animal realm with the *vidyadharas*, and also the *vidyadharas* with the throat centre because the throat centre represents the principle of communication. *Vidyadharas* also represent the principle of communication between the Enlightened and the unenlightened; animals have no principle in the way that human beings have even though, yes, there is some communication, but not in the fully developed sense that there is between human beings. So it's as though the choice here is, if it is a question of choice, between communication and non-communication, and communication of a special sort. So do you think that signifies anything? I mean what is the sort of spiritual experience you are confronted with here? It's almost as though just leading an animal existence or getting into communication with something higher, or something representing something higher than the animal realm, in other words a teacher.

Devamitra: There is also a suggestion of mantra.

S: Yes, in a way.

_____: It fits in very well with how we were describing the animal realm as being a realm where people in a sense just don't see the possibility of anything higher and as though culture could act as the intermediary, as a way into that.

S: Right, yes. So culture on its own level is a sort of analogue of the spiritual life and **spiritual** culture, so to speak.

Virabhadra: And it's the only one of the realms that really needs such a bridge, perhaps. Because of the particular characteristics of the animal realm.

S: But it's also as if the human world overlaps with the animal world. A lot of what you think of as human is in fact animal and people that in a way you think of as human are again in a way animal. Or at least they haven't really realised their full human potential until they start to learn. Until at least there is culture, and ideally hopefully spiritual culture, too.

_____: Do you think there is any meaning in the fact that here we do have a choice now, whereas before...

S: This I'm not sure about. We didn't on the sixth day have a choice but again we have a choice. It is as though this pertains almost to an earlier level of experience, but perhaps we shouldn't expect too much of a linear development here. Or one could ask why there is this sort of sequence, why are the first manifestations seen, the first visions seen, through the medium of the heart centre and then the second through the medium of the head centre and then the third through the medium of the throat centre? Why that particular order? If it was in terms of increasing degrees of alienation, surely the head centre should have come last instead of second. But it isn't really quite like that because the throat centre sort of unifies the head and the heart centres. Perhaps one cannot expect a fully worked-out conceptual framework or point by point correspondence. That suggests that it is sort of just two-dimensional when it is really perhaps multi-dimensional. [360]

Kuladeva: Do you think it has anything to do with that although on the sixth day you are confronted with all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and there is apparently no escape, but at the same time if you don't actually do anything, if you block yourself off from that then does this not, the possibility of being reborn in the animal realm, is that not tied in by whether you are open to that or whether you block yourself off to it?

S: Could be. Or it could represent the fact that if you accept that there is no other way, that the only thing you can do is to follow the spiritual life, you just have to look for a teacher. So in a way that comes next. If you don't actually do that, in a sense without a teacher you are not better than an animal and you have to be reborn somewhere, so you would be reborn in the animal realm. You could look at it like that.

But on the other hand, again, you could say that there is no escape. If there's no escape then you just have to find a teacher, there is no possibility of your not finding one, or at least **wanting** to find one.

But it could be of course that we are not concerned with the literal world but just with that animal-like state of ignorance. Which in a way underlies all the realms.

But perhaps we could go back a bit to this question of the choice, if there is a choice, between communication and non-communication; the *vidyadhara* representing communication between a higher and a lower level and the animal representing, relatively at least, non-communication.

Sagaramati: I think the fact that communication is a two-way process, there's a chance of communication in an animal.

S: It's as though the animal represents just extreme horizontal communication. Whereas the communication as represented by the *vidyadhara* is vertical communication. Animals do communicate in a way but it is all as if it were very much on the same level, though animals can begin to communicate with human beings, they can even learn from human beings, but to that extent they cease to be animals because they are learning. And they can be well taught and they can be badly taught, you can develop truly human positive qualities in an animal and also neurotic ones. You can see a neurotic little dog sometimes. On a walk a few evenings ago we passed a woman who lives in the village, I think, and she had a couple of dogs and she was in process of doing her best to make those dogs neurotic, the way she was talking to them and treating them, and the poor dogs were standing there with really sort of puzzled airs. And you really felt that she was a really neurotic woman, quite unbalanced, you could see that, she occasionally speaks to you again in a quite strange sort of way. And you could see that she was trying to make those dogs neurotic, and they were healthy enough so far to have been able to resist the process. But they were quite puzzled; they didn't really realise what was going on. And the foolish woman was expecting them to understand everything that she said and was speaking as though they **could** understand, and she was just explaining things, in a way, crazy things, instead of actually **showing** the dogs what she wanted. It's as though the dogs were quite sensible in relation to that woman, but if they get two or three years of that treatment I wonder how they will end up.

Any further point about this? [361]

Sagaramati: There was one thing I thought in terms of the meditation practices we do. We do home in on the nose for the last stage of the mindfulness of breathing. I was wondering, if you tend to be a head person anyway, wouldn't you be better focusing in your heart?

S: No, it is not in your heart, it's the stomach.

Sagaramati: But that's the heart right here, you see.

S: No, if you are a head person, in a way to counterbalance that you should even go below the heart, go even lower down. In fact this is a thing that I have sometimes mentioned, even recommended when I was taking classes down in London. There is a technique of concentrating not on the in and out breath but on the rise and fall of the abdomen. This is taught especially in the so-called *vipassana* teaching. But it doesn't mean that it is completely useless. Sometimes one can do this, this has a calming and more steadying effect in the case of the person who is concentrated more in his head. So you can concentrate, I would say, in the fourth stage, not on the breath coming and going within the nostrils but on the very gentle, as it should be by that time, rise and fall of the diaphragm, it is actually. And that will pull the consciousness down, so to speak. You can develop a sort of warm, comfortable, glowing feeling by doing that.

Sagaramati: I picked up a while ago when you were talking about the centres, in Buddhism the *chakras* that you focus on are - well, there is the heart, do you never go below the heart?

S: Yes and no, depending on context. This is of course only in the - I was going to say Vajrayana - but all the *chakras*, so to speak, if you take it that there are seven in all, though in a way that is arbitrary, but anyway take it that there are seven in all, it's only in the Vajrayana, some forms of the Vajrayana, that all seven are used. Usually it is the top three which are correlated with body, speech and mind. And of course those top three are mentioned here. Sometimes four are used and then there is another set of correlations. Or even five, the five elements. The Vajrayana doesn't **usually** go beyond five, but sometimes it goes to the full seven and then of course different sets of correlations come into play.

Sagaramati: I think you did say that in the Hindu tradition there tends to be a stimulation of the lower energies, I think you said. (**S:** Yes.) In Buddhism they concentrate on the sublimation of those energies (**S:** That is true.) in the heart.

S: That is true. The Hindu Tantric system very often recommends the stimulation of the lowest centre, the *mulatara* which is connected with the sexual centre, and the raising of that energy up the *shushana*. But this also is done sometimes in the Vajrayana, but on the whole the Vajrayana does not do that, it thinks much more in terms of unifying the energies at the heart centre.

Sagaramati: That's why I mentioned the mindfulness of breathing going to the heart, imagine a thing in your chest, as it were and trying to focus on that.

S: But no, actually you can go down to the diaphragm, let us say. It's the movement. You are not concentrating on a centre, [362] you are concentrating on the rise and fall of the diaphragm.

Sagaramati: Ah yes, I am confusing it, there is a Japanese meditation practice where you do focus on a centre.

_____: The *hara*.

Sagaramati: The *hara*.

S: Yes, the *hara*, that is an area though, rather than a centre. But that is a quite useful practice for those who are, so to speak, more in their heads, the more brainy, the more intellectual, the more conceptualising, as it were. To sometimes sink the consciousness down to the - yes, down to the *tanden*, one can do that, or just to concentrate on the rise and fall of the diaphragm instead of the point in the nostrils where the breath strikes as it comes in and goes out.

_____: So the *hara* isn't a centre, it's an area, is it?

S: The *tanden* is an area, definitely, but whether *hara* is used quite synonymously with that I am not quite sure. It probably is but I would need to check that.

_____: The head centre and the heart centre, I can almost physically feel those centres, those energies, but the throat centre is a lot more shady for me. Is it supposed to be at the lower end of the throat or higher up?

S: It is more here, it is near the Adam's apple, so to speak. But it can sort of flutter, you sometimes feel it just fluttering just there, it's not just one point, it is more like a little area. Perhaps you should communicate more. [Laughter]

Anyway, I think we could end there because the next section starts up something quite different and we probably need to go into it pretty thoroughly and it would be perhaps a little bit frustrating to break up in the middle. Tomorrow is the last day so we are going to have quite a bit of ground to cover, but maybe that's just as well.

Sagaramati: Also, some people say, well, I still find, it's very easy to concentrate on the fourth stage rather than the others because I think there is a tendency for the mental or the conceptual to focus on a point easier, but the other one is more diffuse, you have to feel something more diffuse rather than mentally home into it.

S: Could be. Because when you are counting the stages, one to ten, you can also visualise figures one to ten, and that sometimes helps, even of different colours according to one's taste or temperament. Or of light even. I don't know if I have mentioned that recently, it's a long time since I have taken classes. But I used to mention it. I used to say it is like having a block calendar with just one figure, one date, for the day and you tear them off one to ten one by one. So you say 'in out one' and you see this red figure one flashing against a white background. Then, 'in out two', the one disappears and you see then two. This can certainly help improve concentration. Has anybody ever mentioned this?

_____: No. I've never heard it. [363]

S: You've heard of it?

Subhuti: Whenever I have mentioned it people have become rather distracted by it. And they start making the letters all fancy and illuminated.

S: Oh dear, it's because we have all these artists in the movement, isn't it. But anyway, for others not so artistically inclined it might be useful but those who are artistically inclined just be warned by that. But it is a possibility, it can certainly steady concentration. That's why perhaps if you visualise it at all visualise quite a stark figure, very plain and functional, just like the figure on the date pad.

_____: Times Roman.

S: Yes, right. And red against a white background is quite good .

[Next Session]

S: We come on to the wrathful deities. Page 24. Would someone like to read, take it in turns read one after another those five paragraphs and then we will discuss all five together.

THE WRATHFUL DEITIES

Now the principles of the five Tathagatas are transformed into the herukas and their consorts. The basic qualities of the families continue, but now they are expressed in a very dramatic, theatrical way; this is the energy of vajra, padma, and so on, rather than just their basic qualities. The herukas have three heads and six arms. The symbolical meaning behind this is the power of transmutation, expressed in the mythical story of the subjugation of Rudra.

Rudra is someone who has achieved complete ego-hood. There were two friends studying under a teacher, and their teacher said that the essence of his teaching was spontaneous wisdom; even if a person were to indulge himself in extreme actions, they would become like clouds in the sky and be freed by fundamental spontaneity. The two disciples understood it entirely differently. One of them went away and began to work on the spontaneous way of relating to his own characteristics, positive and negative, and became able to free them spontaneously without forcing anything, neither encouraging nor suppressing them. The other one went away and built a brothel, and organised a big gang of his friends who all acted in a spontaneous way, making raids on the nearby villages, killing the men and carrying off the women.

After some time they met again, and both were shocked by each other's kind of spontaneity, so they decided to go and see their teacher. They both presented their experience to him, and he told the first that his was the right way, and the second that his was the wrong way. But the second friend could not bear to see that all his effort and energy had been condemned, so he drew a sword and killed the teacher on the spot. When he himself died he had a succession of incarnations, five hundred as scorpions, five hundred as jackals and so on, and eventually he was born in the realm of the gods as Rudra.

He was born with three heads and six arms, with fully grown teeth and nails. His mother died as soon as he was born, and the gods were so horrified that they took both him and the body of his [364] mother to a charnel ground and put them in a tomb. The baby survived by sucking his mother's blood and eating her flesh, so he became very terrifying and healthy and powerful. He roamed around the charnel ground, and began to control all the local ghosts and deities and create his own kingdom just as before, until he had conquered the whole threefold universe.

At that time his former teacher and his fellow student had already attained enlightenment, and they thought they should try to subjugate him. So Vajrapani manifested himself as Hayagriva, a wrathful red figure with a horse's head, and uttered three neighs to proclaim his existence in the kingdom of Rudra. Then he entered Rudra's body by his anus, and Rudra was extremely humiliated; he acknowledged his subjugation and offered his body as a seat or a vehicle. All the attributes of Rudra and the details of his royal costume, the skull crown, skull cup, bone ornaments, tiger-skin shirt, human-skin shawl and elephant-skin shawl, armour, pair of wings, crescent moon in his hair, and so on, were transmuted into the Heruka costume.

S: So what is the point of the story? And what is the connection, let us say, of the story with the explanation of the wrathful deities?

Trungpa does say at the end of paragraph one, 'the symbolical meaning behind this is the power of transmutation expressed in the mythical story of the subjugation of Rudra.' It's not **quite** that.

Subhuti: Do you see it as the process of softening ego that we talked about before? This being made receptive and cooking, as it were.

S: Yes, one could say that, but on the other hand the story seems to be intended to show, or to explain or account for, the appearance of the *herukas*. Because in appearance the *herukas* are very different from the Buddhas of which they are supposed to be a manifestation. Do you see what I mean? So the attributes of the *herukas* **are the attributes of Rudra**. It says this clearly, 'all the attributes of Rudra and the details of his royal costume', etc., 'were transmuted into the *heruka* costume.' So outwardly the *herukas* look exactly like Rudra. But what is the difference?

Virabhadra: They have been transformed by the power of Enlightenment.

S: So what has been transformed?

Virabhadra: Well, the mundane very powerful and unskilful energies have been transmuted into very powerful skilful energies.

S: Yes. It's as though in a way the Buddhas are acting like Rudra, there is apparently no outward difference, but actually there is a tremendous difference because that energy of the ego has been transformed, has been transmuted, and is being used for a completely different purpose. This is in a sense the point which is being made.

A further point is, how was that transmutation achieved? It was achieved by the ego itself being treated, as it were, in a rough sort of way. There is almost a sort of cyclical process here. It's as though [365] Enlightenment assumes a wrathful form so as to overcome the ego, and having overcome the ego it's as though the wrathful form of the Buddha, though in this case it is not strictly speaking the Buddha - it's Vajrapani and the other name isn't given here - but anyway it's two Buddha or Bodhisattva-like figures who manifest wrathful forms to overcome the ego and then themselves assume the form of the ego, as it were for further wrathful manifestations. Do you see what I mean?

But it also suggests that if you oppose, if your ego opposes, say, the energy if you like, of the Buddhas, that is transformed into wrathful and the ego sees the Buddha not only in a wrathful form as having all the attributes of the ego. Do you see what I mean? In fact it may not in a sense know the Buddhas are peaceful but they only appear as wrathful if you start opposing them. And if you oppose your fully developed ego to the wrathful form of the Buddha it's as though that wrathful form of the Buddha assumes an even more egoistic form. Well, it's invincible, the ego cannot overpower non-ego, so the ego experiences the non-ego as immensely powerful in relation to itself, experiences it even as ego, you can say. The wrathful form of the Enlightened one assumes the characteristics of the ego itself. So the *herukas* wear the attributes of Rudra.

To the extent that you oppose reality you are alienated from reality. And to the extent that you are alienated from reality you see reality as terrifying.

But there are some incidental points, so to speak, that we can go into here. Just a few passing points. What does the word *heruka* mean?

_____ : Masculine principle.

S: Sort of, but *heruka* means really ‘one of space’. There is for instance *herumba* which means clothed in space. *Herukas* are really the naked ones, so they are clothed in space, they wear nothing but space. They are not absolutely naked, of course, because they have got these various bones and skins and so on. But since you have got five Buddha families and five Buddhas you also have five *herukas*. They are not very individualised as personalities, so to speak, they are in fact simply called, usually, Karmaheruka, Ratnaheruka, Padmaheruka, Vajraheruka and Buddhaheruka. They are much of a muchness so to speak.

But the story of Rudra is quite interesting. You know where it comes from? We have recounted it before, of course, from *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, and I think it was included in the readings that we had at Sukhavati on Padmasambhava Day.

_____ : Didn’t you read out quite a part of it on your...?

S: I did too, yes. I read the description of Rudra more than the actual story. And this little summary gives a very condensed and in a way not very adequate idea of the horrifying nature of this Rudra. The text really goes into quite massive detail, doesn’t it, and paints a very vivid picture indeed.

But one thing I find very interesting here is that it all started with ‘two friends studying under a teacher and their teacher said that the essence of his teaching was spontaneous wisdom. Even if a person were to indulge himself in extreme actions they would become like clouds in the sky and be freed by fundamental spontaneity.’ This was the teacher’s teaching, so ‘the two [366] disciples understood it entirely differently. One of them went away and began to work on the spontaneous way of relating to his own characteristics, positive and negative, and became able to free them spontaneously without forcing anything, neither encouraging nor suppressing them. The other one went away and built a brothel and organised a big gang of his friends who all acted in a spontaneous way, making raids on the nearby villages, killing the men and carrying off the women.’ So, what is essentially wrong here? There are two different understandings of spontaneous. But in a way it’s surprising that Trungpa doesn’t point the moral and the dawn of the tale a little bit more because I’m sure that this is the way in which some of the things that **he** has said have been taken by people in the States. Some of the things he says seem to **invite** that sort of misunderstanding.

Devamitra: Actually when we read over that I thought immediately of that.

S: In a way here the Rudra seems to represent, almost, the characteristically Western attitude towards the Tantric teachings. The way in which the Western mind - to use that expression, strictly speaking there isn’t any such thing as a Western mind - apprehends or misapprehends the Tantric teachings and turns them to the purposes of the ego. We had something of that sort this morning when we studied *The Precepts of the Gurus*, we went into that sort of thing quite a bit in relation to one precept. I will just read out the precept, and you can imagine the sort of things we explored. ‘The ten things not to be avoided. Three: Obscuring passions being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom, which give deliverance from them (this is the editor’s addition), are not to be avoided.’ Then the editor adds, ‘if rightly used to enable one to taste life to the full and thereby reach disillusionment.’ So we really went into that. That it was not a question of the obscuring passions not being avoided in the sense of being indulged in or even tasted a little, but that the fact that you had these passions was to be faced up to and you were to really work on those passions because they represented the possibility of your attaining divine wisdom. In them was the energy that was going to get you to divine wisdom, but you have to work on them.

So in the same way one disciple went away and began to work on the spontaneous way of relating to his own characteristics, positive and negative. He adopted the right attitude. But the other took spontaneity to mean just following your own whims, your own fancies, your own desires, your own unskilful tendencies, and this is the sort of way that a lot of people in the West use or misuse the Tantric teachings, just to justify their own unskilful tendencies.

So there are these two attitudes typified by the two disciples; one really understanding what the teaching of spontaneity was all about, the other misunderstanding and completely distorting and misrepresenting.

‘After some time they met again, and both were shocked by each other’s kind of spontaneity.’ See, that’s interesting. You might think that it is understandable that the one who has got it right, so to speak, was shocked by the spontaneity of the one who had got it wrong. But also the one who got it wrong was shocked by the understanding of the one who had got it right. ‘So they decided to go and see their teacher. They both presented their experience to him and he told the first that his was the [367] right way and the second that his was the wrong way. But the second friend could not bear to see that all his effort and energy had been condemned so he drew a sword and killed the teacher on the spot.’ So what does this mean, what does this suggest, what is he looking for from the teacher?

_____ : Approval.

S: Approval. But more than that.

_____: Recognition.

S: Recognition, but more precisely than that? He is looking for confirmation of his own attitude. Confirmation of the rightness of his attitude, or even confirmation of his rightness.

So this is really a very important point. Not only with regard to, say, the teacher but with regard to the teaching, the spiritual tradition itself. There is an aphorism in *Peace is a Fire* to this effect, isn't there? Do you remember that one? That people are attracted to Buddhism because it - what was it?

Devamitra: Confirms their opinions or ideas.

S: Yes, confirms their opinions or ideas, or words to that effect. It would be better, I say, if they were attracted to Buddhism because it **rejects** their ideas. But this is what I am getting at. Some people say 'Buddhism must be right because it agrees with everything I think.' Well, in a sense, yes, if it is really what you think at your best, at your noblest, your most intuitive moments, your most inspired moments; when Buddhism seems to confirm those sort of things, well, yes, that's good, and you can legitimately follow up your interest in Buddhism then because it confirms what you've thought or felt in that sort of way. But only too often people take to Buddhism or what they think is Buddhism because it seems to confirm certain attitudes of theirs which may not be skilful or wholesome or correct **at all**. Some people might think Buddhism is a form of extreme asceticism, and they really like that so they are attracted to Buddhism because it confirms their fondness for extreme asceticism. Or they think that in Buddhism there's no place for devotion and they like that sort of idea.

So one is very often looking for confirmation. And if that confirmation is not given, if one is told that one is wrong, it is unbearable and you are even prepared to kill the person that tells you are wrong to maintain your rightness. I think I mentioned in the memoirs the case of disappointed devotee of Anandamayi who once knocked her down a flight of steps.

_____: That doesn't ring a bell.

S: I think it is there, I just refer to it, I don't describe it in detail. She didn't give him what he wanted, whether confirmation or something else, so he knocked her down a flight of steps. He was very devoted.

I have touched upon something like that in my current letter in *Shabda*, haven't I, in connection with my visit to Christchurch. I am going to have a little more to say about that same sort of thing in my next letter. Well, quite a bit more to say about it, actually.

But often people are looking not only for approval and recognition but confirmation of their rightness. In an ego-grounded sort of way, in a more objective way, yes, you are trying sincerely to [368] find out if you are right in the attitude that you are adopting. And of course you are pleased and relieved when you discover some genuine confirmation of that. But that is a different thing. It is to be distinguished from looking for a confirmation just because your ego security is bound up with that, and rejecting anything which threatens that ego security, anything which says that you are wrong.

Virabhadra: It seems to be almost looking for power. Sort of asking the teacher to sort of give you some sort of power that you didn't have before.

S: Right, yes.

Anyway, the results were terrible, when he died 'he had a succession of incarnations, five hundred as scorpions, five hundred as jackals and so on, and eventually he was born in the realm of the gods as Rudra. He was born with three heads and six arms with fully grown teeth and nails. His mother died as soon as he was born and the gods were so horrified that they took both him and the body of his mother to the charnel ground and put them in a tomb. The baby survived by sucking his mother's blood and eating her flesh so he became very terrifying and healthy and powerful.' There is no doubt a lot of symbolism here but perhaps there is no need to go into it. On a more mundane level what could be worse than, or more horrific than living off the flesh of your own dead mother, so to speak? But no doubt there are symbolical overtones also that we need not go into. It's quite a powerful enough image anyway.

'He roamed around the charnel ground and began to control all the local ghosts and deities and create his own kingdom just as before, until he had conquered the three-fold universe.' This is the natural tendency of the ego, to want to bring everything under control, to try to become king of the whole universe, the whole three-fold universe. So yes, the ego does create a world of its own, which it rules over, it's king, creates its own kingdom. So something has got to happen. Sooner or later of course the ego bumps up against reality and that can't be a very pleasant experience, it comes as an unpleasant shock, a terrible shock. And this is what happens now.

‘At that time his former teacher and his fellow student had already attained Enlightenment, and they thought they should try to subjugate him.’ They didn’t ignore him, they didn’t let him roam unchecked. It’s as though the forces of Enlightenment tried to bring the forces of unenlightenment under control, to subjugate them as Padmasambhava did with regard to the gods and demons of Tibet. ‘So Vajrapani manifested himself as Hayagriva’. This is not the whole story, Vajrapani himself represents a transformation of one of the two, Vajrapani being the bearer of the thunderbolt anyway, and he manifests himself as Hayagriva the horse-headed deity that we have already encountered as one of the guardians of the gates who is usually regarded as a manifestation of Avalokitesvara. But we get these crossings of the lines sometimes, just to make it clear that we shouldn’t take all these things too literally - ‘a wrathful red figure with a horse’s head’ and uttered three neighs to proclaim his existence in the kingdom of Rudra. Then he entered Rudra’s body by his anus and Rudra was extremely humiliated.’ What do you think is the significance of this, that he enters Rudra’s body by his anus and Rudra feels extremely humiliated? Don’t forget Rudra represents the ego. So what does it suggest that the Rudra also represents, the fact that he is treated in [369] this sort of way by Hayagriva? Is it just the Tibetan imagination running riot a bit or does it have a definite significance, a definite meaning? Why should he feel humiliated?

Devamitra: Well you get a certain feeling of strength from it which could be associated with what we were talking with regard to the *asuras*, a sort of exaggerated masculinity.

S: Ah, yes, yes.

Devamitra: And therefore it would be humiliating to be treated in that way.

S: So in other words his masculinity as it were is affronted. In other words his egohood is affronted. In other words a direct attack is made on the egohood of Rudra and this is as it were symbolised, you could say, by seeing Rudra as this essentially masculine kind of character, this one-sidedly super-*asuric* character, and that sort of attitude, that sort of extent of egotism has to be painfully subjugated and subdued. That means he has to be treated in exactly the opposite way as though it was not an ego at all, that it was not masculine at all. Put in the completely opposite position and in that way subdued. Do you see what I mean? Because the fundamental characteristic of the ego is to want to **assert** itself, not to be under **anything**’s control, not to be **under** anything or anybody. So here there’s a sort of reversal of roles, it’s as though Vajrapani as Hayagriva takes on the sort of role that Rudra usually adopts, this as it were exaggeratedly masculine role as it were, and Rudra is forced into the opposite position. And in this way the wrathful form of the Buddha adopts this even more egoistic attitude, as it were, in order to subdue the ego.

‘So Rudra acknowledged his subjugation and offered his body as a seat or a vehicle. All the attributes of Rudra and the details of his royal costume, the skull crown, the skull cup’, etc. ‘were transmuted into the *heruka* costume.’

So it is as though in the spiritual life you don’t abdicate the energy which we usually find in association with the ego, you **appropriate** that energy and you **use** that energy. Which means you may, to some people, appear almost egoistic, but actually it is not so, you have not got the ego itself, you have merely appropriated the **energy** of the ego, and that is now placed at the service of the Enlightened mind. To the unenlightened mind it might seem as though the Enlightened mind has assumed some of the characteristics of the ego, because the unenlightened mind is hostile to the Enlightened mind, so to speak, and cannot but see it negatively.

Anyway, perhaps one should as it were contemplate the images here and try and get the feeling of them rather than explain it all too analytically or too philosophically or psychologically. But you get some sort of feeling of the sort of energy that the Herukas represent. It makes it clear that the Enlightened mind, or the Buddha, isn’t something just weak and anaemic and tender and loving in a rather wishy-washy way, it has got more energy than the ego itself, and can even seem like an ego to the ego because it is so powerful. Not that it is powerful in itself, it only appears as powerful because the ego opposes its power to it. Fundamentally it is peaceful. Fundamentally the Buddhas don’t do anything, they are just quiet and peaceful. It’s your fault if you run up against them and bruise yourself.

All right, let’s read on, then. [370]

First there is the Great Heruka who is not associated with any of the five families, he is the space between the five families. The Great Heruka creates the basic energy of all the wrathful herukas, and then come the Buddha Heruka, Vajra Heruka, Ratna Heruka, Padma Heruka and Karma Heruka with their respective consorts. They represent the outrageous, exuberant quality of energy which cannot be challenged. Fundamentally the quality of the five families is a peaceful state, open and passive, because it is completely stable and nothing can disturb it; the tremendous power of that peaceful state manifests as wrathful. It is often described as compassionate anger, anger without hatred.

S: I think one has to remember here that psychological states are being used as symbols for metaphysical realisations. It is not 'I really feel quite sorry for you and I am only pretending to be angry or only showing anger', no, one is not concerned really with anything psychological, anything emotional in the ordinary sense here, at all. So this shouldn't give anybody the excuse for saying things like, 'it's just my righteous indignation, it's all for your own good.'

_____: So one's anger could really only be based on some sort of insight.

S: Anger in **this** sense. It might in a way be perceived as anger in the ordinary sense, but I think even that one should be a little doubtful about, but it certainly could not **be** anger in the ordinary sense nor be felt as such. The point was raised even in - I think it's in the *Milindapanha* - when the Buddha spoke harshly whether he really felt angry. And the answer is given that no, the Buddha spoke out of compassion. You see he spoke harshly in the sense that the words that he used were severe words but they were not an expression of anger and surely there would not have been an angry feel to them. I think one always knows, one feels as it were intuitively if someone is saying something strongly to you, even if it is quite harsh or severe, one always knows, one always feels, if one is oneself sincere, whether there is any actual anger there or not. And if you really feel there is no anger, no ego-based anger in the ordinary sense, you can even accept that quite harsh statement or harsh judgement from the other person, or harsh criticism as the case may be. You really can feel the good will behind it even though it is quite severe. You do not feel anger behind it.

_____: You would probably react if you did feel that.

S: Or even if someone is as it were fighting with you, maybe in the course of discussion, and manifesting great energy and vigour, but you can sometimes feel, if the discussion is disinterested, that there is not any sort of egoistic attitude behind it, the other person is not trying to win, he is genuinely trying to communicate the truth as he sees it to you. So even if he is breaking, or even smashing through your weak defences in the form of your rationalisations, it is not really anger that is bursting through. You experience it a bit roughly because something of yours is being broken, is being smashed, but it isn't really anger, it is just the energy of his [371] conviction as it were, that is doing that, he is not personally angry. Do you see the distinction?

So if someone just gets angry in the course of discussion, even if it is talking about the Dharma, this cannot be described as compassionate anger, anger without hatred. Though even in the ordinary way you can have anger without hatred, but even that ordinary anger without hatred is not the sort of quality that is meant when one speaks of wrathful Buddhas. The word wrathful is used only analogically. I think it's quite important to realise that, otherwise you just get a convenient rationalisation for your bad temper, or your lack of patience, or proneness to lose your temper.

But all that has been said about the wrathful deities makes it quite clear that Enlightenment, or even just ordinary spiritual life, is not something anaemic and slack and devoid of energy and vigour, as very often people tend to think or assume. *[Pause]*

All right, let's go on to the *gauris*, then. Would someone like to read that paragraph?

Then there are the *gauris*, another type of wrathful energy. The five *herukas* are the existence of energy as it is, while the *gauris* are activating energy. The white *gauri* dances on a corpse, her activity is to extinguish thought processes, therefore she holds a mace of a baby's corpse. Generally a corpse symbolises the fundamental neutral state of being; a body without life is the state without any active thoughts, good or bad, the non-dualistic state of mind. Then the yellow goddess holds a bow and arrow because she has achieved the unity of skilful means and knowledge; her function is to bring them together. And then there is the red *gauri* holding a banner of victory made out of the skin of a sea-monster. The sea-monster symbolises the principle of *samsara*, which cannot be escaped; the goddess holding it as a banner means that *samsara* is not rejected but accepted as it is. Then in the north is *Vetali*, black in colour, holding a *vajra* and a skull cup because she symbolises the unchanging quality of *dharmata*. The *vajra* is indestructible, and the skull cup is another symbol of skilful means. We do not have to go through all of them in detail, but just to give a basic idea of these *gauris* and messengers connected with the wrathful mandala, each particular figure has a function in fulfilling a particular energy.

S: So, 'Then there are the *gauris*, another type of wrathful energy. The five *herukas* are the existence of energy as it is, while the *gauris* are activated energy.' Do you think this is a very valid sort of distinction?

Virabhadra: The *herukas* seem to be pretty active already!

S: Energy is energy, energy always acts and activates. Maybe it's enough to say that they just represent another aspect of energy, another form of energy, another way of expressing what is basically the same idea.

_____: These aren't the consorts?

S: No, these would seem to be not the consorts. 'The white gauri dances on a corpse, her activity is [372] to extinguish thought processes, therefore she holds a mace of a baby's corpse', the baby's corpse presumably suggesting that the thought process has been stifled at the very beginning. But why should there be that sort of function or value? Of course in a very general way, yes, as you practise meditation discursive thought processes are brought to an end but that is in a very general sort of way on a quite elementary level. What is the significance **here**? Why is it the special function of the wrathful energy so to speak to extinguish thought processes? Is it thought processes in general or only, perhaps, special kinds of thought processes?

Virabhadra: They seem to have been murdered, these thought processes. So maybe they are particularly strong or gross sort of ...

_____: Habits.

S: I thought of rationalisations of a defensive nature. The wrathful energy of the Buddhas as it were would just slay them, as it were, before they even have a chance to develop properly. Rationalisations would be nipped in the bud, all sorts of defensive thought processes and thought constructions of that sort.

_____: It's a quite horrifying image really.

S: Yes, indeed.

'Then the yellow goddess holds a bow and arrow because she has achieved the unity of skilful means and knowledge. Her function is to bring them together.' Maybe this a bit redundant in a way but it suggests as though there is a special energy that brings together *prajna* and *upaya*. Or perhaps it is one of the functions of energy, especially this wrathful energy, to overcome the distinction between as it were theory and practice, wisdom and means, as it would be at the highest level. Where there is this wrathful energy there is no alienation of theory from practice and practice from theory, you are brought right up against what is actually there, the raw emotional energy and so on. Or, as the case may be, the energy of Enlightenment itself.

Virabhadra: Skilful means seems to be operating at quite a high level where these energies are concerned. The potential for disaster is very great.

S: It is not in a sense that wisdom and skilful means actually do exist in isolation and there is a special energy to bring them together, no. By their very nature they are together, so one mustn't take it literalistically. But that bringing together, or being together, of wisdom and means generates or is associated with or expresses tremendous energy.

Subhuti: You are being confronted by this at a particular time, aren't you? I don't quite see how this functions for the dead person. I can see how confrontation with reality would cut off rationalisations but I don't see quite how this works. Do you see what I'm getting at?

S: Not quite, no.

Subhuti: Well, it is something that you are being presented with and that presumably you are resisting. So you are experiencing [373] these figures as having an effect on you. (**S:** Yes.) So what effect is this yellow *gauri* having on you, as somebody who is resisting?

Tape 19

S: Well, I suppose it depends upon the type of resistance. There could be, say, a type of resistance that resists the bringing together of wisdom and means, that wants to keep theory and practice separate. Well, this wrathful energy of the Buddhas, so to speak, or this particular form of it, compels you, almost, to bring wisdom and means together. Not that they can really be kept separate, but when there is any real energy arising within your spiritual practice they must tend to bring these two together, to develop them together. It is almost as though you can't be quite clear as to what belongs to the object and what belongs to the subject here. Or who or what is influencing whom or what in what way. Sometimes the subjective reaction is put in terms of the objective fact, if you see what I mean. As when Trungpa himself sometimes speaks of paranoia, as though paranoia is a **thing** rather than your response to a situation. As though it is a thing which you experience rather than your experience of a particular situation.

'Then there is the red gauri holding a banner of victory made out of the skin of a sea monster. The sea-monster symbolises the principle of samsara which cannot be escaped; the goddess holding it as a banner means that samsara is not rejected but accepted as it is.' I think that is open to misunderstanding. I don't think the banner means that it's accepted, but rather it has been conquered. Supposing you do kill your enemy and you make a

banner out of his skin and hoist that banner, it doesn't mean that you accept him as he is, surely it means you've conquered him. I think that is the significance here.

_____: Again, that phrase 'samsara is not rejected but accepted as it is', is a teaching that is again very much open to being fed.

S: Indeed, yes. But 'accepted as it is', well, with a view to transformation, you should add, at least. There is quite a difference between accepting that sea-monster as it is, which would presumably mean leaving it swimming in the sea - there is quite a difference between that and actually catching it and killing it and skinning it and hoisting its skin as a banner. You certainly haven't accepted it as it is, you have really been doing things to it, you have transformed it, in fact.

'Then in the North is Vetali, black in colour, holding a vajra and a skull cup because she represents the unchanging quality of *dharmata*.' I think the symbolism or the interpretation of it is getting a little arbitrary here. 'The vajra is indestructible and the skull cup is another symbol of skilful means.' And he says in fact, 'we do not have to go through all of them in detail but just to give a basic idea of these *gauris* and messengers connected with the wrathful mandala, each particular figure has a function to fulfil in fulfilling a particular energy.' There are gate keepers and messengers, it seems, as though the *gauris* are the messengers. I think this is the development of a sort of natural association, it's as though in ancient India, from which all this imagery originally comes, I suppose, and taken to Tibet, in a gateway you have a guardian and also you have a messenger. So they have taken it that the guardian who stays where he is represents the relatively static masculine aspect and the messenger represents the dynamic aspect that sort of goes for help if the gate keeper [374] needs help, or to send a message without leaving his post which of course he cannot do. So in that way the one comes to represent, say, the more static and the other the more active aspect of energy, though in a sense the distinction is not very meaningful. Maybe it's a question of paying more attention to what these figures actually look like and seeing pictures of them rather than trying to work it all out conceptually. It would be much better if you hung a picture of a *heruka* in your room and looked at it every day and tried to feel what sort of spiritual quality it represented.

All right, would someone like to read that last paragraph?

'The wrathful deities represent hope, and the peaceful deities represent fear. Fear in the sense of irritation, because the ego cannot manipulate them in any way; they are utterly invincible, they never fight back. The hopeful quality of wrathful energy is hope in the sense of a perpetual creative situation, seen as it really is, as basic neutral energy which continues constantly, belonging neither to good nor bad. The situation may seem overwhelming and beyond your control, but there is really no question of controlling or being controlled. The tendency is to panic, to think you can keep control; it is like suddenly realising that you are driving very fast, so you put the brake on, which causes an accident. The *gauris*' function is to come between body and mind. Mind in this case is the intelligence, and body is the impulsive quality, like panicking, which is a physical action. The *gauris* intervene between intelligence and action, they cut the continuity of the self preservation of the ego; that is their wrathful quality. They transmute destructive energy into creative energy. Just as the body of Rudra was transformed into the Heruka, so the force behind the impulsive quality of panic or action is transmuted.

S: We can say in this connection that sometimes you have the experience, say, in a very worldly sort of situation, like say, a situation in which you panic, that you suddenly experience and access a tremendous energy just because it is an emergency situation and you panic. It's as though you can suddenly call up a tremendous amount of energy. But when you want to do your spiritual practice where's that **energy**? So it is as though the *gauri* is the one who intervenes and cuts off that energy from the way in which it is usually used, that is to say for the purposes of the ego, and makes it available for the spiritual life. It's a bit like that. Do you see what I mean? So if we contemplate our reactions in these sort of situations of emergency we realise that there is a tremendous amount of energy around available to us, really, but we don't ever seem to be able to get on to the right track or into the right channel. It's not that the energy isn't there, we have plenty of energy but we are not able to direct it properly.

So it isn't as though the *gauri* is a goddess or is even a principle or factor which is doing that, the *gauri* represents more the **need** to do that, or even a certain amount of success achieved **in** doing that. It's the energy of the ego which has to be put on to a completely different track. There is a term for this, what is it, you used to get it with the old trams when you switch the points. What's it called?

_____: Shunting?

S: It's not - it's switching on to another rail, as it were. Actually the two rails may be seeming to go along almost parallel but they do **slightly** diverge, you just [375] shift the points so that the train is going along instead of going that way it just goes that way. The switches are changed. And of course subsequently the two

tracks can diverge considerably. You have got to learn to do that and switch the ego energy on to the spiritual track.

For instance, you can be feeling very tired and dull and you maybe go into the shrine and you do your puja and meditation but it's a very dull tired business. And maybe you are sitting around and someone comes to see you and you get talking and you get angry and you get so angry because of the way the other person is talking and challenging you that you really feel a tremendous energy of anger arising within you, but where was that when you sat to do your meditation and puja? There seemed then to be no energy at all around anywhere. So it shows that energy is there; it is only a question of switching on to another track. Maybe you can't do it directly, perhaps you have to go through various stages of transformation before you can do that, maybe it can't be switched directly, it has to go first on to one track and then on to another and then on to another, so to speak. And that is where of course the arts come in, I think, quite a lot. Because they help capture this crude, egotistic energy and they process it until it's more refined and it can then be utilised, so to speak, for the purposes of the spiritual life.

Sagaramati: But even this crude energy doesn't seem to be available all the time. (S: No.) It really requires something to bring that up.

Devamitra: Yes, it needs to be shocked into existence, very often.

S: Yes, it's a bit lethargic. Or maybe your whole way of life since infancy has conditioned it into just lying low, rather, because **children** seem to have tremendous energy, don't they? It is notorious that as you get older you become less bright and less vital and less lively in every way.

Devamitra: Do you think this is the sort of problem which Indians will be faced with less? Well, anyone other than the English, say? You have commented on apathy and deadness etc.

S: Well, I don't want to generalise too much. One certainly gets that feeling sometimes in London. Some of our friends from up North wouldn't agree that it's general or universal in the British Isles. They would think it more characteristic of the soft Southerner.

Sagaramati: Although Manchester isn't all that better.

S: Not all that better?

Sagaramati: A little bit.

S: You certainly do notice in India that people, with all their faults, are quite exuberant and vital, very often.

But anyway, what is the general message, as it were, that you get from this section, about the wrathful deities both male and female, the *herukas* and the *gauris*? There are twelve of them altogether, twelve *gauris* altogether.

Devamitra: I don't know whether it's intended at all but something that strikes me is that it's almost like the transmutation of the *asura*-like temperament. [376]In a way, actually, the *herukas* are almost like, maybe like Enlightened *asuras* in a way.

S: Well, they are Enlightened egos, though of course that is a contradiction in terms strictly speaking. But the ego is not always war-like and militant and combative and heroic, as it were. The ego can also be mean and sneaky and indirect and slithery. Do you see what I mean? So don't make the mistake of thinking that the ego necessarily appears just in this Rudra-like form, no, it can appear in very different, very treacherous sorts of forms. Elusive forms, subtle forms, or, as I have called them, *sneaky* forms.

_____: I see the *heruka* as something that you can actually grapple with. (S: Yes.) You can't do anything, you are stalemated if you come across a peaceful deity, (S: Right, yes.) there is just nothing you can do. But with a *heruka* you can actually respond in a quite positive way, I suppose, even though you know you are going to be shot down in flames eventually. But at least it gives you something to cling on to.

S: Right. Another point also is of course that weak people can have very strong egos. Do you see what I mean? There is a beautiful story in Crabbe. Does anyone know Crabbe?

_____: Only from his famous one, a little bit.

S: Crabbe the poet I mean.

_____: He lives just down the road, doesn't he?

S: That's right, in Suffolk. He has got some really wonderful verse stories, and one of them is about two friends and one of them was a bachelor and the other was a married man, and the bachelor was always pulling the leg of the married man about being under the thumb of his wife. But what happened eventually was the bachelor himself got married but he was a bit afraid of getting married to a strong-minded woman who would always have him under her thumb, so he deliberately chose a very young girl who was quite weak and delicate and was very frightened and who looked up to him as her great big protector. So anyway, he brought her home, he was very pleased he had got a very patient and submissive wife, completely dependent on him and very weak. So things went all right for a few weeks. Anyway one day he and his friend wanted to go out somewhere and the friend who had this strong-minded wife had a bit of difficulty coming away but in the end he came away but the man who had this very weak sort of wife couldn't get away at all because as soon as he said he was going out she fell into a faint and said, 'Oh I couldn't bear it', so he was obliged to stay at home, he couldn't go out. So the long and the short of it was that she controlled him far more effectively through her weakness than the other man was controlled by his wife through her strength. Do you see what I mean? This poor weak, helpless, whining little wife - she had her husband absolutely under her control. So Crabbe tells this story in a very interesting way.

You can meet these very weak, whining sort of people. Actually their egos can be very, very strong and they can really control the people around them and control the situation. So don't be misled by this, the ego is always strong but it doesn't always necessarily manifest strength in this *asura*-like [377] way.

It's like the saying about the woman of this type, she has a whim of iron. [*Laughter*] If you see what I mean.

_____: You certainly do get some people who just seem to perpetually dominate conversation even though they might not be present. But something in their nature just triggers off people's energy, if you like. In a way it is an indirect way of getting energy.

Devamitra: It reminds me of what you said some time ago about the tyranny of the weak over the strong.

S: Yes, this is a good example of it.

Devamitra: That's Oscar Wilde.

S: He often hit the nail on the head, didn't he, in his witty way?

_____: 'The tyranny of the weak is the tyranny that's eternal'.

S: I think D.H. Lawrence regards Christianity as a good example of the tyranny of the weak over the strong.

_____: That comes up quite a bit in *The Apocalypse*, doesn't it?

S: That's right, yes.

Sagaramati: There's a difference between being weak-willed in that sense. I mean a weak person doesn't necessarily have a weak will.

S: No, that's true. But perhaps one can say even a weak-willed person can have a strong ego. At least a person who seems to be weak-willed can have a strong ego.

Devamitra: It seems almost that what you are saying is that there's no such thing as a weak ego.

S: In a sense, no, in a sense a weak ego is a contradiction in terms. The ego is always strong. The ego as such is always strong.

It's almost as though if you are a spiritual person you mustn't be afraid of **seeming** to be egoistic when you know quite well in fact you are not. In a way, if you are really a spiritual person, in a genuine and authentic and even a heroic way, an active way, you cannot but - I think - appear as egoistic to some people and even be reproached for your real egotism, as people may see it, as though if you were genuinely spiritual you would be in fact meek and lamb-like, and innocuous. Do you see what I mean? If people feel with you that they are really coming up against it, one of the first things that they will do by way of reaction is to accuse you of being unspiritual. As they do if you are very firm in your opinions, they will accuse you of being intolerant. It being assumed that intolerance is an unspiritual quality and that any refusal to [378] just agree with everybody and to say that everybody is right amounts to intolerance. So if you just stick quite firmly to your point of view they will say that you are being intolerant. So if at the same time you show you really believe in something and you are really prepared to work for it, in a sense to fight for it, they will say you are not being very spiritual, you are being egotistic. Because, yes, to the worldly person you can say, to some extent, or seen from certain angles so to speak, the spiritual person has some of the attributes so to speak of the ego, of the egoistic person. That is to say the realatively *asura*-like egoistic person.

So what appears on the surface to be their concern that you are not being very spiritual is actually a fear of the fact that you are being as it were relatively spiritual. They feel it as something uncomfortable and threatening and therefore try to fight back by accusing you of being unspiritual. If you were really spiritual you would be a completely harmless little baa-lamb.

Anything more to say about these wrathful deities?

Sagaramati: It does say that the wrathful deities represent hope and the peaceful deities represent fear.

S: I'm not very sure about this. Again in a way it's Trungpa's confusion of the subjective and the objective. I don't think he means the wrathful deities **represent** hope or that the peaceful deities represent fear, I think he has just expressed it rather clumsily. Because they don't represent hope in the sense of embodying hope, the hope is in you, in a way, not in the wrathful deity. And the fear is in you, not in the peaceful deity. The peaceful deities don't represent fear in the sense of symbolising fear or embodying fear, they represent the possibility for you or on your part. Where there are peaceful deities there is ego and where there are peaceful deities there is fear so far as the ego is concerned. Where there are wrathful deities there is hope so far as the ego is concerned because the wrathful deities represent, as he says, 'the perpetual creative situation seen as it really is.' So his language is rather misleading here. Do you see what I mean?

_____: Yes, it's almost as though Enlightenment was an enemy and that as long as the enemy remains hidden you feel afraid but when you can see the enemy in the form of the wrathful deities then there is hope, you think here it is, now I can overcome my enemy, i.e. Enlightenment. (**S:** Yes, right.)

Virabhadra: Although in a way with the wrathful deities that is where you get beaten, whereas with the peaceful deities you can still maintain your own position.

S: Well, if you get beaten there is hope, that is why there is hope.

_____: It depends which way you look at it.

S: In a way you can't fight with the peaceful deities, you can fight with the wrathful deities and that means your own energies can be engaged, and in sort of fighting with them perhaps some of their qualities will rub off on to you.

Well, what do you think of this whole tradition of having wrathful deities? Do you think it is in fact helpful? Is it very meaningful in a Western context, do you think? [379] I mean **really** meaningful as distinct from it being quite a good idea and quite interesting? Does it really mean anything, as it were, do you think? More profoundly.

_____: Practically it hasn't really meant much for us yet in the Movement. (**S:** No it hasn't, really.) And I can't see it doing so, not for some time, I don't think.

S: It's something we can understand intellectually or even empathise with but it doesn't seem to occupy a really important place in spiritual practice.

Virabhadra: We are very much concerned, say, with work, I mean we are all involved in work and we are all trying to get energy going. So the wrathful deities are very much concerned with energy,

S: Yes.

_____: But we haven't used the wrathful deities to summon up the energy needed for work.

S: In a way you could say the wrathful deities could be regarded as symbolising the work situation. Because people have seen the work situation as very threatening and terrible but actually when they get into it they find there is lots of energy in it and they can contact their own energy.

Virabhadra: Also there is the value of the wrathful deities as - well, they are definitely not lambs just to stroke, what I think quite a powerful misconception is that the spiritual life is for weaklings.

S: The mere fact that you even have pictures like that around has a certain value.

Virabhadra: Tantra Designs' reproductions of the wrathful deities are quite popular.

S: If they were too popular I would be a bit suspicious.

Subhuti: They are really fascinating, perhaps to an extent in an exotic sort of way, they do have quite a strong emotional appeal.

S: So what do you think they are appealing to and what do you think they mean to people who are perhaps not - especially outside the Friends, I am thinking?

Subhuti: To people **outside** the Friends?

_____: They are just devils, aren't they?

Subhuti: I think it's connected with like in horror movies and things like that, there is a sort of frisson that goes with it. It's somewhere between attraction and repulsion.

S: Also maybe the sheer novelty of it.

Subhuti: Experience, perhaps.

S: Experience.[380]

_____: A desire, if you like, to get back to pagan roots. There is something a bit paganistic about the wrathful deities.

S: Perhaps you don't see them spiritually, so to speak, at all, as transcendental forms which they really are, but more like pagan gods, yes? (**Voices:** Yes.) Which is all right but it does not give their full meaning, by any means.

Devamitra: It seems to indicate that the wrathful deities do have more of a popular appeal.

S: Yes. Of course the wrathful deities in Tibetan Buddhism are of a more esoteric nature, you only get wrathful deities just as you get *yab-yum* forms only in the Vajrayana - well only in the *anuttara-yoga-tantra*, the highest form of Tantra. So they are not exactly popular.

_____: Do they form the basis of many meditation practices?

S: Indeed they do.

_____: So what function do they have, then, do they get one into contact with the energy that they represent or that you are trying to overcome, or what?

S: It's possibly that people are actually fascinated by them and even if your emotions are of a cruder nature it is as though these forms just have more impact, it seems more like that. Doesn't Otto use this phrase for the holy, 'the *mysterium, tremendans et fascinans*', doesn't he say? It's the terrific and the fascinating, the terrific is the fascinating. I think one is fascinated by the spectre of this bizarre energy, I think that holds you, it's got a greater holding capacity for the ordinary person, perhaps, than has the peaceful figure.

Devamitra: You feel that's something to be separated from darker responses within oneself, say?

S: I think the appeal in the case of the Tibetan wrathful figures, even for Westerners, is probably not to darker forces within oneself, I think to something quite positive, this is what I feel.

_____: There is a sort of delight in it.

S: Delight in it. Well, it's as though one's own energies are so blocked that you delight when you see a figure where it is all free and exuberant and also with a certain crude or primitive quality too. Like there is a bull-headed figure, the many heads, the many legs, the many arms, the weapons, the nakedness. It's as though this suggests all the things which are thwarted and suppressed and inhibited **in you**. Even if it isn't, maybe, you are not taking it in a very highly spiritual sense, but that is the broad direction. And that is certainly one aspect even of the traditional symbolism.

It is maybe in a quite milder sort of way the Cerne Abbas giant, people quite like that giant, don't they, in a way? In a way he is a little bit popular, he is a naked figure with an erection and with an enormous staff, I think it is, in each hand. [381]

Subhuti: No, that's the other one.

S: The other one, one club. So people take delight in this sort of thing, but in the case of the *herukas* even if you don't know anything about Tibetan Buddhism and have no distinct aspiration for the spiritual life the symbolism speaks for itself. And there's the halo of flames. So it as it were appeals to all those energies which are thwarted and imprisoned in them, they would really like to be like that. But at the same time it is a bit crude

and primitive and that, so to speak, is them too. Their energy, even their thwarted repressed energy doesn't exist in a very refined form.

Sagaramati: That came out in that Order meeting up in that retreat in Glasgow, when you actually chose the name Heruka. It was all dull until you mentioned *heruka* and we said 'what's that?' and as soon as you mentioned what it was everybody came alive, 'Oh yes, we'll have that'. [Laughter]

S: Wasn't that in Malini's day and wasn't she then thinking that she'd like to change her name and be Kurukulle. She went through a phase of wanting to be Kurukulle, this red dancing naked female figure, but I didn't regard it as a purely spiritual aspiration. She eventually dropped the idea.

But yes, it's perhaps significant, as I mentioned, I brought it up in the other study group where there actually were several Heruka-ites present. I mentioned that is in a way a sort of naked figure and I mentioned that I had heard that somebody went to pay a visit to Heruka and found four inmates of the community sitting around the table in the kitchen having tea without any clothes on, all completely naked, so they all laughed but nobody let on whether they were included in that or not! [Laughter] But it is the same sort of thing, isn't it? It's doing something a bit wild, a bit bizarre.

Sagaramati: That happened in Edinburgh.

S: In Edinburgh, was it? You seem to know all about it.

Devamitra: It was in *Shabda* actually, Suvajra mentioned it in his biography.

Sagaramati: Yes, they had done it to Suvajra to shock him.

Devamitra: Of all the people to do it to! [Laughter]

S: Well, let's hope they really did shock him. It seems to be livening you lot up also, quite successfully. [Laughter]

_____: I think it's really good to bring these characters in.

S: Also there is another thing, which is, let's see - the skull cup, the bone ornaments, so there is also the association of death, which is also a pretty taboo subject in its own way, as much as sex, so to speak. So there are those bone ornaments and the skull cups and all the terrifying, prohibited, bloodcurdling, skin-creeping kind of things which you usually see in a rather negative way in connection with horror movies, and here they are in open association with the religious life and spiritual ideals. So that must at least be a little bit titillating if nothing else.

Subhuti: We've tended to discourage pseudo-spiritual [382] exoticism and so on. Do you think there's a place for this? Not for pseudo-spiritual exoticism but for this sort of exuberance?

S: Well, in a way the *herukas* aren't very exotic, because exoticism comes when you have things, especially say clothing, which have a definitely regional significance. But if you have got these naked figures, well, there is nothing regional about nakedness, so to speak, do you see what I mean? One *heruka* has got a bull's head, well, you get bulls in England too, and skull cups and bones, there is nothing particularly Tibetan or Indian about them because you get them in Britain too, and flames. So it wouldn't require very much initiative on the part of an artist just to change things a little bit and all the essentials would be there but it wouldn't be exotic at all. Perhaps we should get Chintamani to try his hand on these things. If you say do Padmasambhava it is exotic a bit because the robes are exotic, the cap is exotic and so on. But the wrathful figures, the *herukas*, seem to make use of more natural elements which are more universal.

But certainly this sort of quality of energy, even spiritual energy is in a way quite an important one. And it really removes from the spiritual life that association of something anaemic and insipid and pallid and weak. At the same time it is not the sort of energy that was manifested, say, in Europe in the Middle Ages in the Crusades, and the Inquisitions, and the witch hunts. It is quite different, there is a quite different feeling from all that. Or even a different feeling from ordinary paganism, it isn't just paganism. The very symbolism itself suggests that. It goes beyond the pagan, even though you may not conceptually be able to give an account of the spiritual content of the symbolism. But something seems to come across which is paganism plus, as it were, even to the ordinary person.

_____: Do you think that is possible? That they see the image ...

S: I think it is.

Devamitra: Actually something which I find quite remarkable is that you can have a figure like that which is really terrifying and in a way almost - well it looks brutal, but you never get the feeling that it's sadistic.

S: No you don't.

Devamitra: You never get that from it.

S: It is exhilarating, quite definitely.

Subhuti: I remember when you read that story of Rudra and eating his mother, which is a really horrifying thing. I know that Rudra isn't a *heruka*, wasn't a *heruka* at that point, but I remember being really excited and really enjoying that even though apparently it's a really horrifying event. I find that quite strange.

S: You certainly wouldn't get that impression reading, say, Count Dracula, or something like that. Perhaps it is because of its associations and the part it plays in the story and the whole powerful spiritual context. You know it's the life of Padmasambhava, you know it is one episode in that [383] overall story.

Devamitra: I think another thing about this is if you just look at it in a way it is so shocking it actually stimulates the energy, just a little bit. They are stimulating to look at.

S: That's true. Whereas if you contemplate a picture of the crucifixion, complete with blood and all that, it shocks you but in a quite different sort of way, it doesn't stimulate you in the least.

_____: It turns your stomach over. [Pause]

S: What about these wrathful **female** figures? We haven't really considered them even though we have gone a little bit into the *gauris*. What sort of impression do you get from them? When you see for instance this red *dakini*, just to take a very general example, this red, as it were wrathful naked dancing figure complete with bone ornaments - what sort of impression do you get?

_____: Is that Sarvabuddhadakini?

S: She's one, but she's different. What sort of impression do you get from all that? The fact that it's a female figure presumably makes some sort of difference.

_____: Tremendous freedom.

S: Freedom.

Devamitra: Complete abandon.

S: Abandon, yes, it's abandon more than freedom.

Sagaramati: Wild abandon.

S: Wild abandon. Ecstatic wild abandon. In what way or in what sense is that a spiritual quality? Abandon in the ordinary sense is certainly not a spiritual quality, so what spiritual quality so to speak is being bodied forth here?

_____: Is it just you are letting everything go for the Dharma, you aren't holding anything back?

S: There's that, yes.

Devamitra: It's like a wild woman, the image is used of the passionate woman throwing herself into the arms of her lover, it's that kind of feeling.

S: That's right, yes.

Devamitra: For the Dharma.

S: I think I mentioned this in a very early talk. Where was that?

Kuladeva: In the Tantric series.

_____: Cremation ground. [384]

S: But it isn't the way people usually think about the spiritual life, is it? Can you imagine the average clergyman thinking in those sort of terms? *[Laughter]* Or anyone preaching a sermon in church about it?

Kuladeva: I can't imagine **any** clergyman, let alone the average one!

S: Or even the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Sagaramati: I think the thing is they feel a bit nearer to one, even psychologically, than some of the other things.

S: Yes. It's very difficult to feel really close to the peaceful deities. You may of course be quite wrong in thinking, actually, that you are closer to the wrathful deities than you are to the peaceful deities, but it doesn't really matter, at least you get a foothold, you have caught hold of something and that is the important thing. But in the case of the peaceful deities you find it very difficult to catch hold of **anything**.

Subhuti: I assume that we should make considerably more use of them than we do.

S: If they do actually help us. We need to develop the **quality** more. Whether those particular iconic representations will help us to do that, that's another matter. I mean they are not helping us at the moment, we are simply discussing it conceptually, actually, we are not actually looking at images, except perhaps mentally to some extent.

Perhaps people should try when they go away on solitary retreat, take a very wrathful deity with them and concentrate on the development of that sort of energy. If it's a fine sunny day and there aren't any people around maybe you could even take all your clothes off.

Sagaramati: Paint yourself red. *[Laughter]*

Virabhadra: It's difficult to use something like that in the right way, and go into it and use it as a means of summoning up energy if you don't really know about it.

S: And of course also there is the important thing that 'the *gauris* intervene between intelligence and action, they cut the continuity of the self preservation of the ego, that is their wrathful quality.' You really need to be able to switch the energy. The danger, even, is that you just summon up this energy, this wild energy, but you're unable to switch it. I saw this on some of the very early retreats, I remember that on some of the very early retreats, I think before any of you were coming along, on one or two of them I remember Debbie who was about fifteen years of age then, she was very, very keen on having bonfires for the last night of the retreat, and everybody dancing around the bonfire.

She did manage to as it were organise it a bit surreptitiously on one of these retreats. But it just was clearly, certainly at that time, not the right sort of thing at all. It just meant the retreat ended in a not very retreat-like sort of way, if you see what I mean. They just weren't able to switch the energy. [385] But perhaps in a sense the important thing first of all is to get in contact with the energy, maybe not in the context of a retreat, and **then** switch it. You can't switch energy that you don't have or don't experience. But one must be careful one doesn't just lapse into unskilfulness.

And there's no doubt of the Tantric value of work, if I may put it that way.

Sagaramati: It is like when you have those cruder energies flowing: the most difficult thing seems to be to remain sensitive, especially of other people. It seems that you lose what sensitivity you have.

S: Or even awareness.

Sagaramati: Or even awareness. Normally you can keep the mental awareness but you don't feel sensitive.

S: Yes, right. I was going to say that work is the great Tantric guru, and you can certainly quote me there. *Work is the great Tantric guru*, or the great Tantric guru is work, whichever way round you like, for people who are going in search of such things. Certainly people have found from their own experience that work does put them into contact with their cruder, even sometimes their wilder energies. Heruka shouldn't really be the name of a centre, perhaps, it should be the name of a work party. Or demolition team.

_____: Hevajra.

S: Right, yes.

Anyway, let's leave it there for the moment and go on to the other section after tea, the next section being the concluding one.

_____: [Unclear question]

S: I am not quite sure, certainly not in ordinary social life, it seems a bit incompatible with ordinary social life.

Sagaramati: You mean a healthy wildness would be incompatible with a ...

S: I think it would be much more spontaneity and the ability to just drop everything and just take up something new. Or put all your energy into something, be really enthusiastic, really into what you are doing. I think it would show itself more in this sort of way. Not necessarily as in dancing round bonfires and maypoles and things like that, that seems a bit pointless and a bit artificial.

Devamitra: Being able to be wholehearted about something that you really wanted to do.

S: But more than that, wildness also indicates a certain freedom. Not just a reliable worker, as in wholehearted work, if you see what I mean.

Devamitra: A certain kind of recklessness.

_____: Abandon. [386]

S: Recklessness, also abandon, yes.

_____: 'Couldn't give a damn' attitude!.

_____: Now, now!

S: You do occasionally meet people like that.

_____: Certainly in the climbing world. They seem to gravitate to that sort of sphere of activity. Because that sort of activity does provide an outlet for these energies.

S: But that seems a bit too serious in a way.

_____: What?

S: Things like mountaineering.

_____: Goodness, it's the most hilarious activity you can possibly enjoy!

S: Hilarious? (_____: Yes.) I wouldn't have thought so.

_____: Yes! It's tremendous fun going ...

S: Not the sort of association I get at all. You think of someone like Lord Hunt in khaki shorts. [Laughter]

_____: I've actually seen Lord Hunt down in Cornwall and all the other climbers just laughed at him, he is so incongruous. Bit of a [unclear]

Devamitra: The sort of wildness of someone like Shelley?

S: No, no, no, Shelley wasn't really wild, I would say. No something much more than that, something a bit more heroic than that, if I may say so. Blake, the young Blake, must have been quite wild. He was very normal and healthy, but quite wild at the same time.

_____: Oh I remember, he went down to the tomb in Westminster, didn't he?

S: I wasn't thinking of that, that doesn't sound very wild.

_____: A bit different.

S: But you see what Lawrence was getting at when he spoke of man being domesticated. Sort of house trained. Everything being discouraged which didn't fit into the neat domestic pattern. You know what happens to a dog when he is house trained, he is quite different from what he was like when he was running loose in the wild. Well that sort of thing happens to men if they are not... well it usually happens to them, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. You can see, they have been domesticated, they have been tamed, not to say enslaved. They don't even [387] dare stay out for the night in case of what their wives say when they get back in the morning,

in many cases. They are accountable to their wives. You don't find that even in India, they're not domesticated to that extent.

_____: I was talking to my brother-in-law after a supper we had very recently in Germany, and we were talking about Buddhism because he began to be quite interested after a third or fourth glass of beer, and we were having a good conversation, and come one o'clock the door opened and my sister walked in, 'Come on Tony, time for bed'. And Tony got up and went to bed.

S: Just like a child.

_____: I was shocked.

S: I bet you were.

_____: I felt quite sort of... well, what hope have we?

Tony Wharton: I think this healthy wild energy would manifest in people having more enthusiasm. I think that sort of energy would be regarded by most people as very immature. (**S:** Yes.) Or very ...

Devamitra: Boy scoutish.

Tony Wharton: Yes, something like that.

S: Well no, immature, not even boy scoutish, even the boy scouts aren't exactly **wild**, are they? But there are very few people in the Friends, even in the Order, who have that slightly wild quality. Kovida has got it a bit, but I think hardly anybody else.

Sagaramati: Ajita has.

S: Ajita? A bit, perhaps, in a way, in a way. *[Long pause]*

Sagaramati: I think you contact it, though, much... well, in an animalistic way if you go into a countryside that's like it. Like say Norfolk, Norfolk and Sussex and that, I get a definite feeling of tameness. (**S:** Oh yes.) Sweet little cottages and things like that. But in North Wales or up on the West Coast of Scotland there is a definite feeling of wildness in the atmosphere.

S: I certainly don't feel it in Wales.

Sagaramati: North Wales.

S: Even North Wales seems very domesticated to me, a very domesticated landscape. But I have been spoiled by going to New Zealand, you see. No, there are too many snug little cottages and little fields, and lot of sheep, it doesn't feel very wild, no.

Sagaramati: I didn't mean Corwen.

S: No, it's too commercialised. I don't think any part of [388] Britain is wild actually, or any part of Britain I should have said, maybe the odd part of the Highlands.

[General discussion over tea about landscapes etc.]

Sagaramati: You have said that the basic sort of theme in this country is apathy. Something like the wildness and all that, that sort of energy is the complete antithesis. So in a sense it's what we need, in a way.

S: Right. This sort of wildness, or the sort of wildness which I think we are talking about, is the antithesis not only of apathy but of respectability. You can't imagine somebody being wild and respectable, or respectable and wild.

[General discussion over tea about respectability of appearance at work, e.g. of doctors - tea break discussions were not usually recorded on seminars - presumably out of compassion for the poor transcriber!!]

S: Two or three years ago, I think it was, I expressed a fear lest the movement had already started becoming a bit respectable, do you remember that? (**Voices:** Yes.) I even mentioned the word staid. There were cries of protest, I remember, at the time, but I might not have been entirely wrong. I think you have to watch that, especially as you get successful and start being accepted. Almost sort of unconsciously you start conforming and acting respectable. In a sense you can't help it because it is very difficult to run an office in a wild sort of way, well, it can't be done, can it? An office has to be run in an efficient, well-organised sort of way, but that

doesn't mean that, or rather you should be careful to make sure that you yourself don't become just an efficient well-organised sort of person. And even if your office work - I am talking about office work within the context of the Friends - doesn't permit you to be wild as it were, to use that word, you should make quite sure that you have got other opportunities and outlets outside which do permit you to be wild. Otherwise if you are not careful you will just end up quite staid and respectable.

Devamitra: Do you still think that we are heading in that sort of area? Or has it been ...

S: I don't think there is any **real** danger, actually. One of the things that help, perhaps the thing that helps most, is that we do give people an impression of energy and that I think itself is new. For a lot of people that is certainly not what they usually associate with respectability. Respectability is usually a bit dull and stuffy and apathetic. So if you convey an impression of energy and interest and liveliness, that is sufficient to counteract any sort of tendency towards being respectable or appearing to be respectable. I think when things are just fairly efficiently ticking over it is then that you have got to watch out that you don't become respectable or at least appear respectable. Unless of course occasionally you want to appear respectable for certain strategic purposes, as a matter of *upaya kausalya*, that's another matter, but watch it that it really is that.

The last section is on the dying person so let's go through this. Can we read those first four paragraphs one by one, because they are all connected, and then discuss them as a whole. So four people read them one by one.

[388]

THE DYING PERSON

It seems that in the Tibetan culture people do not find death a particularly irritating or difficult situation, but here in the west we often find it extremely difficult to relate to it. Nobody tells us the final truth. It is such a terrible rejection, a fundamental rejection of love, that nobody is really willing to help a dying person's state of mind.

It seems necessary, unless the dying person is in a coma or cannot communicate, that he should be told he is dying. It may be difficult to actually take such a step, but if one is a friend or a husband or wife, then this is the greatest opportunity of really communicating trust. It is a delightful situation, that at last somebody really cares about you, somebody is not playing a game of hypocrisy, is not going to tell you a lie in order to please you, which is what has been happening throughout your whole life. This comes down to the ultimate truth, it is fundamental trust, which is extremely beautiful. We should really try to generate that principle.

Actually relating with the dying person is very important, telling him that death is not a myth at that point, but that it is actually happening. "It is actually happening, but we are your friends, therefore we are watching your death. We know that you are dying and you know that you are dying, we are really meeting together at this point." That is the finest and best demonstration of friendship and communication, it presents tremendously rich inspiration to the dying person.

You should be able to relate with his bodily situation, and detect the subtle deterioration in his physical senses, sense of communication, sense of hearing, facial expression and so on. But there are people with tremendously powerful will who can always put on a smile up to the last minute of death, trying to fight off their old age, trying to fight the deterioration of their senses, so one should be aware of that situation also.

S: So the general point here is quite clear, isn't it? Because if you don't tell the dying person the truth, tell him that he is dying, it means you are not communicating with the dying person, you are refusing to communicate and just at that very time when he most needs human support, sympathy, co-operation, communication, at that very time he is being denied it. And that is surely a very terrible thing. So even if it's important, as it **is** important, to communicate with people during their life, and communication involving being truthful with them, it becomes all the more important at the time of death. But it's surely very difficult to bring in communication and truthfulness and honesty at the time of death in your relations with people if it hasn't characterised your relations with people during life. It is going to be very very difficult indeed, almost impossible, psychologically speaking, to do it then in the most difficult situation of all, as it is for most people. So if you are not honest with people during their lifetime, and your lifetime, how can you be honest with them at the time of death? So make a special effort, by all means, at the time of death, especially in the way of telling, if that is your duty, [390] telling the other person that he or she is dying, but also realise that you have to prepare for that, in a way, during life itself. Be always honest with people, be always open with people, and then you will be much more easily able to be open and honest with them at **that** time and tell the truth.

Sagaramati: I would have thought most people would know they were dying.

S: It seems sometimes people do, sometimes they don't. I had a letter from one of our Friends who is a nurse and she was writing about a quite painful experience she had had, and it concerned a woman in the hospital where she was working who only realised that she was dying five minutes before she died. And her husband also did not know that she was so near to death, no one had said anything to them. Apparently the woman's illness was not a painful illness, I forget what it was but it was of such a nature that it did not **occur** to her that she was dying or could be dying until five minutes before the end. And the Friend who wrote to me was writing to say surely this is wrong and surely we should be able to break the news, so to speak, to the person who is about to die before the actual end is reached. And it was a terrible shock to that woman when she realised that she was dying, and she had never **thought** before that she was going to die of that particular disease, and nor had her husband thought she was going to die, it was a shock to him, he only knew that she was likely to die when he was told that she **had** died. And this Friend of ours was in the position of having to be the person to tell the husband that his wife had died, and he had no expectation of that at all. So until the last minute, almost, the attitude had been one of reassurance, 'No, everything is going to be all right, there's nothing really much to worry about', etc. etc.. until five minutes before the end.

Virabhadra: It had been known by the hospital staff?

S: Apparently it had been known, or at least realised as a possibility.

_____: It seems to be such a taboo subject that even hospitals - it's a general practice that you don't really tell people their state, how close to death they are.

S: Well, one can understand in a way the attitude that you don't want to alarm people. Maybe they are going to recover, you don't know, you don't want to alarm them and maybe weaken their resistance by suggesting to them that they may be going to die when it isn't certain. There is that also to be taken into consideration, but when it is definitely known, surely then one has to be open with people, that in fact they are dying as far as one can tell.

Virabhadra: The greatest problem that I've had in this respect is you get the feeling, or people actually tell you, that they don't want to know. I had one of my patients recently who specifically said, she came in, she obviously had a cancer and she said, 'I don't want to know if it's cancer, I don't want to have cancer and I don't want to know.'

S: As if, if I am not told that I have it in a sense I haven't got it. [391]

Virabhadra: A nurse once told me that her impression was that nobody wanted to know that they were dying, they wanted to know that they were going to get better, which seems to sum up a lot of people's attitude. Which in a way is that they don't want to communicate on that issue.

S: It reflects their basic attitude towards life, and perhaps at that time it is rather too late to do anything about it, and they would rather not know in some cases that they were going to die until it was actually too late to do anything about it.

Virabhadra: I find myself playing a rather complex psychological game sometimes just trying to work out do they want to know and if you tell them will they resent you for having told them or will they be angry with you if you don't tell them? So you find yourself trying to work out what people's real wishes are.

S: Yes. It's like in the case of the woman who says no to the man, you are left sometimes left trying to work out does she mean it or does she not? And it's almost as though in certain situations whether you take it as actually no or whether you take it as a sort of way of saying yes you are going to be wrong either way. So it could be much the same here.

Because you cannot force people to face the truth ever. Even if you do say, 'Well, look, as far as medical science is concerned you have only a week or a month to live', but they may not be prepared to face that fact. They might say, 'They have made a mistake, they have never really taken proper interest in my case and they don't really know, and doctors often make mistakes, and there is Mrs So-and-so who was told she had only a year to live and look ten years later she is still alive...' In that way they sort of refuse to face the situation.

_____: Are you saying in a way that if they are not going to face the situation they are not going to face the situation regardless of what you say? So in a way that would mean that Virabhadra's problem isn't as acute?

S: If people are open to the possibility of communication then it is incumbent on one to make that effort to communicate. And if you are in any uncertainty by all means make the effort to communicate. For instance, the doctor might broach the subject by saying, 'It does seem that you are more seriously ill than we thought', and then they might for instance respond by saying, or they might twig and say, 'Well, all right, please tell me the worst.' Then you can go ahead and be honest. But on another occasion or some other person if you put it to them in that way, 'Look, things do seem worse than we had thought', then they might say, 'I am sure you

must be mistaken, I feel a bit better today', then you know that no, they are not ready for communication so you just keep quiet, at least for the time being. I think you have to play it by ear in that sort of way. It's not a question of suddenly appearing at their bedside and reading the death sentence as it were.

But if all their lives people have not been accustomed to [392] communicating, either the person who is trying to relate to the dying person or the dying person themselves, if they haven't been accustomed to communicating or facing the truth is going to be more difficult than ever at that time. So you are not going to be able to suddenly get a person to face the truth if **all their lives** they have avoided facing the truth. If they have even avoided facing the truth about life do you expect them to face the truth about death? It's impossible. So they will go on pretending right up to the last in every way.

But perhaps there are some people more open with whom, yes, communication is possible. So in a way Trungpa suggests it is almost as though, the way he puts it, the dying person is only too open to communication, only too anxious to communicate, and it's the others who aren't willing, but I think very often the dying person himself or herself is just unwilling to communicate, or is just as unable to communicate. They are both in the same boat. The person who knows that the dying person is dying doesn't dare to say so, the dying person himself, even though they suspect that they may be dying, feel that they are dying, don't dare to ask. So nothing is said on either side. The pretence is kept up. 'Ah well, it will be better weather next month and you will be able to go out and have a nice walk', and actually they know that it's not really going to be like that, so the relationship is a pretence all the time, there is no communication going on, and that is really sad, because if the person is dying and you can be with them, as Trungpa said, and there can be mutual communication at that time, that is a real proof of friendship, you really are relating to that person, you are relating to each other even more, or more than ever, because of the crucial nature of the situation, and that can be, as he says, a rich and rewarding experience. But if your whole life has been a denial of the possibility of that sort of communication it's very unlikely that you are going to discover it at the time of death, though even that is possible if there's a will to communicate on both sides.

Virabhadra: Another aspect of the problem which I have encountered is the fact that most people are Christians with whom I have contact, and telling somebody that they are dying who is a Christian tends to unleash a burst of Christian activity. The priest comes in and there is lots of praying going on and the whole thing gets a sort of Christian (romp?) as it were, and when that does happen there is no communication established.

S: And I'm sure very often there is no communication between the priest and the ... In a way the respectable thing is being done, they are dying properly, it's not a question of communication.

Virabhadra: I have felt that quite strongly, that the whole Christian way certainly doesn't involve communication and friendship. And in a way I have felt I would rather that people didn't have that .

S: Yes. Sometimes even dying people have to tell the priest to go away, if they are lapsed Catholics or something of that sort, are even bothered by that when they don't wish to be, even pestered, because officially, technically, they belong to that denomination. I believe the information is sometimes inscribed on the chart at the foot of your bed, isn't it, or it used to be? [393]

Virabhadra: It tends to be found out when you come into hospital, and the priests are given a list of their flock.

Devamitra: I suppose people tend to get more religious in hospitals too.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: I've never thought of that aspect of it actually.

Subhuti: Get the *Dies Irae* muttered in your ear as you are going out.

S: Yes, it can make you think, can't it? Or if you are exhorted 'In a few minutes from now you will be standing face to face with your judge.'

Virabhadra: And it seems to me that there's a whole different level between... I can imagine somebody in the Movement dying, the whole thing would just be a completely different thing.

S: It would be sad but at the same time festive in a way.

Virabhadra: You can imagine it could be a really creative and positive sort of situation for all concerned. Whereas the sort of situation I find myself in is just really ugly sometimes. You really hope for the expansion of the Movement.

S: I remember hearing when I was in Ceylon many years ago that there was a Dutch Buddhist who had become a *bhikkhu* and he fell sick, he was seriously ill, and he was admitted to a Christian missionary hospital run by Catholics, he was formerly a Catholic, and they really got to him, he was very seriously ill and thought to be dying and because he was so ill they wouldn't allow any of his Buddhist friends in, all the priests were there around him, they were putting pressure on him to be reconverted to Christianity, and he was almost dying. He was certainly very very seriously ill. But there was a young Buddhist, a rather ardent young Buddhist, who suspected what was going on and he forced his way in, literally, into the hospital and to this man's bedside and all he could say was 'Get me out of here, get me out of here, they are trying to convert me.' So he did actually get him out, I think he appealed to the authorities and he was removed from that hospital. And he did recover, and he wrote about his experience in a booklet which he published. This is how I came to know about it. His name was Bhikkhu Dharmapala, and he published a few booklets, he's a little bit known, not very well known, but that was his experience. They took full unscrupulous advantage of his defenceless condition.

All right, let's go on, read the rest of it paragraph by paragraph and we will discuss that also as a block to pull things together. [394]

Just reading the Bardo Thotrol does not do very much, except that the dying person knows that you are performing a ceremony of some kind for him. You should have some understanding of the whole thing, not just reading out of the book but making it like a conversation: "You are dying, you are leaving your friends and family, your favourite surroundings will no longer be there, you are going to leave us. But at the same time there is something which continues, there is the continuity of your positive relationship with your friends and with the teaching, so work on that basic continuity, which has nothing to do with the ego. When you die you will have all sorts of traumatic experiences, of leaving the body, as well as your old memories coming back to you as hallucinations. Whatever the visions and hallucinations may be, just relate to what is happening rather than trying to run away. Keep there, just relate with that."

While you are doing all this, the intelligence and consciousness of the dying person are deteriorating, but at the same time he also develops a higher consciousness of the environmental feeling; so if you are able to provide a basic warmth and a basic confidence that what you are telling him is the truth rather than just what you have been told to tell him, that is very important.

It should be possible to give some kind of simple explanation of the process of deterioration from earth into water, water into fire and so on, this gradual deterioration of the body, finally ending up in the luminosity principle. In order to bring the person into a state of luminosity you need the basic ground to relate with it, and this basic ground is the solidness of the person. "Your friends know you are going to die, but they are not frightened by it, they are really here, they are telling you that you are going to die, there is nothing suspicious going on behind your back." Fully being there is very important when a person dies. Just relating with oneness is extremely powerful, because at that point there is uncertainty between the body and the mind. The body and brain are deteriorating, but you are relating with that situation, providing some solid ground.

As far as the visions of the peaceful and wrathful divinities are concerned, it seems to be very much left to the individual to relate with them himself. In the book it says that you should try to conjure up the spirit of the dead person and tell him about the images; you may be able to do that if there is still continuity, but it is very much guesswork as far as ordinary people are concerned; there is no real proof that you have not lost touch with the person. The whole point is that when you instruct a dying person you are really talking to yourself. Your stability is part of the dying person, so if you are stable then automatically the person in the bardo state will be attracted to that. In other words, present a very sane and solid situation to the person who is going to die. Just relate with him, just open to each other simultaneously, and develop the meeting of the two minds.

S: A few points here. Trungpa says 'just reading the Bardo Thodol does not do very much except that the dying person knows that you are performing a ceremony of some kind for him'. Sometimes [395] this seems quite important, not only for dying people but for sick people. The feeling that something is being done for them.

In some cases of course they do believe the ceremony will do them some kind of good, but it's as though even when they don't have any definite belief of that sort the fact that they feel that something is being for them, it is as though people care, or something is happening, has a sort of positive or at least consoling effect.

Tape 20

Another point is, whatever Trungpa says here is true in relation to the dying person, but we mustn't forget, he seems to have in a way forgotten in this stage, or in this section, that the bardo experience is not only an

after-death experience, it's an experience that you can have in this life itself, it's the transitional experience. So just as it is important to stay with people and relate to them and communicate with them at the time of death, it's also important to stay with them, or in the same way it's important to stay with them and relate to them and communicate with them when they are going through a transitional phase or experience which may well be very difficult and traumatic. As when for instance someone is going through a quite difficult time on retreat. Just because the retreat is a sort of transitional stage or transitional experience for him, a sort of bardo state if you like.

So it's important to relate to, really relate to and communicate with people at **all** times, but it's all the more important to be able to stay with them and to relate to them and communicate with them when they are going through anything of a crucial nature, especially very transitional nature. The dying state is just one particularly very crucial example of that.

Trungpa also says, 'there is no real proof that you have not lost touch with the person.' Well, proof in the scientific sense, there isn't, but you can feel at least quite certain that you are still in contact with the deceased person and you can have some sort of feeling of how **they** are feeling.

So Trungpa says 'the whole point is that when you instruct a dying person you are really talking to yourself.' That seems really rather odd, I wouldn't agree with that at all.

Virabhadra: When you say you can be in contact with a dying person, or dead person, does that tend to be the case with people that you have known very well or...?

S: That is as far as my experience goes, it is people that I have known. Not necessarily very well. I recollect one instance where I had only met the person concerned once, she was the mother of a friend of mine, but when I went to the house just before the funeral I had the definite experience that that woman was just sitting there in..., well, I said to the friend who was the son of that person, I said 'didn't your mother always used to sit in that particular chair?' and he said 'Yes.' And I.. you can't say feeling and you can't say seeing, it is actually perceiving there. Not that there is any sort of visual experience or anything of that sort but the person is definitely there, as definite, as tangibly, without the actual physical body being there, as anybody is present. The body is there but the **physical** body is not there, if you see what I mean. And in the same way you perceive their mental state, whether they are happy or not happy and so on. And you are relating to them and presumably you can relate in terms of the bardo teaching. It's very [396] difficult to say in detail how much of it gets across, etc., etc. I'm sure that there is the possibility of actual communication with the consciousness, so to speak, of the deceased person, that it isn't just subjective imagination or fantasy. And it may well be that the Bardo Thodol teaching provides a content, as it were, an appropriate content for that sort of communication. Though the number of days can't be taken literally and I'm a bit doubtful about taking literally the traditional statement that you spend say forty-nine days going through the bardo and that there are certain things that you should remind them of on each day. I really doubt that, but in a general way surely I think these teachings can be communicated under those circumstances.

I don't have any experience of this sort of contact or communication after more than a week, and my experience has been that it's at its strongest for the two and a half to three day period immediately following death. You can sometimes as it were hear the person, not only perceive but hear.

_____: And presumably one develops *metta* for that person.

S: Yes. In some ways that is the most important factor, one would say. If one can do nothing else, develop *metta*. That cannot but be good, it is a form of communication, and it does in a way provide what Trungpa calls that sane and solid situation.

_____: If one spoke to them would they hear?

S: Well, yes, but you wouldn't need to speak aloud, they could perceive your thought, so to speak. You are hearing them but there is no audible voice heard.

_____: Oh I see, yes.

S: They would perceive your thoughts. They would pick up on whatever was your mental and emotional attitude towards them, whether you actually vocalised that or not. I don't know whether they would hear distinct words as it were, maybe even they would, or maybe not, maybe that would not be necessary. Your meaning would be communicated even independently of non-vocalised words.

Kuladeva: I was going to say, because they wouldn't have any physical senses, would they?

S: No they wouldn't have any physical senses but they could perceive you physically even without those physical senses. As I mentioned when I spoke about my own experience with acupuncture, I saw my physical body, though I just wasn't seeing with any physical eyes because I was seeing from **outside** my physical body.

But the great message seems to be all the way through this section, just remain in contact with people, whether during life or whether during death, or during the experience of dying, or after death. Remain in contact. It's only if you are in contact and in communication that any transmission of the truth, or sharing of the truth, is possible. It's not a very good idea to leave it all to the last minute. And you need most of all to be with people, stay with them at crucial situations, in the broader sense, not just at the time of death. And it is very often when people most need support and contact that people [397] abandon them out of embarrassment or feelings of impotence and so on. It may be a genuine feeling of inadequacy because someone may be dying and they may know that they are dying and they may turn to you and say, 'Tell me what is going to happen after death.' What can you say? You can't say very confidently as though you have been there, this is what is going to happen, this is what you have got to be prepared for, so you cannot help feeling your own inadequacy. So the best thing you can do is to remain in contact, to stay with that person, not withdraw or retreat, because in a way your own inadequacy in a certain sense has been exposed. You are not adequate just because you can provide cut and dried answers, this is what the priest does. You haven't to pretend to a confidence or pretend to knowledge you don't possess, it is enough if you just stay with that person. You could for instance say, 'Well, look, I don't really know, but no doubt I shall know one day because just like you I shall have to die, I shall have to face it.' At least you can be open in that sort of way and to that extent you maintain the contact. You don't lapse into an unreal situation of pretending something. Or if the situation is appropriate you can say, 'Well, look, as a Buddhist, this is what I believe, and this is what I have a reasoned belief in.' Or you can say something like 'Death isn't all that different from life, it's a particularly important transitional experience, just be open to whatever is going to happen. I don't know what's going to happen, you don't know what is going to happen, but just remain open to that. And if you have led a fairly positive life then surely whatever happens to you after death you have nothing to fear.' Often the person wants consolation or reassurance but you can't give it on a dishonest basis.

Virabhadra: How important do you think the handling of the physical body is after death?

S: I can't say that I really know personally, but the tradition is that one should be quite sure that consciousness has, as it were, departed, and it is generally said that one should not dispose of the physical body, not dispose of the remains, for at least two days. But I think there is very little danger of premature burial or premature cremation nowadays, almost always for purely practical reasons the body is kept for up to a week, just because at most crematoria or even most graveyards there's a waiting list. It's as simple as that.

_____: You have to be certified.

S: You have to be certified dead anyway, but even doctors can make mistakes here in this matter, if you see what I mean. People have been certified dead and then come back, haven't they? I don't know whether there are any recent examples of this, are there?

Virabhadra: I've not heard of any.

S: In recent history, no. But yes, you are not buried or cremated usually for a full week.

Virabhadra: I was thinking of things like post-mortems which are quite often carried out the same day.

S: I think you probably wouldn't feel, because I remember again going back to my own experience that I was watching this acupuncturist massage my legs, but I felt nothing. But it [398] might not be a very pleasant experience to see doctors performing an autopsy on you. But then again I don't know, because again to quote my experience I just felt nothing at all. It could well be that you see the whole thing and you just feel nothing at all, it just doesn't affect you or in a way concern you, really.

_____: It might ram home the basic truth that you have died. (**S:** Yes, that's true.) You might not have been aware of that fact.

Subhuti: In the text it says that if there is no body for some reason then the text should be read on the person's usual sleeping place. So how closely is the consciousness associated with the body after death, once it becomes dissociated from the body does it tend to hang around where the body is or where ...?

S: Well, this is a sort of tradition. There does seem to be something in this, as though - it's not a question of after death, the fact is that the process of death is more prolonged and more extensive, or involves a greater number of stages than is usually thought. It isn't, from a traditional Buddhist point of view, and I think most traditions agree with this, it isn't just a question of the heart ceasing to beat and bodily warmth being lost, it is also a question of the complete dissociation of consciousness from the physical body which may take somewhat longer than modern medical science regards the process of death as lasting. Do you see what I mean?

But presumably if you don't have a physical body handy, so to speak, and you want to read the Bardo Thodol for the benefit of the deceased person, presumably you read it near their accustomed sleeping place because since they have slept there many times there will be a sort of almost magnetic link between that and them. One mustn't think in terms of space and time in the ordinary sense, in the after world so to speak the deceased person's consciousness will be 'near', inverted commas, not only his own physical body but those traces, so to speak, if you like psychic traces which he or his physical body have left. Do you see what I mean? So you can approach the spirit so to speak not only via his actual corpse but via any traces which he has left by living in certain places or being associated with certain things. His clothing would do, for instance. For instance, as I felt in the case of that friend's mother that I mentioned, that she was sitting on that chair. That actually was the chair on which she was accustomed to sit. I didn't feel her presence as it were when I was standing near the corpse. The corpse was in the coffin but I stood near that at one stage, I didn't feel anything then. It could be that actually if you can speak of the spirit being around it's as though she was around there rather than just by the physical body itself. It's as though the spirit, so to speak, the consciousness, comes back to where it is accustomed to being, which is usually where the physical body was accustomed to being, but not necessarily so.

So if someone, say, is drowned at sea the consciousness is not likely to be hovering over that spot of the sea where the body actually is, it's more likely to be hovering over the house where the person previously lived.

He represents someone as saying, 'there is nothing suspicious going on behind your back', it is almost as though the dying person is a bit suspicious or feels a bit of paranoia. I don't know whether this is a typical Trungpa touch, but I think, yes, [399] it can sometimes happen, if people feel that they are not being told the truth, they get a bit suspicious, so they might even start feeling that all sorts of things are going on without them knowing, behind their back as it were. Especially if there is property and the dying person thinks that others may be after it or something of that kind. A dying king might think his son is trying on his crown already. Or in the old days the dying person sometimes suspected that they were already breaking open his strong boxes and all that kind of thing, they couldn't even wait for him to be gone, couldn't even wait for him to die.

If confidence is once broken, if you get this feeling that people aren't telling you the truth, no one is telling you the truth, and you may get this feeling if the fact that you are dying is not been broken to you, and you feel that you are dying, you may just become generally suspicious, which wouldn't be a very healthy state to die in, it seems.

It really does seem dreadful that people have to die in hospitals under heavy medication when perhaps that isn't necessary, not in all cases. Clearly no one would want to die in pain but perhaps people would in some cases rather die in pain than die without consciousness.

It does seem that the last stages, that the final stages of death, are painless. Once you have passed a certain point and the process of death has started it would seem that actually you do not feel anything. Is there any medical evidence for this?

Virabhadra: Not so far as I know, people in pain tend to require pain relief right up to the end.

Devamitra: I have been recently reading Gitting's account of John Keats' life and his death. Even though he had a very long drawn out death, it seems, you got the impression that the last few hours were definitely very calm and peaceful.

S: That could be of course because the organism has ceased to resist, it's no longer struggling.

Devamitra: You get that feeling from the point where Keats himself realises and acknowledges that he is going to die, he says, 'I am going, I'm dying', and six or seven hours later he actually goes. I was quite struck by that actually.

Virabhadra: What do you think would be the state of somebody who, say, went into a coma or was under very heavy medication so that they weren't conscious for quite a few days or weeks before they died?

S: I don't know but my guess is that they would be in much the same sort of state that I was when I had that acupuncture, they would be just seeing it all and just watching - well, not even watching but just seeing it all, and that sort of experience would be prolonged until actual physical death took place. I think simply that. They could presumably see, even hear, everything that was going on even though medically speaking they were unconscious.

Anyway, perhaps we can not only close but conclude there. We have got through the whole commentary. It might be a good idea if those who do have time, as soon as they can if they just read through this translation of the text having studied the commentary. (340)

Sagaramati: Which one would be the better translation, that one or Evans-Wentz?

S: Difficult to say. I think this one is closer to the Tibetan as far as I have been able to make out. The sort of poetical passages, in some kind of verse, read better in Evans-Wentz. So perhaps one could read those in the Evans-Wentz version but consult the translation of those verses in this just to check up on Evans-Wentz, as it were, as regards actual meaning. But he certainly reads, his verses read better.

For instance, just to refer to the main verses of the six bardos, I don't know what your taste in verse is but here it is translated, 'Now when the bardo of birth is dawning upon me', whereas Evans-Wentz translation is 'Now when the bardo of birth upon me is dawning'. The latter sounds much better to me and more feelingful and therefore more meaningful.

_____: I found through reading this translation that it helped me understand Evans-Wentz, (**S:** Yes, right.) but at the same time I felt a much stronger feeling for the Evans-Wentz translation in terms of feeling. This seems to be almost a bit too explanatory, almost.

_____: Ordinary.

S: Ordinary, yes.

Buddhadasa: This book has been translated into Finnish, so I am not quite sure what the Finnish Order Members will make of it.

S: They have themselves translated the *Precepts of the Gurus* and I wasn't too happy about that because I don't think the English of the Evans-Wentz verse reproduces the Tibetan very technically.

_____: Is that the only version we have got, the Evans-Wentz version?

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Do you think there is anything to be said for actually using this, if somebody, say, within the Order or the movement died, for using the Bardo Thodol?

S: I think one could. Again, that would not mean that one need read it over a period of forty-nine days with the complete certainty that on day one this was happening and day two that. I think the first week after death is important. If this reading of this helps one remain in contact, that is good, and certainly if something of one's sense of the meaning was conveyed it would be good, and there is also the possibility that if one were to read it aloud, or even to read it thinking the words, there would be a perception of that on the part of the deceased consciousness and that that would be **extremely** helpful. But even if one directed *metta* towards the deceased person that would help, surely. They would be likely to be in some kind of contact with you and be positively affected by the *metta* that they picked up coming from you. And if they were in a positive and more peaceful state and felt that someone was with them, even, then they would be in a better state to face and to experience and to assimilate whatever it is happens after death.

Perhaps later on I will follow up this idea [401] I had of giving a series of talks on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and going into some of the implications of it fairly systematically.

END OF SEMINAR

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