General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

Dhyana for Beginners seminar with Sangharakshita (unedited transcript)

Using the text in A Buddhist Bible (pp.437 et seq in the 1970 edition. Unfortunately not all editions of the Buddhist Bible contain this text.), ed. Dwight Goddard, and available on-line at www.buddhistinformation.com/dhyana.htm

Sangharakshita also refers to a translation by Charles Luk: Secrets of Chinese Meditation, pp.111 et seq, Rider 1975.

The on-line version has been inserted into this digitized version of the transcript; there might be minor differences between that and the version under discussion.

According to the FWBO Newsletter dated summer 1975, this seminar was held at Nash, a large house near Steyning in Sussex, and lasted ten days, from 23 June to 3 July 1975.

As well as Sangharakshita, those present included Abhaya, Buddhadasa, John Kerr, Lokamitra, Nagabodhi, Padmaraja, Dave Featherby, Ratnapani, Sagaramati, Sona, Vajradaka, Vajrakumara, and Vessantara. (Dave Featherby was ordained as Padmapani three weeks after this retreat, and the transcriber has used his Order name throughout.)

John Kerr took very little part in the discussion and the transcriber was unable to identify his voice. Vajrakumara probably accounts for most of the "Voice" credits in the margin: his was a very quiet voice, often inaudible.

The name(s) of the original transcriber(s) remain(s) unknown.

Digitized and annotated by Shantavira with assistance from Ashvajit.

Extracts from the actual text (only) are in "double quotes".

The start of each page is numbered according to the original transcript.

[1] [Tape 1 Side A]

Dhyana for Beginners

S: This morning we are going to start on 'Dhyana for Beginners', page 437 in the Buddhist Bible.

I am just wondering whether I should say a few words about the T'ien-tai school. I wonder how many people are familiar, or rather not familiar, with the T'ien-tai school of Chinese Buddhism? Does it convey anything to anybody? Perhaps I'd better just say a few words about it, though it won't be possible to give anything more than just a very general impression.

Buddhism was introduced into China quite early. There seems to have been some penetration of Buddhism into China as early as the first century of the Christian era, and from that time, say for four, five, even six hundred years, Buddhist teachers and Buddhist texts continued steadily to pour in from India, also from central Asia. So that by the time that this particular text, 'Dhyana for Beginners', came to be written, or rather the lecture on which it was based came

to be delivered, Buddhism, we may say, was in a quite flourishing state in China. It was not only flourishing but it was quite young, as it were, it hadn't settled into any very definite form, it was still a bit fragmentary and still therefore perhaps quite lively, and the T'ien-tai school may be regarded on the whole as a sort of systematizing school.

The T'ien-tai school isn't a sect; I'm using the world school quite deliberately. It had no sort of sectarian emphasis. We could even say that the T'ien-tai school was just a sort of tidying up movement of all the Buddhist teachings and texts which had by that time been introduced into China. It was an attempt to arrange them in some sort of order. If you like, it was an attempt to organize, even, some, at least, of the vast mass of material, spiritual and cultural, that had poured into China, either directly or indirectly from India. So the T'ien-tai school is primarily, one may say, a systematizing school, both on the theoretical side and also on the practical side. It tries to organize the whole vast mass of Buddhist material introduced up to that time into China into a coherent whole. This I think is its distinctive feature, and Chih-i or Chih-chi, I'm not quite sure how to pronounce it, is the greatest master of this particular school, the T'ien-tai school.

Chih-chi himself was not the founder of the school; technically he was the fifth patriarch of the school, but he became very, very much better known than any of his predecessors and may be described as the virtual founder of the school, though he wasn't technically the founder of it, [2] and he spent much of his life, much of his time, on the Tien-tai mountain. It was there that he established a great centre which became the sort of headquarters of the whole school, the whole movement, and he delivered many of his lectures there, wrote many of his works there, gathered his disciples together there. So the T'ien-tai school was a sort of encyclopedic movement. I'm not going to go into the details of Chih-chi's teachings. He systematized the sutras, the Buddha's teachings, in a very interesting way. I'm not going to go into all that. I think it's sufficient to indicate that the T'ien-tai school, and especially the work of Chih-chi himself, was simply an attempt to systematize the whole Buddhist tradition as known at that time in China, both on the theoretical and on the practical side, and that there was no sectarian emphasis. This particular tendency comes out very strongly in the work that we are going to go through now: 'Dhyana for Beginners'. It's quite basic, as it were, it's basic Buddhist material, and though it is produced in China, a thousand years after the time of the Buddha, in many ways it's remarkably faithful to the original teaching.

There are quotations from Mahayana sutras, there are definite Mahayana touches, one could even say the whole spirit of the text is Mahayanistic, but these Mahayana mystic elements give, as it were, an extra depth to the original tradition rather than representing any departure from it. So in a way the whole text is a rather beautiful blending of the Hinayana and Mahayana elements. Incidentally there is nothing of the Tantra because at this stage Tantric Buddhism had not developed, at least had not come out into the open. So we have quite a

wonderful blend of Hinayana and Mahayana; a sort of balance. We are definitely in touch with the older teachings or the older formulation of the teaching, that is to say the Hinayana formulation, but the spirit of the Mahayana is there too.

It could also perhaps be mentioned that both the Pure Land and the Ch'an or Zen development of Far Eastern Buddhism began virtually under the auspices of the T'ien-tai school. The T'ien-tai school also encouraged the recitation of the name of Amitabha. It also encouraged quiet sitting and meditation. And these tendencies, becoming more and more specialized and perhaps a little sectarian, eventually gave birth to the Pure Land school and the Ch'an or Zen school. But originally they were part and parcel of the great Tien-tai movement.

So in this way we see that the Tien-tai movement is not very different in a way from our own movement, and it provides us in some ways with a [3] quite interesting historical exemplar and model.

The T'ien-tai school and especially Chih-chi seems to have performed a great sorting out operation, which in some respects is what we are also trying to do so far as Buddhism in this country is concerned.

Anyway this is just a very rough introductory sketch. If anyone wants any further information about the T'ien-tai school he'll find it in, first of all, Sir Charles Elliot's 'Buddhism and Hinduism'. Also in Takakusu's 'Essentials of Buddhist philosophy' and Yamakami Sogen's 'Systems of Buddhist Thought'. Do you want me to repeat those?

Voice: Yes, please.

S: Sir Charles Elliot, 'Hinduism and Buddhism'. Then Takakusu 'Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy'. And lastly, there's a very old but still quite good and reliable book - there's a copy in the Order Library at Aryatara - Yamakami Sogen 'The Systems of Buddhist Thought'. There are also some translations in, I think it's 'Origins of Chinese Tradition'. It's a big thick volume of translations published in America. [Possibly 'Sources of Chinese Tradition', 2 vols, Columbia University Press, tr.]

I have sometimes thought that some time I should give a lecture on the T'ien-tai school. It's quite a big gap in our knowledge I think.

Voice: [unclear] [laughter]

S: That would be rather naughty wouldn't it? Anyone want to ask anything about what I have said so far about the T'ien-tai school? Or about Chi-chi or Chi-chi? [two different pronunciations used]. Remember that we're in the very early, very creative days of Chinese Buddhism. China is beginning to make its original contribution, as it were, to the development of Buddhism. Mm? Mm? There's a sort of outburst of spiritual energy. China isn't just taking in any more, just accepting, but has started to assimilate and started to express something of its own understanding of Buddhism in its own way.

Voice: Do you think there are any other parallels between Tien-tai and [unclear] [4]

S: No, I think that they're all more detailed forms of what I've already said, and more sort of specialized examples of what I've already said. We, of course, as yet haven't found any mountains to go to. [laughter]

Nagabodhi: Was it called the T'ien-tai school in the time of the Fifth Patriarch or was it something else?

S: This seems to be a later designation. Mm.

Voice: Is it Tien-dai or Tien-Tai?

S: Tien-Tai. It meant great heaven, great heaven mountains. In Japanese it becomes Ten-dai. The Tien-dai school was introduced into Japan. It was of considerable importance there for several hundred years until the rise of the more sectarian forms of Buddhism, especially Shin and Zen.

It is one of the great features, not only of the T'ien-tai school or movement, but of Chinese Buddhism generally, certainly during the whole classical period, that it was never sectarian. Whereas Japanese Buddhism later on tended to be very sectarian indeed with mutually exclusive ecclesiastical corporations, mutually exclusive ordinations, teachings, and so on. So Japanese Buddhism split up virtually into a number of self-contained sects, but Chinese Buddhism never did that.

Voice: What about the northern school and the southern school and the Platform intrigue you hear about?

S: Well here again it's interesting that they're called northern and southern, yes, just northern and southern as it were, but this again is within the Ch'an tradition. But scholars are still sorting out what really happened. Whether this whole difference wasn't a later invention. Whether those two particular teachers did differ, you know, as much as was later on supposed, but this is just a very tiny detail, as it were, in the total history of Chinese Buddhism. I mean the whole question from a sort of historical and critical point of view of virtually the authenticity of the Platform scripture is very much under discussion, oh yes, and what was its exact place in the history of Ch'an.

Now there are two translations in English of this particular work. There's the one appearing in the 'Buddhist Bible' which is by Dwight Goddard in [5] collaboration with a Chinese man. There's another one in 'The Secrets of Chinese Meditation' by Lu K'uan Yu - Charles Luk - and I've been comparing the two, at least portions of them, and it's quite interesting. It seems that the Dwight Goddard translation is a bit freer, a bit more expansive, a bit more explanatory, but it seems to convey much more of the spirit of the text. Charles Luk's seems a little bit more scholarly and a little bit more accurate. He gives, for instance, the correct Sanskrit equivalents of Chinese Buddhist technical terms, whereas very often Goddard only guesses, he doesn't really know the Sanskrit equivalents. But

Charles Luk's translation, rather surprisingly, strikes one as rather dry. Charles Luk is no doubt a practising Buddhist and a sincere meditator, but nothing of this comes over as far as the translation is concerned. It's quite interesting. It's a very dry sort of translation. So therefore I felt it would be better if we used the Dwight Goddard translation although I've got a copy of the other one and I'll be referring to that where necessary, if there are any obscurities in the Dwight Goddard translation, and also I'll be referring to it for help with the correct Sanskrit equivalents of the Chinese Buddhist terms. For instance, Dwight Goddard called the text 'Dhyana for Beginners' but strictly speaking it's 'Samatha Vipassana for Beginners'. Dhyana one can take as comprising samatha and vipassana, but samatha vipassana, or the Chinese equivalent, is what the original title actually says. So we'll be checking the Dwight Goddard translation in this sort of way against the Charles Luk translation. But on the whole we can rely on the Goddard translation. As I said, that gives much of the spirit and feeling, not only the text itself, but the subject.

Now we're going to do what we usually do: we're going to go round the circle taking it in turns to read a section, even a short chapter, at a time, and then we're going to go through it more minutely, questions can be asked, and we can also have some discussion.

We're going to start on the preface which is by an early Chinese editor, that will help introduce us to the work. The preface is by a monk living in the Tsung dynasty which is between 900 and 1200 AD. Now if Padmaraja would like to start and read that preface, then we'll get into it.

Padmaraja: [reads from p.437-8] "Preface. The Tien-tai Sect hold four treatises on Dhyana in high regard. The [6] first is entitled, Dhyana for Immediate Enlightenment. It was written for those who are seeking instantaneous enlightenment by means of one phrase or even one word. It is the record of lectures given at the Nuo-chien Monastery in King-chow, Hupeh Province, by Grand Master Chih-chi. It was written down by Chang-an, one of his disciples, and was compiled in ten volumes. The second treatise is entitled, Dhyana by Regular Steps. It is also based on lectures by the Grand Master, but this time they were delivered at the N'rkwei Monastery and recorded by the disciple, Fah-chen. It was at first compiled in thirty volumes, but was afterward recompiled in ten volumes under the title, Dhyana Paramita, or the Ideal Dhyana. The third treatise was at first entitled, Dhyana by Irregular Steps. It was written down by the Grand Master at the request of Mao-shee, a Minister of the Grand Council (Chen Dynasty 548-581). It was compiled in one volume and now goes under the title, the Six Wonderful ways of Dhyana. The fourth treatise, the one that we are now to study, was written down by the Grand Master for the benefit and instruction of his own brother (Lieut. Col.) Chen-chin. It is undoubtedly a compendium of the Master's mature understanding of the Mahayana and is a sure key to enlightenment.

"The different headings employed in this book, such as, 'Stop and Realize', 'Samapatti and Prajna' (Transcendental-powers and wisdom), 'Tranquillization

and Reflection', 'Serenity and Quietness', are all derived from the same source. If you trace out this source and terminus, or should trace out the practices and attainments of the Buddhas, they would all alike be found in this practice of Dhyana, - stopping thought about Truth and realizing Truth itself. It was just what the Grand Master of the Tien-tai Mountains had himself experienced in a vision of the Vulture Peak that had come to him when he was staying at the great Su Mountains, and was always after his chief inspiration. Briefly speaking, the Dhyana which our Master Chih-chi had practised, and the samadhi which he had experienced, and the lectures which he had delivered with such eloquence, were nothing but the manifestation of this 'Stop and Realize'. Or, in other words, what the Master had been teaching us was simply the narrative of the operation of our own minds; and the profound teaching of the T'ien-tai school, and the voluminous literature to be studied, are no more than an elaboration of this single subject. If we should disregard the conception of Dhyana, it would be impossible for us either to understand or to discuss the teachings of the T'ien-tai school. Consequently it is not only necessary for everyone who is following (Buddha) to study it, it is also necessary for him to practise it. [7]

"As we look outward upon the world, we see corruption everywhere - people hankering after amusements, seeking to gratify their own selfish comfort, trying to rationalize their prejudices, deliberately blinding their eyes to their own enlightenment. How few there are who comprehend the way to practise Dhyana! Instead of studying this book, they keep it hidden away in a bookcase and their labour is in vain. But again I bring the teaching to the 'engraver of wooden blocks' for another republishing and I hope that everyone who reads it will profit by its teachings. Moreover, I hope that everyone who reads it will practise its teachings and gain thereby a personal realization of its immeasurable treasure. As my labour is now ended, I write these few lines as an introduction. Bhikshu Yuen-tso."

S: There are quite a few points just to deal with briefly here, even though we will be going into some of them if not all of them in greater detail as we go though the text itself. As you see, the first of the four treatises on Dhyana which are held in high regard by the T'ien-tai school - it's a mistake to call it a sect - the first of them is entitled Dhyana for Immediate Enlightenment and it was written for those who are seeking instantaneous enlightenment by means of one phrase or even one word. Why do you think people should have sought for enlightenment in that particular way, it seems rather odd doesn't it? But nobody comes along to us nowadays and says, 'Please teach me just in one word, just speak one word hearing which I shall become enlightened.' Nobody does that. [laughter] But apparently they did that.

Voice: They would if they dared. [laughter]

S: They would if they dared? Well, perhaps in China they just dared. [laughter] And perhaps here no one holds out the possibility of that sort of thing.

Voice: Maybe it's because words in those days were cherished a bit more than

what they are now.

S: Mm. Yes. Perhaps it's because they took the teaching more seriously. There is an episode in the scriptures, it must have been the Pali scriptures somewhere, as far as I recollect, though not I think in the actual Pali [8] canon but perhaps in the commentarial literature or Jatakas, where the Buddha is speaking about the possible disappearance of the teaching, and he's admonishing the disciples and trying to make them realize how lucky they are to have so many teachings to study and to learn, and he's saying that a time will come in the future when the king will send a man on an elephant all round the kingdom proclaiming that if anybody knows just a single stanza of the teaching, let him come to the palace and I will give him an immense reward. And he said, 'Monks, at that time there will be nobody able to come forward and claim that reward. Not even if the king were to send a man round on an elephant offering the same reward for half a verse, even for a single line, it would have disappeared.' So he impresses upon them the great value of even a single verse or half a verse. And when we were studying the Udana we did see that quite often the Buddha spoke just a few lines or just gave a very short, very succinct teaching, even pronounced a certain verse, and there was an instantaneous realization. So perhaps something of that sort at the back of this sort of enquiry. It may have been that in some cases at least it was simple laziness. People just wanted to get it very easily.

Voice: Maybe that's why it's called for those seeking instantaneous. It's those sort of people that special texts, sort of send them back to square one.

S: And you also notice it says it was written for those who were *seeking* instantaneous enlightenment by means of one word, it doesn't say they get it that way. [laughter] You notice that the Grand Master's lectures on that particular kind of Dhyana were compiled in ten volumes, [laughter] which suggests that when they ask for instantaneous enlightenment in one word, they've rather let themselves in for something, that there was a very lengthy seminar at the end of which they might have gained enlightenment or they might not.

The ten volumes, by the way, are no European type volumes. The Chinese volumes are chuans, which are small bound chapters virtually, it's much more like ten chapters, actually than ten volumes in our sense. You must always remember this when reading about Chinese literature. It seems much more voluminous than it actually is.

Voice: Would this first text be connected with what you talked about - the Path of No Steps?

S: Exactly, yes, there are no steps, it's instantaneous. [9] At least, that's what you want, whether you get it is quite another question. And you also see here this distinction between regular steps and irregular steps as applied to meditation.

Voice: Do you . . . between this and the idea of. . . Would it have been that kind of teaching? [unclear]

S: That kind wasn't very often one phrase or one word. Sometimes it was. It

could have been connected with that. If so it means that we have here, within the general Chinese Buddhist tradition, what afterwards became a very conspicuous and very characteristic part of some forms of Ch'an, especially the Rinzai form. So there are all these different texts - four remember - on Dhyana, some of them based on the lectures, the oral instruction of the Grand Master, others actually having been written by them. So we're concerned in this particular text with the fourth of the treatises, written by the Grand Master Chih-chi for the benefit of his own brother.

Lokamitra: Can you say a little why the path of irregular steps is called the Six Wonderful Ways of Dhyana?

S: Yes, because presumably, and not having read the text I can't say, but presumably because it doesn't give one step after another. But it gives irregular steps. So there's this method, there's that method, or you do this or you do that, but they don't add up to a regular sequence to be practised in a regular order. They are as it were six different ways; in a way they are all equally valid, they are not arranged in successive steps; they are all equally advanced or equally elementary. This is my, as it were, guess, but I think it will turn out to be correct.

Voice: Do you know if anybody is working on the translations of those treatises?

S: I've not heard so but a lot of translation activity seems to be going on among Chinese Buddhists. Recently I was sent information about an English translation just been published of a very, very important work of Yuen Chuan, in fact his main work, which is known as the 'City of Yuen Chuan', his great work on the Yogacara or, better, on the Vijnanavada philosophy, embodying the results of his studies at Nalanda and digesting about a dozen Indian commentaries on original texts of Vasubandu. This has just been published in a big fat volume. It's been translated by a Chinese scholar. And then again, there are new translations of the [10] Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra, by the way, is the sutra most highly esteemed, or one of the two or three sutras most highly esteemed, by the T'ien-tai school, mainly because of its comprehensive character. A new translation of that has just come out from Japan, well, not a new translation completely, it's an edition of a translation which we've seen hitherto only in part. It's the translation by Kato, part of which was used by Soothill in his 'Lotus of the Wonderful Law' that has now come out in its entirety from Japan. And a Chinese Dharma Master based in America, based in San Francisco, is at the moment bringing out an English translation of the White Lotus Sutra with very extensive traditional commentarial material in three volumes. [White Lotus Sutra is Sangharakshita's name for the Saddharmapundarika or Lotus Sutra, tr.] And there's another complete translation of the Lotus Sutra which has come out, apparently by a Chinese scholar which I have on order. Dr Conze of course is working on his translation from the Sanskrit text.

Buddhadasa: We have a book, White Lotus Sutra ... under a longer title, similar title, it came to the shop. We're not quite sure of its origin. Is it your

copy of the White Lotus Sutra that you've ordered?

S: Well, I ordered through the bookshop, through Judy.

Buddhadasa: That must be the copy that we've got, extensive commentaries etc.

S: Right, oh, that's very good. So sooner or later we shall really be able to go into the White Lotus Sutra. Already I've given a series of lectures which provide a sort of framework for understanding, in a very broad sense. But we shall very soon have four translations from the Chinese version, which is the version of Kumarajiva and a sort of literary classic in its own right, and a lot of commentarial material from the Chinese plus Dr Conze's complete translation from the original Sanskrit text. So we shall then be very well equipped. This is a sort of sign of the times, one may say. Another very important text which is in process of translation, I got word of it recently, translation in three volumes, is the Sanskrit Mahaparinirvana Sutra. This is the other great work on which the T'ien-tai school bases itself. It, of course, recognizes and accepts all the sutras, but these two are particularly important [11] that is to say the Saddharmapundarika and the Mahaparinirvana. So there's quite a bit of activity of this sort going on in Chinese Buddhist circles. There's of course Charles Luk's own activity, but he seems to be a gifted amateur and his translations are sometimes a bit dry and wooden.

It's very interesting, whilst we're on the subject of translations, in China, Kumarajiva's translations and Yuen Chan's translations are regarded as representing the two types of translation, as it were. Kumarajiva was not Chinese, he was from central Asia, but he lived and worked in China for many years during the golden age of the Tang Dynasty when Chinese literature and art and civilization in general was at its height, and he had the collaboration of some of the greatest writers and poets of his day in editing his translations, in preparing his translations, so they are regarded as literary classics. They're very easy reading, even lovers of Chinese literature who aren't particularly interested in Buddhism read them for their beautiful style and language, much as some people in England may read the authorized version of the Bible for the sake of the literary beauty, the literary value of the work, even though they may not be Christians any longer. So Kumarajiva's translations are in very wide circulation; they're the popular ones which are read. He translated for instance the Diamond Sutra and the White Lotus Sutra. Yuen Chan's translations, on the other hand, are much more faithful and accurate and literal so far as the letter of the text is concerned, but they're a trifle dry, so I am told, and they're not so popular. They're very popular with scholars who want to get at the actual details of the original text, but they're not so popular with literary folk and with ordinary religious-minded people. They prefer Kumarajiva's translations. And it's also said that [though] Kumarajiva's are a little free as regards the letter, [he] certainly conveys the spirit, very, very faithfully, very adequately, and in a very inspiring fashion indeed. So the two translations of the Dhyana for Beginners seems to be a bit like that. Dwight Goddard's is rather like Kumarajiva's or in Kumarajiva's tradition, as it were. Charles Luk is more in Yuen Chan's tradition. So it's good

to use the one for inspirational purposes and the other for a sort of scholarly checkup, if you feel so inclined.

All right, let's go on to the second paragraph of this same preface and look into a few matters which we'll be going into in much greater detail in the course of the body of the text, or in the course of our study of the body of the text. [12]

This second paragraph says, "The different headings employed in this book, such as, 'Stop and Realize', 'Samapatti and Prajna', 'Tranquillization and Reflection', 'Serenity and Quietness' are all derived from the same source."'

First of all 'Stop and Realize'. This is a very good rendering, but not at all literal. It corresponds to samatha and vipassana and, as we saw, the correct title of the book in terms of popular Sanskrit originals for Chinese Buddhist terms is 'Samatha Vipassana for Beginners'.

So why stopping and realizing? Why is samatha rendered as stopping and vipassana as realizing? Later on it's made clear that stopping means stopping thinking, stopping discursive mental activity, and just seeing the truth directly. That is the realizing. But there's one danger of misunderstanding here and it's that that I want to comment on before we go on any further.

Samatha, it is true, does involve, at least in its higher reaches, the cessation of discursive mental activity, but we shouldn't think of it as being merely that. Samatha is much, much more than simply the cessation of discursive mental activity. But sometimes in the course of this text you are given the impression, if you're not very careful, that samatha is merely that, merely the cessation of discursive mental activity.

Perhaps we should go a little bit more into the meaning of the word samatha itself inasmuch as this won't be done quite in that way in the course of the text. Are you familiar with this particular term? As a term in Pali and Sanskrit texts? Samatha in Pali, shamatha in Sanskrit. Have you got a broad idea of what it means?

Voice: No, I haven't.

S: You haven't. Anybody got any idea, anybody can say?

Lokamitra: You usually correlate it to the first stage in meditation, the concentration aspect.

S: Mm, mm.

Vessantara: It's calming down.

S: It's calming down, this is the literal meaning, calming down [13] or pacification, that's the literal meaning. But it covers really in its fullest sense the experience of all the dhyanas, both the rupa dhyanas and the arupa dhyanas, the dhyanas pertaining to be the so-called world of form and also those pertaining to the so-called world of no-form. So samatha covers very broadly, or can cover in

some contexts, in fact we can say usually does cover, the experience of all those dhyana states. All that is samatha.

Voice: What's the spelling of that?

S: Samatha, if it's Pali there's no accent over the S, but if it's Sanskrit in this case it becomes 'sha' instead of 'sa'; there there's a little stroke and a long 'a' and a line over the final 'a', shamathaa.

So it is not simply the calming down of discursive mental activity; it represents also the development of all the positive nidanas, especially say happiness, bliss, joy. It represents the experience of all these. So it's also a building up of positive emotion in the fullest and highest and most refined sense. So the translation or rendering as 'stopping' doesn't give you that total meaning. This refers just to one aspect of samatha, the stopping of discursive mental activity. But samatha is not merely that, it's much more than that.

Vessantara: It represents the development of all the positive nidanas?

S: Yes.

Vessantara: Including yathabhuta and jnanadarsana?

S: No, no; the lower ones. That is, those which correspond to what I call positive emotions. No. With the yathabhuta and jnanadarsana you'd step into vipassana. So this should be borne in mind throughout the whole text because to render samatha by stopping is a quite interesting and vivid way of putting it and it's certainly true of one whole aspect of samatha, but it doesn't exhaust the total meaning of samatha by any means. There are hints to this effect here and there in the text which I will dwell on and enlarge when we come to them, but I think it's important to emphasize this right from the beginning.

Voice: Could you just mention briefly the arupa dhyanas? [14]

S: The arupa dhyanas are first of all the sphere of infinite space, then the sphere of infinite consciousness, then the sphere of no thing, and then the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception; these are the four arupa dhyanas or formless dhyanas. But these too are included under the heading of samatha.

I don't know whether we ought to touch upon this, but perhaps it would be useful, or at least interesting, to indicate the general difference, or the nature of the general difference, between the rupa dhyanas on the one hand and the arupa dhyanas on the other. Has anyone ever thought about this?

Voice: When I did think about it I just thought it was a matter of that the experience went completely beyond experience through senses, beyond any kind of physical experience at all.

S: Well, one could say that of all dhyanas.

Voice: This rupa, material and immaterial [unclear] form no form. [15] [Tape 1 Side B]

S: Well, that's quite difficult to say, inasmuch as in Indian thought generally there's no conception of the material quite in the way that we have it in Western thought. Rupa means literally form. You could say that by 'no form' it is not meant exactly that visual forms disappear, so much as that the, as it were, objective content of your experience is not so, as it were, heavy. Does this convey any meaning or not?

Voice: [unclear]. Could you say some more of the realms of colour, sound?

S: It's not just the realms of colour and sound, it's not just that, it could even be regarded as more refined than that. Light is there, different degrees, different manifestations, but let's go back a little to this whole idea of rupa.

As I said, it's not matter in the western sense. Rupa has sometimes been defined, and I mentioned this before, as the objective content of the perceptual situation [by Herbert Guenther, tr.]. In other words there is a perceptual situation, you perceive, you experience, you are aware, but there is an element in that which is not amenable to your subjective control, even though part of your experience; that is what we call rupa. It's intractable, it's something you come up against. In the arupaloka you do not come up against it, as it were, so strongly. [laughter] In other words perhaps you could say there isn't such a violent collision between subject and object. The so-called object is not so intractable, it's more malleable, more susceptible. Therefore there is a greater degree of freedom experienced. I must say this is not the traditional explanation, this is my own particular way of putting it across, or trying to put it across.

Vessantara: Could you try and give me some feeling of how that looked like - say a visualization.

S: Well, though rupa is mentioned here, there is nothing particularly or specifically visual about it. It refers to the objective content of the entire perceptual situation, not just the visual type of the perceptual situation. It's as though in the so-called arupa levels the objective content of the perceptual situation, instead of being hard, like a hard ball or a mass of rock, has softened. It's not so resistant, it's something that's still there. You've not resolved the subject-object [16] distinction, but the objective content in the perceptual situation has become much less resistant; it offers less resistance to being moulded as it were by the subject. The subject also of course has changed, the subject is less stiff too. So you begin to see the nature of the experience? So all this is covered by the term samatha, though we haven't yet, of course, gone into this question of the general nature of the distinction between the rupa and arupa dhyanas. But they can be, each of them, collectively characterized and then compared and even contrasted. I would say that in the rupa dhyanas the emphasis is subjective, the orientation is subjective. In the arupa dhyanas it is objective. In the rupa dhyanas you are, as it were, integrating your own experience, raising it to a higher and higher and higher level. You're becoming more concentrated, more integrated, more blissful, more ecstatic, more peaceful, and so on. But when you come to the level of the arupa dhyanas it's as though that process has been completed, that process, that

subjective process of integration and so on, and then with your elevated mind you, as it were, look out and you see infinite space, infinite consciousness etc. Yes? So it's in this sense that I say that in the rupa dhyanas there's a subjective orientation and in the arupa dhyanas there's an objective orientation.

Nagabodhi: Lama Govinda, when talking about Sir Edwin Arnold, I think, says it's not so much the dewdrop slips into the ocean, but the ocean slips into the dewdrop. [A reference to the last verse of Arnold's poem, The Light of Asia, tr.]

S: Yes, but we're still dealing with the dewdrop here. Yes? These are all developments within the dewdrop. So far we haven't come anywhere near the shining sea. Yes? If that represents the transcendental or nirvana. This is all dewdrop.

Voice: [unclear].

S: Ah, a bit of a sidetrack in the sense that you are adverting with your rupa dhyana mind to what is objective within the samsara. You're still making something conditioned, as it were, your object. In that sense it is a sidetrack, but you are enlarging and expanding your mind which is a quite positive thing, and it may help you when you come to try to develop insight, but in a sense it is a sidetrack. Yes? It's another dimension sort of opening out but not leading directly to nirvana, you have to return, as it were, from that when you seek to develop the vipassana. [17]

Voice: Is that the point in the summary, where you can either go one way or the other?

S: I don't remember that.

Voice: Yes, go either to siddhis or you can go back to concentration and...

S: Ah no. I know what you're referring to, but that is within the rupa dhyanas. It's the fourth rupa dhyana which is the basis for the development of siddhis.

Voice: Is that when that stage, Bhante, reaches what is called a stream entry?

S: No, no; that's quite different. That's got nothing to do with siddhis.

Voice: No. I mean, the four, when one's gone through up to the fourth dhyana, rupa dhyana, it's one level after stream entrant then...?

S: No, no. To enter the steam you have to develop insight, which is something quite distinct from samatha, and the insight is to be developed from the second dhyana. This is something we shall be going into in detail in a later chapter. We have already gone into it quite thoroughly in the Udana seminar, but we'll be going into it perhaps more thoroughly than that in a few days' time.

But we're still concerned with samatha, hmm? So though the term samatha is rendered here in this text by stopping, it's very much more than the disappearance of discursive activity. Samatha comprises the entire build-up of the positive emotions through the four arupa dhyanas, and also your explorations of cosmic

dimensions as it were in the arupa dhyanas; all that is samatha. So when you encounter the word 'stopping' don't take it too literally.

Lokamitra: What does Luk use? Does he use 'stopping' or..?

S: He uses the Chinese terms chih and kuan. He doesn't usually translate into English. He says, for instance, 'those who resolve to practise the chih kuan method should provide themselves with high concurrent [18] causes. This chih is samatha, the kuan is vipassana, but Goddard uses dhyana to comprise both of these, which is not incorrect, one would also say that.

You notice that the writer of the preface says, "It was just what the Grand Master of the Tien-tai Mountains had himself experienced in a vision of the Vulture Peak that had come to him when he was staying at the great Su Mountains, and was always after his chief inspiration." Do you think there's any significance in him having a vision of the Vulture Peak?

Voice: That was where the White Lotus Sutra.

S: Yes, that was where the White Lotus Sutra was [delivered] so it always has a symbolic significance. The Vulture Peak represents the pinnacle of the mundane beyond which there's only the transcendental, in the same way that beyond the mountain peak there's only the sky, there's only space, there's only the void. So it is said, according to tradition, that the Buddha is always present on the spiritual Vulture Peak, externally preaching the White Lotus Sutra. There's always as it were something going on on that higher plane. So apparently the Grand Master had a sort of vision, had a spiritual experience, of the happenings on that plane. In other words he had a sort of enlightenment experience - this is what it means - which took that particular form. This of course perhaps accounts for the very high esteem in which he held the White Lotus Sutra.

"Briefly speaking, the Dhyana which our Master Chi-chi had practised, (that is the Grand Master), and the Samadhi which he had experienced, and the lectures which he had delivered with such eloquence, were nothing, but the manifestation of this 'Stop and Realize'." Samatha-Vipassana. It's very interesting that the Grand Master is expressing the whole content as it were of his very Mahayanistically-oriented realization through an exposition of these two basic terms which run through the whole of Buddhism, the whole Buddhist tradition, and are so common even in the Theravada, and which were present practically from the beginning of Buddhism. So this is a very important feature of the T'ien-tai school, the Tien-tai movement, this blending as it were, for the want of a better term, of Hinayana and Mahayana: the most ancient elements of the teaching with more recent ones. I mean taking the usual historical view of the development of Hinayana and Mahayana that is to say. Which is not the view of the Grand Master himself; he took Hinayana and Mahayana equally in all their forms, the teaching of the historical Buddha himself. [19]

Vessantara: Very much a Chinese way of doing things?

S: Yes, mm. So though one is concerned very much with the Mahayana depth

here, you don't really get very far away from the original formulations of the teaching. So the whole of Buddhism, if you leave aside the Vajrayana that is, hangs together very nicely in these teachings.

Lokamitra: They were usually Sanskrit, not the Pali version of the early teachings, weren't they?

S: Yes, right, that is to say the Sarvastivada version or one or another of the Sarvastivada versions.

Lokamitra: If these had come out of India at a time when the Mahayana was more dominant, how much would these have been influenced at all? Would these have been made more Mahayanistic?

S: No, the Hinayana tradition was kept quite distinct and was introduced into China in a quite separate form. It was introduced in China in the form of what they called the Kosa school, that is to say the school which is based upon the study, or largely devotes itself to the study, of Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosa. In Japan that school was called the Kusha school.

Voice: Was it also called the [unclear] school?

S: This I don't remember. And of course, not only the Abhidharmakosa, but various Sarvastivada works were translated into Chinese. Mainly works dealing with vinaya and basic Buddhist teachings, as elaborated by the Sarvastivada, and allied schools like the Dharmaguptaka.

Voice: Who was the main teacher of the Sarvastivada?

S: The main teacher so far as the Abhidharma tradition of the Sarvastivada was concerned was Vasubandhu. There's a French translation of the Abhidharmakosa in seven volumes. I have a typescript of an English translation of that in three volumes out of the seven. It's a very complex and detailed and very scholastic sort of work. I doubt if it would be of any general use, though it's useful for reference.

Voice: Is it the counterpart of the Pali Abhidhamma? [20]

S: It's the equivalent rather than the counterpart. No, just a minute. Vasubandhu is a systematizer. First of all when you say the Pali Abhidhamma presumably you mean the seven books of the Abhidhamma Pitaka? Yes? So there are seven books in the Sanskrit Sarvastivada Abhidharma Pitaka, but they're not Sanskrit versions of the same books, they're completely different books. They're covering much the same sort of ground, eh? And then there is a great commentary upon these seven Sanskrit books of Abhidharma known as the Mahavibhasa, and then Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosa is a sort of systemization of this great commentary, citing the views of many different teachers and giving his own opinions and interpretations.

Voice: So he didn't have anything to do with the original Sanskrit Abhidharma?

S: Not with the compilation of it. No, no. But his teaching was based upon it.

Voice: If one was going to make, start, not very detail study, but a kind of a broader study of the Abhidharma, which pitaka of the two pitakas would you suggest one started with, the Pali or the Sanskrit?

S: Well, the Sanskrit ones aren't available in English. You'd have to start with the Pali. I think they have all been translated. So it's interesting that the writer of the Preface says, "If we should disregard the conception of Dhyana, it would be impossible for us either to understand or to discuss the teachings of the T'ien-tai school." In other words the T'ien-tai school, though it includes many flowers of the Mahayana, doesn't ever get away from its Hinayana roots. It has a very wonderful Mahayana philosophy and a very wonderful sort of overall Mahayana attitude towards the whole spiritual life. But it's quite firmly rooted in basic Buddhist teachings and practices such as those represented by samatha and vipassana.

Is there any further query on that preface? All right let's go on then to the first chapter.

Voice: [reads from p.438] "Dhyana. Lectures Delivered by Grand Master Chih-chi of Tien-tai Mountains, at the Shiu-ch'an Temple (Sui Dynasty, 581-618)

"Avoid all evil, cherish all goodness, keep the mind pure. This is the teaching of Buddha." [21]

S: It's rather interesting and significant that this quotation comes right at the beginning. Why do you think that is? It's quite basic Buddhist teaching straight out of the Dhammapada. And Chih-chi, he's a great Mahayana master and this is the quotation that he starts with, very characteristic of his whole emphasis and approach.

Voice: [reads from p.439-40] "There are many different paths to Nirvana, but the most important one for us is the path of Dhyana. Dhyana is the practice of mind control by which we stop all thinking and seek to realize Truth in its essence. That is, it is the practice of stopping and realizing.' If we cease all discriminative thought it will keep us from the further accumulation of error, while the practice of realizing will clear away delusions. Stopping is a refreshment of the lower consciousness, while realizing might be compared to a golden spade that opens up a treasure of transcendental wealth. Stopping is an entrance into the wonderful silence and peacefulness of potentiality (Dhyana-Samapatti); while realizing is an entrance into the riches of intuition and transcendental intelligence (matti-Prajna). As one advances along this path, he comes into full possession of all means of enriching himself and benefiting others. InThe Lotus Sutra' it says:

"'Our Lord Buddha forever abides in the permanence of the Mahayana both as to his attainment of the realization of Truth and as to his enrichment with supernatural powers of intuition and transcendental intelligence. With these

qualifications he brings deliverance to all penitent beings.'

"We may liken these two powers (samapatti and prajna) to the wheels of a chariot and the wings of an eagle. If a follower has only one, he is led into an unbalanced life. As the sutra says:

"'Those who only practice the goodness and blessings of Samapatti and do not learn wisdom are to be counted ignorant, while those who only practice wisdom and do not learn goodness and sympathy are to be counted as unbalanced.' Though the errors eventuating from unbalance may differ from the errors of ignorance, they alike lead a person to the same false views. This explains clearly that if one is to attain Supreme Perfect Wisdom in an immediate way, he must hold the two powers in equal balance: he must be both prepared and ready. The sutra says:

"'As intelligence is more especially developed by arahants, the true nature of Buddhas is not perceived by them. The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva, by possessing the ten enlightening factors of permanence, perceived the true nature of Buddhas, but if they do not perceive it truly it is because of their laying too much stress on intelligence. It is only the Buddhas that perceive it perfectly because their powers of Samapatti and Prajna have been equally developed.'

"Hence, in conclusion, are we not right in drawing the inference that the practice of Dhyana is the true gateway to Supreme Perfect Enlightenment? Is it not the noble path that all followers of Buddha must follow? Is not Dhyana the pole star of all goodness and the Supreme perfect Enlightenment?

"If anyone thoroughly understands what has been said here about Dhyana, he will appreciate that its practice is not an easy task. However, for the sake of aiding beginners to clear away their ignorance and hindrances and to guide them toward enlightenment, we will aid them all we can by explaining the practice of Dhyana in as simple words as possible, but at best, its practice will be difficult. It would be absurd to present its profoundness otherwise. It will be explained under ten heads, which will be like the steps of a stairway that leads upward to Enlightenment and Nirvana.

"Those who are really seeking Truth, but are more advanced, should not look upon this book with contempt because it is written simply and for beginners. They should be humble and prudent because of the difficulties they will encounter when they come to its practice. It is possible that some will be able to digest its teachings with great ease and, in the twinkle of an eye, their hindrances will be abolished and their intelligence will be boundlessly developed and so will their supernormal understanding, also. But if you just read over the literal meaning and do not enter into its significance, you will not be able to find your way to enlightenment-the reading will be just a waste of time. Such a reader will be likened to a poor man who spends his time counting another man's treasures and being no richer for it himself."

S: Well, much of that is quite clear but there are, at the same time, some things

that need some explanation. So after quoting that very well known little verse the Grand Master says, "There are many different paths to Nirvana, but the most important one for us is the path of Dhyana", that is to say the path of samatha and vipassana.

"Dhyana is the practice of mind-control by which we stop all thinking and seek to realize Truth in its essence. That is, it is the practice of 'stopping and realizing'." Stopping, of course, corresponding to samatha, realizing vipassana.

"If we cease all discriminative thought it will keep us from the further accumulation of error, while the practice of realizing will clear away delusions. Stopping is a refreshment of the lower consciousness, while realizing may be compared to a golden spade that opens up a treasure of transcendental wealth." This phrase "stopping is a refreshment of the lower consciousness" is very important because it shows us that stopping, or samatha rather, is not just a cessation of discursive mental activity, it's also a refreshment of the lower consciousness. Lower consciousness because the mind is not yet enlightened. But this whole idea of refreshment is very important and involves all the positive emotions. And though the practice of samatha, through the practice of concentrating and meditation in the more ordinary sense, the positive emotions are developed. You become more and more integrated, more and more energy comes up, you become more and more blissful, more and more happy, ecstatic, and in this way the whole of the lower consciousness, the whole of the ordinary mind, the mundane mind, is refreshed. And this is very, very important as an approach to the development of insight. One of the [22] things that I've been thinking recently is that the development of positive emotion is almost the most important factor in the whole spiritual life so far as people in the West are concerned, and we may say that the practice of the rupa dhyana is, in a way, just a way of becoming emotionally more and more positive at ever higher and higher levels, with corresponding liberation of energy. So one must be careful not to think of samatha just in terms of cessation of mental activity, not just in terms of stopping, and nothing but stopping, in a quite literal sense; it's the whole refreshment of the lower consciousness. Unless you're being refreshed your meditation isn't doing you very much good as it were. If you tackle it in a grim, forcibly concentrated sort of spirit it probably isn't going to do you much good, unless in that way, as sometimes happens, you can break through into something emotionally positive. But you should be enjoying the meditation otherwise it isn't meditation really. At best it's just an approach to meditation, however long you sit there.

And if stopping is a refreshment of the lower consciousness, then realizing, insight, vipassana, this "may be compared to a golden spade that opens up a treasure of transcendental wealth". Luk, rather interestingly, doesn't have that particular comparison. I don't know whether Goddard added it or whether he has cut it out. One just doesn't know. Or it might be a little addition by a commentator which got incorporated into the text, or it might be present in some editions of the text and not in others, but anyway it does give one a very sort of positive impression that vipassana, insight, "is a golden spade that opens up a treasure

of transcendental wealth".

It also gives you some inkling of the relationship between the samatha and the vipassana, the stopping and the realizing. The samatha is that refreshment of the lower consciousness, the experience of positive emotions at higher and higher levels, the experience of more and more energy as it were, surging up in more and more refined forms, and then when you're in that very integrated, concentrated, positive and happy, joyful and energetic state, you just look, as it were, you just try to see, and that looking and seeing, seeing things as they really are, is your vipassana. But if you haven't got a healthy eye, you can't really see. If you haven't got a refreshed lower consciousness, you won't be able to unearth that transcendental wealth. If you don't stop, you won't be able to realize, except that the stopping is very positive, the stopping is a positive experience. [23]

Voice: Is it [that] the positive as opposed to the negative is actually an aspect of mundane life which is like accentuated, or is it more a coming through into relative life of absolute consciousness?

S: No, it's an aspect of mundane life which is accented or accentuated and further developed and refined. But it's from that particular aspect of mundane life that you can make your approach to the transcendental, just as it's from the top of the mountain that you can launch yourself into the sky. It would be more difficult to do it from lower down, especially if you were caught up in bushes and jungles.

Another thing, it's very important to realize the relationship between the samatha and vipassana in this way, and especially important to realize how very necessary is the development of the positive emotions in more and more refined and powerful, or perhaps I should say, healthy and vigorous forms.

Voice: How about when one consciously develops one aspect of mundane life, say in this case positive emotion, positive thinking, that if there is one aspect of relative life then the other aspect, in this case negative emotion, negative feeling, is there also and there is a relationship between the two, and we always sort of thought, read perhaps, didn't think so much, but read it, there was always a swing between the two, and to the degree that you were positive, then also to that equal degree you would also swing to negative.

S: No, no, not necessarily, no. Of course you can fall from the samatha state. This is why the vipassana is so important and so necessary, that gives you access to the transcendental and that insight into the transcendental, that seeing of things as they really are will react as it were upon one's conditioned being and start permanently transforming it, that means stream entry. After that you can't fall back. That is a permanent gain, but on the level of samatha there are no permanent gains, they can be lost. But because you are positive, it doesn't mean that sooner or later you've got to be negative, not that at all. You can maintain that positivity provided you keep up your mindfulness and so on and your practice, but there's always a possibility of slipping back until you reach

the transcendental level. But there's no automatic swing, though there is of course the continued gravitational pull.

Lokamitra: Doesn't that [unclear] as you develop more positive emotions you're much more aware of the potentiality of the negative [24] emotions within the situation? So you're much more aware of the danger of that?

S: Not exactly that. I also think that there's a bit of a miccha ditthi [i.e. wrong view] here. I think one's thinking of the negative and the positive emotions too dualistically. When you develop a positive emotion you're not developing that positive emotion as opposed to the corresponding negative emotion. Supposing you develop love, it doesn't mean that hatred is correspondingly developing and sooner or later you'll have to spring to that extreme. It doesn't mean that at all, because if you really develop love, or if you want to develop love, then sooner or later you may encounter the problem of resentment. You may have to recognize that there's a lot of resentment within you. So in order to develop your love, you'll have to incorporate the energy which is in the resentment. In other words take the wind out of the sails of the resentment so you're not left with anger or resentment as an actual existent opposite of the love that you've developed. In a way, in terms of energy, at least your love, the love that you have now developed on a higher level with more energy in it, is a middle way between the love and the hate, is a synthesis, inasmuch as it's taken the energy out of the hate. So to the extent that you have done that there is no opposite as it were remaining. But if you allow yourself to sink, then again there'll be that bifurcation into love and hate, especially if the love becomes tinged with attachment. But it isn't as though here you are at the extreme of love, and there's the extreme of hate, and sooner or later you're going to have to swing. No, that is much too literalistic.

Vessantara: [unclear] you might just as well work on the development of hate.

S: Yes, it wouldn't matter. You would swing sooner or later.

Nagabodhi: Can we not talk in terms of sensitivity? You're increasing your sensitivity to experience of any kind perhaps, in a way you open yourself out to wider wavelengths, in a way, which might include both sides of the coin, if you're capable of feeling love on the more refined level perhaps you're also susceptible to more refined aspects of unhappiness?

S: I think there's an ambiguity in the word 'refined'. Refined does not mean weak. And also as you go up the scale of the dhyanas then your positive state [25] becomes so positive you can repel what is negative. Far from being so more susceptible and so vulnerable that you sort of start being affected more and more, no, you repel it and fling it off quite spontaneously. So I think we have to be very careful about this way of thinking that the more spiritually developed you are the more sensitive you are and the more careful you have to be and you start sort of trembling at every little knock at the door and someone slams the door and you get all upset and, you know, you come tumbling down from your higher spiritual level. [laughter] [26] [tape 2 side A]

S: There may be a sort of intermediate phase or state of heightened sensibility or sensitivity, but it's very much a little phase; one should be very careful not to idealize it and to think in terms of the higher up you go the further you go in spiritual life, the more sensitive, you know, you become and the more carefully you must be handled and must handle yourself and, you know, the more excuses are to be made for you and the more things you can't do. I think you have to be very careful, it's not a sort of spiritual neurasthenia that one is [unclear] [laughter], but sometimes people talk a bit like that, but also there's the other side which is equally true: that the more you develop spiritually, the more robust you become. So you don't become like a nervous elderly lady, you know, as you sort of develop spiritually. You know, you must beware of thinking that if things are a bit vigorous and a bit robust, well, they can't be very spiritual, you know, the spiritual is the very attenuated and refined and delicate and susceptible. One must really be aware of thinking of the spiritual in those terms, though some people may go through a period of definite sensitivity when they may have to be quite careful, but it's a phase rather than a definite stage I would say, and perhaps bound up with temperament as much as with anything. So we mustn't be sort of precious about these things.

Vessantara: I felt that this is something we haven't stressed enough up to now - that we could always do with a more sort of warrior feeling, a comradely feeling.

S: Right, right, the heroic ideal, as per Abhaya's little article in the recent Newsletter. ['Some Reflections on the Heroic Ideal in Buddhism', FWBO Newsletter No.26, pp.2-4, tr.]

Voice: I've got a question that sort of comes up out of what we were talking about before. If, on the one hand, one discovers resentment because one was discovering positive emotions, say, and you said that...

S: No, one isn't discovering resentment because one is discovering positive emotional states. You are trying to develop positive emotional states, which means that energy is required. You find that you are not able to develop the positive emotional states. Therefore you wonder why. You start looking around for the reason and then you see that a lot of your energy is trapped in negative states which perhaps you hadn't realized [27] before. So in this way you start trying to transfer the energy from the negative to the positive, and in this way the metta, for instance, develops and its contrary gradually subsides. So where then is the question?

Voice: The question wasn't actually on that but I was just sort of going onto the like contrary, the other side, of when you have positive emotions and there's the likelihood of desire stimulated. Is the energy also being encapsulated or trapped within that desire? And then do you also have to kind of tap it from inside that desire? Or is there a different sort of approach?

S: Well certainly it's a question of the near enemy and the far enemy. The near enemy is more difficult to detect than the far enemy, but of course it's still an enemy. So in a way perhaps you should be more careful of the near enemy than

of the far enemy because it's much less obvious. So in the case of metta, if you are trying to develop metta then be even more careful of attachment than you are of anger and resentment. To get rid of the attachment may require methods of its own. You may have to do a little asubhabhavana, or cut yourself off for the time being from what is giving rise to the attachment or which is pulling, as it were, the energy away from the metta and into the attachment.

So, the Grand Master has spoken about samatha and vipassana or stopping and realizing, and then there's a quotation from the 'Lotus of the Wonderful Law', or rather the 'White Lotus Sutra', to the effect that the Buddha possessed both of these, both samatha and vipassana, in the highest possible degree. And then the Grand Master goes on to emphasize the importance in the spiritual life of a balanced development of stopping and realizing, or samatha and vipassana, which is of course very much akin to the need for balancing the two spiritual faculties of samadhi and prajna. It's quite directly analogous to that, taking samadhi and prajna in their highest sense as it were.

Voice: There's no similarity of meaning between these two terms, samatha and vipassana and samadhi and prajna?

S: No etymological connection as far as I know. Samadhi means more like concentration or integration of energies.

Voice: They seem very similar to me, prajna, wisdom, insight, when you're talking of vipassana. [28]

S: If you take the triad of sila, samadhi, prajna, then samadhi is quite different from prajna. It corresponds to samatha here and vipassana corresponds to prajna.

Buddhadasa: What corresponds to prajna?

S: Vipassana. Not in the sense of being its complement but being an equivalent term.

Vessantara: At what point do these two terms need to be balanced?

S: This whole question of balance need to be clarified a bit because really how can you have a balance between the conditioned and the unconditioned? It's quite absurd; in a way it's quite ridiculous. Samatha is an aspect of the conditioned, vipassana is an aspect of the unconditioned though related to the unconditioned, so how can you speak in terms of balancing the conditioned and the unconditioned, really? They are successive stages, successive steps. So what is the meaning here?

Vessantara: Is it in a sense that the path is in a way spiralling, you go through each of the steps and then you go through them again on higher and higher levels?

S: No, it isn't that. The Grand Master is referring to practice, the two should be balanced in practice. Your practice of samatha should equal your practice of

vipassana.

Voice: Is this a reference to actual technique?

S: As it were, yes. To put it very roughly and crudely, if you spend say half an hour a day developing samatha, you should spend half a day developing vipassana.

Voice: Half an hour mindfulness of breathing, half an hour contemplation of the twelve nidanas?

S: Right, yes. If you are doing the full dhyana practice. But of the two, you have to take the samatha first. And there's no point in trying to develop vipassana before you've got a firm basis for it in samatha, even though eventually you must equalize the two. [29]

Vessantara: So is there any kind of guideline to at what point one should start working on vipassana practices?

S: Well, ideally, as soon as you can. The great danger is of course that the vipassana becomes just an intellectual exercise and even a sort of forcing. The refreshment of the lower consciousness is very important. Unless you really are standing at the top of the mountain, at least you are quite a way up the side of the mountain, you can't really look out over the landscape as it were. So, the samatha, the rupa dhyana experience, gives you a vantage point as it were from which to view the transcendental or unconditioned, even though the transcendental or unconditioned is far beyond.

But anyway, let's go back a little bit because this links up with what we were talking about before, about the dhyanas, the rupa dhyanas, and especially the second dhyana. If you go back to the four rupa dhyanas, which are quite important practically, you notice there's a distinction between the first dhyana and the second dhyana. In what does that distinction consist?

Voice: In the first dhyana there are mental thoughts or thought processes.

S: Well, there's discursive mental activity.

Voice: In the second there isn't.

S: But by the time you get to the second dhyana that discursive mental activity has ceased. So what you do when you practise samatha, ideally you should go through all the four dhyanas, the four rupa dhyanas. That is to say, integrating consciousness at higher and higher levels, experiencing greater and greater happiness and bliss, ecstasy; not only that but faith and joy and peace and equanimity, all these highly positive emotions, to a very, very, high degree indeed. So this is the experience of samatha by way of the four dhyanas, and one can understand the nature of these four dhyanas through the Buddha's four similes. Do you remember those?

Voice: The spring bubbling up.

S: First of all the soap powder being saturated in water, and the subterranean spring bubbling up within the lakes, then the lotuses growing [30] in the water and saturated by the water, and then finally the man wrapping himself in the white garment after a dip in the water.

I think we ought to go through these a little bit more in detail. I've already done it in the previous seminar, but this is quite new material as it were, and for most people I think I ought to go through it again. That is to say the real meaning of these four similes. In other words what are the actual experiences which the four similes are meant to elucidate? Leave aside the psychological analysis, leave aside for the time being which mental factors are present in which dhyanas. That doesn't really help us very much, doesn't give us a really very clear idea about the nature of dhyana states, much less a real feeling for them. But the four similes do, or at least they can, if we go into them a bit.

So what about the first one? In the first one the Buddha says that a handful of soap powder is completely saturated in water. So that every grain of soap powder is completely saturated and not a single grain is left unsaturated or dry. At the same time the water is fully absorbed into that handful of soap powder. There's not a single drop of water extra. So you've just got now this mass of fully saturated soap powder without any extra water remaining. So what does this suggest? First of all what is suggested by the fact that there are two things, as it were, two principles?

Voice: The conditioned and the unconditioned coming into contact.

S: No, not yet. There's the soap, no, no, not yet.

Voice: Emotional and intellectual.

S: In a way emotional and intellectual, though that's putting it very broadly. There's the soap powder which is dry. There's the water which is wet. So you have got, as it were, two opposite principles. If you like, you've got earth and water which are coming together, so something is being brought together, something is being integrated. So in a way it is, as it were, intellect and emotion. Though this is quite broad. You could say that it is your conscious and your subconscious mind. That might be nearer, not taking either of these expressions too literally or too narrowly, or too rigidly, but a certain harmony comes about which was not there before; a certain running together of [31] energies which was not there before, a certain flowing together of energies which was not there before. Not at a very high level, it's more like a sort of happy, healthy, human harmony. You don't feel any conflict, you feel quite sort of at rest, quite reposeful, at the same time not slack or dull. You're quite poised. This is the sort of state. There's no sort of unconscious need tugging at the conscious. So do you get an idea of the sort of state? This is the sort of state that most people get into when they have a successful meditation. It means simply this. Even beginners can fairly easily get into this sort of state. There's no feeling of conflict. You feel quite poised, quite refreshed, quite happy. There's just a minimum of mental activity. You feel quite aware, quite awake, alive. But there is mental activity, there

is what the texts call vitarka vicara. So what do we mean by vitarka vicara? Vitarka is sometimes translated as 'thought initial' or 'initial thought' and vicara as 'thought applied' or 'applied thought'. So thought initial and applied: this is quite a common translation in English, but it doesn't really tell us very much. The commentaries give a quite helpful illustration; the commentaries say that vitarka is like the left hand seizing hold of a pot and vicara is like the right hand scouring it all round. So vitarka is more like apprehension, the seizing hold of the mental object, and vicara is more like comprehension, thinking about it, or thinking of it or thinking round about it even, trying to understand it. So suppose I...

Abhaya: A sort of acknowledgement of what in fact is subconsciously going on, whereas before in the earlier stages you might be repressing it.

S: It can be that, but it's much more general than that. It's every kind of activity of that sort, not simply as applied to the contents of the subconscious.

These two factors, vitarka and vicara, of course they're not only present in the first dhyana, they're present whenever we think. For instance, suppose I think of a certain person. First of all just simply the thought of that person, I suddenly remember him. So I hold the idea of thought of that person in my consciousness. I haven't as yet thought anything about him. But then supposing I go on to think, well, I wonder what he's doing. Last week he wasn't particularly well, this is vicara then. So vitarka is my thinking of someone. Vicara is more like thinking about someone.

Voice: This is in the first dhyana? [32]

S: Yes, so this sort of mental activity is going on all the time, so that it continues at least in a subtle form even when we enter the first dhyana. In the first dhyana it's very often connected with our actual subject of concentration. It sort of becomes identified with that or concentrated into that. We think, 'Oh, this is the breath, here is the breath. Now I'm concentrating, I'm counting my breaths.' This is the sort of form in which vitarka vicara is present, or the form in which it resolves itself in the context of the meditation practice. So we mustn't think of the vitarka vicara or the first dhyana as something special. I get the impression that some of you were thinking it was something special in the sense of something happening only in the first dhyana, but not at all. It's ordinary mental activity but in the context of the first dhyana, and very often of course it's just peripheral, very sort of faint, very subtle, barely there at all. Just at the circumference of consciousness as it were.

Voice: Does it correspond to the skandhas? Consciousness and volition?

S: No, nothing to do with that.

Padmaraja: Sometimes the four dhyanas are enumerated as five. Would that mean the second one would then be the vitarka without the vicara?

S: Yes, when they are enumerated as five. You get the vicara ceasing and then

the vitarka.

But anyway, you get the picture of the first dhyana? It's this very integrated state, this balanced state, harmonious state, but in which there is still this discursive mental activity.

Voice: Could one say, Bhante, that in that state that deep psychological problems had been sort of sorted out, so to speak? Could one be in the world of, you know...

S: It's very difficult to estimate how deep is deep, you know, as applied to psychological problems.

Voice: Yes.

S: But certainly inasmuch as there is at least a degree of integration between the energies of the subconscious and the energies of the conscious mind, [33] at least a degree of harmony, perhaps a considerable degree of harmony, in one's psyche, to that extent, what may be called psychological problems have been resolved. So then what happens is, as one passes through the second dhyana, or one could even put it the other way round, I was going to say as one passed through the second dhyana, vitarka vicara ceased, but one could also say: vitarka vicara ceasing, one passes through the second dhyana.

Now what is the illustration or simile for the second dhyana? It's the subterranean spring. So there you are in, to begin with, the first dhyana. You're happy, you're peaceful, balanced, poised, there are no contrary pulls, you're even quite blissful, and then even discursive mental activities fade away. There's no thought in that sense, though you're fully and clearly conscious, and then in the midst of that state - which is already a state higher than that of ordinary consciousness - there starts bubbling up, from deep within you, a consciousness higher still. And it seems to be bubbling up from deep within you. Your already higher state of consciousness is sort of beginning to be permeated by something of an even higher level. But is seems to come - it feels as though it comes - from deep within, just like the spring bubbling up: a current of energy from a very deep source. And perhaps it also means that deeper and deeper problems are being resolved and the energy trapped in them is being released and is sort of coming to the surface, bubbling up within you. So you don't know where this spring is coming up from. There's no mental activity so of course you can't think about it, but the energy, or whatever it is, the higher state of consciousness, is bubbling up, something is bubbling up from some level, from some source, of which you're not conscious, which you can only think of as a deeper source if you think at all subsequently, retrospectively. So this is the second dhyana.

Then, thirdly, what is the simile for the third dhyana? The lotuses growing in the water, and bathed in the water, sprinkled with the water. And so now, you may say, it's as though the spring which had bubbled up inside you had completely filled you, the higher state of consciousness had percolated completely through your already somewhat higher state of consciousness and had even overflowed; so

that whereas in the second dhyana it is in you, now you are in it. It's as though it's not only within you, but all around you, just as the water of the lake is all around the lotus; as though you're living in it and moving in it and having your being in it, as in a sort of higher element. You're sort of luxuriating, bathing [34] in it, sort of plunging in it, you're swimming about in it. You can move freely in it as it were in all directions. So do you get some idea now about the third dhyana?

And then the fourth dhyana, what's the simile for that? The man wrapped in a white sheet after a bath. You see, he's come out of the water in a sense, the water's been left behind, the water symbolism has been transcended, as it were, on another level. He's wrapped himself in a white sheet. Now what does that represent? What does that symbolize? He's cloaked, he's surrounded, as it were, by some insulating and protective element. He's surrounded by a sort of aura which is protecting him from everything outside, keeping it off. Do you get the idea? It's almost as though he's taking the offensive now. So the white sheet is something much more solid, much more tangible, than the water. It's as though the water has solidified, crystallized into that white sheet which is something much more powerful. It's protecting him now, protecting him from all outside influences. It's even as it were taking the offensive against those outside influences.

Lokamitra: So just going back to what we were saying about sensitivity before, one couldn't be, it would be a very strong stage.

S: Yes, yes, right. You wouldn't be a sensitive plant, as it were, in this particular stage. Once you'd got there, no, no question of that sort of sensitivity or sensitivity in that sense. You couldn't be affected.

You may know that recently I've been revising my terminology a bit, and for the fourth dhyana I've decided to use the term absorption; meditation in the sense of absorption. Yes? You may remember that I used to speak in terms of the three levels of meditation or the three senses of the term meditation? You remember that? So, I've decided that in future I'll speak of them in terms of concentration, absorption, and insight. Yes? I used to speak in terms of concentration, meditation - i.e. meditation proper - and insight or wisdom. But this meditation, or meditation proper, seems a bit clumsy, so in future, concentration, absorption, and insight, yes?

So what is the difference between concentration and the first dhyana? Both involve integration, but in different ways. Can you see how this might be?

Buddhadasa: Concentration's taking place on its own level.

S: Ah, concentration's taking place on its own level? In other words [35] by concentration we mean bringing together the scattered energies of the conscious mind, whereas in the case of the first dhyana you're bringing together the energies of subconscious and conscious. So it's a much deeper concentration, a much more thoroughgoing integration. So the first I call horizontal integration and the

second I call vertical integration. So horizontal integration is concentration, and vertical integration is the first of the four rupa dhyanas or is covered by that.

Buddhadasa: I wasn't quite sure. Is the transition from the concentration state into the first of the four dhyanas. . . ?

S: One can analyse into further sub-stages, but for the present we'll take it just like that, because there are stages intermediate between ordinary waking consciousness and the dhyana states. There are three levels in fact. I think that for the moment would make it a bit too complex.

Buddhadasa: I'm quite confused in this aspect. I thought the concentration on the vertical was sort of, is resolving problem . . . [unclear] in oneself.

S: In a sense it is, but it's resolving in the sense of uniting the energies of the subconscious with the energies of the conscious, yes? So, one's so-called problems are usually simply conflicts between one's subconscious desires and conscious intentions, yes? So once you've resolved the whole difference between subconscious and conscious you've cleared up all those associated problems.

Buddhadasa: Isn't that before the first dhyana?

S: The first dhyana represents the state of consummation of that.

Voice: Yes?

S: Yes. [laughter]

Padmaraja: And that corresponds to the term absorption?

S: The first of the absorptions, yes. [36] If you include the subdivisions then of course it includes the whole process of bringing about that state of vertical integration, yes? But don't get too confused by details, yes?

Anyway, I have also decided to assign distinct terms in English to the four absorptions, that is to say the four rupa dhyanas, to bring out their real nature, because it hasn't ever been made clear before to the best of my knowledge, yes? Not through the medium of English [anyway]. So the first dhyana I'm going to call the stage of integration. Here, in this stage, or by the time you've traversed this first absorption, you are integrated both horizontally and vertically. So this is the stage of integration. You're a completely integrated human being, for all practical purposes. Your energies are integrated. You're balanced, healthy, happy, decisive. This is the stage in which ordinary human beings ought to be living all the time. This doesn't really represent a higher achievement. I think, given a favourable environment and maybe not very much more than that, a positive environment, quite a number of people could be in this state most of the time. It's not anything sort of supernatural or wildly mystical or anything like that, it's a normal healthy state of human consciousness, which should be normal in the sense of being enjoyed most of the time. I don't see that this is impossible.

Perhaps I should also distinguish here between what I call objective discursive mental activity and what I call neurotic discursive mental activity. If you were this normal, healthy, happy, human being, always in the dhyana state, obviously you're going to have to think sometimes. But you would think, and that would not derogate from your being in that first dhyana state. But how would you think? It would be objective thinking, that is to say, thinking that was necessary for practical purposes, and not neurotic thinking, that is, just neurotic mental ticking over of thoughts. The example I've been giving is this. Suppose you want to go to Brighton. You ask someone, 'How do I get to Brighton?' He says, 'You go down to the bottom of the road at such and such a time. You catch such and such a number bus. It'll take you to Brighton.' So if you simply ask these sorts of questions and have the corresponding thoughts, that is objective thinking - objective, discursive, mental activity - and does not get in the way of your experience of the first dhyana.

On the other hand you could be thinking, suppose the bus doesn't come along, suppose the bus is late. Suppose there's an accident on the [37] way. What shall I do? Suppose I am taken to hospital. I'm always suffering from accidents. I'm always the one that gets knocked down. Suppose the bus breaks down on the way, well, will there be another bus? If so, how long will it take to come along? And all right, suppose I get knocked down on the way to the bus stop? You see, you can be thinking in this way. 'I wonder what colour the bus will be. Will it be a red bus or a green bus? I wonder if it will be full today, what shall I do if it's full?' Some people just go on thinking and thinking and thinking like this! So that's neurotic thinking. So this is quite incompatible with the first dhyana and with a normal, happy, healthy, human state of consciousness. But objective discursive mental activity is not incompatible. You can enjoy the first dhyana even when you have to think, provided perhaps the thinking doesn't have to become too complex.

Vessantara: This state of integration though, it doesn't have to be a permanent one obviously, because...

S: Well, being a dhyana, and being samatha, it can't be.

Vessantara: So, um...

S: I mean it isn't necessarily so. You have to make a conscious effort to maintain it.

Vessantara: So it's more in a way an attitude towards one's, or very often, an attitude towards like [unclear] the fact that one has problems or not.

S: Yes, one could say that, a positive, as it were, active attitude. Not an attitude in the sense of something passive that merely reflects.

Lokamitra: Yes, yes, yes.

S: Mm?

Voice: Did you say state or stage of integration?

S: One could say either. Stage, really, yes, as [if] we're going up the stairs. And then for the second absorption, or second [38] stage of absorption, I've decided on the word inspiration; it's the stage of inspiration, because something is as it were trickling in from some other source, from outside. Sometimes you can experience it as coming from below, sometimes even from above. So this is the state of inspiration in which something wells up within you as though from some higher source, even from some source outside your own personality, certainly outside your conscious personality. This is also the state of artistic creativity, real creativity and inspiration, even a sort of, in a way, prophetic inspiration when some word comes to you from some other source; although of course it's also a state which is easy to misinterpret. You think it's coming from beyond or it's coming from God not some deeper source within your own self. So, the stage of inspiration, mm?

Lokamitra: You often hear the expression, 'it's bigger than me,' or, 'I have to give myself up to this thing it's bigger than me.' I can't...

S: Ah, well, there are two, first of all this is the second absorption. You have transcended conflicts between the subconscious and unconscious. Often when people say that in the context of ordinary life and ordinary affairs, I mean affairs in a general sense, what they mean is my conscious is unable to resist my subconscious. Yes? Mm? Yes? There's a conflict between conscious and subconscious and the conscious is giving in...

Voice: Subconscious and conscious?

S: Yes, and the conscious is giving in to the subconscious.

Voice: Giving way to feelings.

S: Giving way to, well, not even just feelings. I mean even the feelings are relatively on the surface, but giving way to instincts and drives and needs of which it is not fully conscious. So that is a quite different thing from abandoning yourself to these higher forces of inspiration that come into your mind on the level of the second absorption. So it must be quite sharply distinguished. I mean a surrender to one's instincts is a quite different thing from a surrender to one's inspiration.

Lokamitra: So inasmuch as there's a conflict between conscious and unconscious it can't be a higher state of consciousness. [39]

S: There won't ever be a conflict or very rarely a conflict. If one is really fully in that second stage of absorption, then one will, as it were, quite peacefully receive the inspiration. Of course, sometimes there are exceptions, sometimes it can happen that you're very careless and the inspiration is ready to come and you're not properly in that sort of second absorption - you may be in a lower state - but something is nevertheless getting through, because maybe the inspiration is very strong and you may even be receiving it at a time when there's a conflict between conscious and subconscious. Then the situation becomes quite difficult and even quite tense. So if you are prone to get these sort of inspirations you

must be quite careful about your surroundings and environment and your way of life so that you can remain in the state or stage of consciousness appropriate to receive it, otherwise distortions can occur and there can be a lot of tensions within you; just like for instance when an artist or a writer is feeling a very strong creative urge, but he's constantly being distracted from that and having to turn away from it and occupy himself with other matters. So that's what I call the stage of inspiration.

And then the third stage, the stage of permeation. You could even call it, or describe it as, a sort of more purely mystical stage, mm? When you feel completely surrounded by and pervaded by some higher element and you're living and moving and having your being in that. You're part of something bigger, as it were, immersed in something bigger, or carried along by something bigger, mm? as an actual experience. This is the stage of permeation. You're thoroughly saturated in it. You remain you, but you're completely, as it were, under the influence of that higher element, because you're pervaded by it and you're living in it, in the midst of it, mm?

I've also thought through another set of terms just now, but I'll let you have those in a minute.

And then fourthly and lastly there's what I call the state of radiation. In this stage you become really so positive that you become, as it were, powerful. Your aura is flashing and beaming and is having an effect on your surroundings, you're radiating a sort of influence. You're not only sealed off, as it were, or rather you're not only sealed off from everything unskilful and negative in you're surroundings, but you're having a positive effect on your surroundings, mm? Because of this we can understand now why, in the Buddhist tradition, the fourth dhyana, the fourth absorption, is regarded as the basis for the development of the so-called psychic powers, eh? mm? [40] Because in this fourth dhyana, you develop this sort of positive aura which is an actual force which can even operate in apparently supranormal ways, at a distance for instance, mm?

So, you've got this stage of integration, then inspiration, permeation, and radiation, mm? mm? [laughter] Now doesn't that give you a better idea of your ascent up through these higher and higher levels of consciousness and being, mm, mm? But remember, you can fall. [laughter] So, also they can be termed, if you like, though don't take this too seriously, because I've only just [41] [tape 2 side B] thought of it and haven't had time to reflect upon it properly, but there's first of all the healthy human stage: the stage of the first absorption is or should be just the ordinary, healthy, human stage, the way you are all the time.

The second is the artistic-cum-prophetic, artistic-cum-prophetic.

Padmaraja: And you said that this can arise without necessarily having the first one as a basis, that is with still a lack of integration between consciousness and unconsciousness?

S: It can, because there is a path of irregular steps as well as a path of regular

steps. But for it to function properly, smoothly and cleanly, it must be based on the preceding stage otherwise it can only function in a distorted way with a lot of tension and difficulty.

Voice: May I just ask a question here?

S: Yes.

Voice: In the second dhyana, or the second stage of absorption, you said that when the spring if inspiration bubbles up there is no discursive thought at all, which seems to suggest that, like, as soon as a thought arises, maybe a very inspired thought, still a thought, does one then go back to the first stage because thought has reappeared?

S: Mm, yes. What does one mean by an inspired thought? Yes, I mean that's quite a good point isn't it? I'd probably say, at short notice, as it were, replying to the question, that an inspired thought is not a thought. Yes, mm?

Padmaraja: Would you say it was more akin to insight?

S: I wouldn't like to say that. Intuition perhaps, but not insight in the full technical sense. Sometimes, for instance, a poet writes a poem, but in a sense he doesn't know what he's written. He writes it, but he [42] doesn't know the meaning of it in a conceptual sense. In that case, yes, it's inspired, it's an inspired thought, inasmuch, yes, in a sense, thoughts are there, but he's not conscious of them as thoughts, not as separate from the total poem, or total poetry. So in that sense, thoughts are no there. The thoughts you could say are such a perfect expression of the energy, the creative energy, that you can't distinguish the thought from the energy. It's like sometimes when you're chanting the puja, you're not consciously thinking about what it means; in a way there are no thoughts, it's not that you're oblivious of the meaning. Perhaps you could say, though again this is only tentative, that the moment of inspiration is succeeded by the moment of expression and that perhaps, though again this is tentative and maybe you can't generalize too much, the level of expression is a bit lower than the level of inspiration even though it may succeed immediately to it, but these are just sort of more the nature of suggestions.

Nagabodhi: You hear about a cliche in craft training, that you learn the craft and then you forget it just so that it won't get in the way. You've got it at your fingertips, but it's not going to interfere with that process.

S: Yes, yes. So, all right, the healthy human stage, the artistic-cum-prophetic stage, then the mystical stage, refurbishing that slightly unfashionable word, and then fourthly the magical stage, because the fourth stage is the stage that can produce effects. So does that make it a bit clearer now, what the four dhyanas are all about?

Lokamitra: It also makes something clearer, that insight doesn't have to have arisen on any of the stages, presumably, so that the first three fetters will be present, or can be present.

S: All ten in fact. [laughter]

Lokamitra: So it seems very easy that one can sort of shoot off at tangents in these...

S: Yes, you can be fully, in these terms, you can be into the arts, you can be prophesying, having great inspirations and being very mystical and magical, but still you're completely within the wheel of life, and can even be quite oblivious of any further possibility of development or any possibility of further development rather. And according [43] to the Buddha's teaching, well, this was going on up to his day. There were people with healthy, human states of consciousness, there were artists, poets at least, and prophets, not completely differentiated; no doubt there was mysticism, no doubt there was magic, but there wasn't insight.

Lokamitra: This seems to be quite common, that you regard, with this sensitivity, things again, you regard some experience as not just a stage on the way, not just something that you're going through, but as something that you should be aiming at all the time.

S: And which you aim to keep as a sort of permanent attainment or achievement or possession. Yes?

Anyway we come now to the question of the discursive mental activity and its relationship to the development of insight, and this is very important because don't forget we are still concerned with this question of balancing samatha and vipassana. We mustn't forget where we started from and where we're going back to.

So the customary procedure is, in all schools of Buddhism, that you develop the samatha first, that is to say that you have as much experience as you can or as much experience as seems necessary for the time being, of those four absorptions, which means the first, second, third, and fourth. So if you have some experience of those four absorptions, obviously it means that your whole being is going to be refined and transformed. You're still mundane, you're still conditioned, but it's in a much finer and purer form.

So what is usually said is that after experiencing the four dhyanas, you come down to dhyana two, because it's in dhyana two that there is discursive mental activity, or rather it's in dhyana two in the second absorption that discursive mental activity is possible. And what do you do then? What do you do in order to develop insight?

Voice: Contemplate.

S: Yes, contemplate, exactly. And what does contemplation mean? Contemplation means that you, as it were, review the conceptual formulations of the teaching, that is to say the conceptual formulations of the Buddha's original insight or original realization.

Abhaya: Could you repeat that? [44]

S: You review the conceptual formulations of the teaching, that is to say the conceptual formulations of the Buddha's original insight, of the Buddha's original realization; realization, that is, of Enlightenment.

So what does that mean? How does that come about? First of all there is the Buddha's Enlightenment, the Buddha becomes enlightened, the Buddha has a certain realization, the Buddha has a certain insight into the nature of existence, and then he communicates that. How does he communicate it? Through the medium of thought, through the medium of concepts. So it's communicated in the form of, for instance, such statements as 'All conditioned things are impermanent,' or 'All conditioned things are transitory.' This represents a conceptual formulation of the Buddha's original insight which is purely spiritual or transcendental, beyond thoughts and words. So in the case of the Buddha he goes from his experience, his insight, to an expression of that in terms of thought and speech. We go in reverse order: by reviewing, by reflecting upon, by contemplating the Buddha's, as it were, conceptual formulation of his insight, we try to arrive at the insight, not just by way of an intellectual understanding, but by way of an actual direct intuition or experience. And this is why we need the samatha experience, because the samatha experience, the experience of the absorptions, puts behind our reflection an impetus which would not have been there, a force which would not have been there without those absorptions, without that dhyana experience. Otherwise the reflection would not have been a reflection, it would not have been a contemplation, it would have been just a mere discursive thinking about, a mere intellectual understanding.

So in this way, in the basis of samatha, the vipassana is developed.

Now, as I mentioned, the tradition often speaks in terms of coming down to the third dhyana where discursive mental activity is possible in order to develop vipassana. This must not be taken too literally, because when you, as it were, come down, you come down, as it were, saturated with your experience on those higher levels of absorption. You don't, as it were, literally leave them behind. But with your total being, as it were, saturated with the absorption experience and with all the energy, as it were, of the absorption experience behind you, you direct your mind to the development of insight by way of a contemplation of the conceptual formulations of that insight.

Voice: Which dhyana is this, you said... [45]

S: This is the second.

Voice: Ah, it is the second.

S: You come down three...

Voice: Ah, I see. Is this when you've got five?

S: When you've got four.

Sagaramati: Isn't it the first?

S: You come down to the third from the top. That's what I meant. [laughter] You leave the fourth, the third, the second, that's three. Now you're in the second.

Sagaramati: I thought it was only meant that there was mental activity in the first?

S: Mm? No, sorry, yes. It's the first you come down to where there is the mental activity still going on, yes, sorry. So you come down four in that sense. [laughter] So you come down to the plane or level of absorption where the mental activity is possible. That's the first, the second is when it disappears.

Voice: Usually, primarily, the learning of the conceptual formulations is, as it were, a priming...

S: Right, the learning of the conceptual formulation is a sort of preliminary homework. Yes? You need not learn very much or very many, but you must have at least some, as it were, intellectual framework, otherwise you have no basis, as it were, for the development of vipassana.

Voice: But some people, presumably, perhaps this isn't particularly relevant just here, but some people presumably do have insight into the nature of reality without having done that priming.

S: Yes, if they just look as it were. If you need a support, then the support is in those conceptual formulations. But otherwise you can simply look and what you see is insight. If you look in that sort of way with the force and the energy of the absorptions behind [46] you. It's stopping and looking, stopping and realizing.

Voice: As the Buddha did originally?

S: As the Buddha did originally. Yes. But of course it's much easier with the additional support of these conceptual formulations.

Sagaramati: This actual looking, this must be like another function. If somebody's energized, say, and he does sort of look, insight isn't necessarily going to arise. It sounds as if looking is a...

S: Well, the looking is an adverting of your being after it has been, as it were, saturated with the absorption, an adverting of your being in the direction of whatever is out there - the conditioned - then in that state you're much more likely to see the conditioned as it really is, and especially if you sort of ?coat [unsure of this word] the development of insight by reflecting on those conceptual formulations of the Buddha's insight which you know from the tradition and from the teaching. You can review the chain of the conditioned co-production; you can reflect on the different kinds of sunyata, on the general concept of sunyata, or even some kinds of visualization are a sort of vipassana because the forms of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas that you visualize symbolize something transcendental, different aspects of Enlightenment, different aspects of Nirvana. So this also becomes not just a concentration exercise, not just a samatha practice, but a vipassana exercise or practice too, though here the word

exercise is not applicable maybe, not even the word practice, inasmuch as they do symbolize different aspects of the Unconditioned.

Voice: You said some are [unclear] visualized. Do you mean some don't?

S: Yes, some wouldn't. It depends on the tradition and exactly where that particular practice [unclear].

Lokamitra: Could you split up some practices into stages and say that this part is samatha specifically and this, er, vipassana?

S: Well, yes, surely. Often you find this done: this part is samatha, that part is vipassana; and in some of the Tibetan traditions you get a deliberate joining together of samatha- and vipassana-type practice.

Well, at any rate, now you get a general idea of the sort of general procedure? [47] So now what happens is you have to start thinking in terms of balancing. You don't want to have so little samatha that your vipassana develops into just intellectual thinking; on the other hand you don't want to have so much absorption and so little vipassana that you just become, as it were, captivated by states which though higher are still mundane. In that sense you need a balance between the two. Enough absorption, enough samatha, to keep the vipassana from degenerating into ordinary [unclear] mental activity and enough vipassana to start cutting at the roots of what ties you to the mundane even in its very refined forms. But obviously the practice of the absorptions or experience of the absorptions comes first.

So therefore, according to the Grand Master, "We may liken these two powers", that is to say samatha and vipassana, [the text (p.439) says samapatti and prajna, tr.] "to the wheels of a chariot and the wings of an eagle." Not in themselves, but with reference to our practice of them. Eventually, once we have had some experience of samatha, we should try to equalize the samatha and vipassana. To do otherwise is to be unbalanced.

There's also a quotation which is quite interesting, a quotation from an unnamed sutra which envisages two possibilities, an extreme development of samatha without vipassana and an extreme development of vipassana without samatha. Interestingly enough, the first is identified with the arahant and the second with the bodhisattva. This doesn't come out in Goddard's translation, it comes out in Charles Luk's. The arahant is said to be one who has developed samatha to the limit without corresponding vipassana, and a bodhisattva the one who has developed a great deal of vipassana but very little in the way of samatha. This may or may not be so as an actual explanation of what an arahant is or what a bodhisattva is, but then the point is made that in the case of the Buddha the two are fully and equally developed. They correspond perhaps to what in the Pali texts is called cetovimutti and pannavimutti, liberation of consciousness and liberation of wisdom, the full practice of samatha, the full practice of vipassana. So the ideal Buddhist at his own level of development, once he has mastered the absorptions, to some extent at least will try to keep these two in equilibrium.

Sometimes samatha and vipassana are rendered as 'calm' and 'clear', which is quite good. First you are calm, then you try to become clear. [48] The clearer you are the calmer you will become, and the calmer you become the clearer you will become, and in this way, until the limits of both are reached, then the two, as it were, coalesce. You could say calmness and clarity. Samatha is calmness, vipassana is clarity. So someone who is calm has a much better chance of seeing things clearly than someone who is not, and that's why you practise samatha, to develop insight. The samatha doesn't lead directly to Enlightenment, it leads indirectly. You don't get Enlightenment by means of samatha but neither do you get it without it. It's the samatha that makes all the difference between a purely mental understanding and actual insight and realization.

Then of course the Grand Master goes on to say, "If anyone thoroughly understands what has been said here about Dhyana (i.e. about samatha vipassana) he will appreciate that its practice is not an easy task. However, for the sake of aiding beginners to clear away their ignorance and hindrances and to guide them toward enlightenment, we will aid them all we can by explaining the practice of Dhyana in as simple words as possible, but at best, its practice will be difficult. It would be absurd to present its profoundness otherwise. It will be explained under ten heads, which will be like the steps of a stairway that leads upward to Enlightenment and Nirvana." In other words we are on the path of regular steps, as far as this text is concerned.

So the succeeding ten chapters are according to the ten heads. I think that will be all for today. We've covered quite a bit of ground. Just check through your notes, see if there's anything more you want to ask about as regards the ground covered today.

Buddhadasa: I'm still in a bit of a quandary about the relationship between samadhi and samatha, and prajna and vipassana. I can't distinguish them.

S: Samadhi covers the same ground as samatha, and prajna covers the same ground as vipassana.

Buddhadasa: So there's a distinction between them?

S: There is some distinction; one can say that samatha draws out more the aspect of the calming down or waning away of all the unskilful mental states as one gets higher and higher in the absorptions. Samadhi refers more to the increase of integration and the drawing together of all [49] energies on higher and higher levels. Prajna, one could say, is the more developed form of vipassana. Vipassana, the term vipassana or insight, is used more with regard to the initial flashes of insight which come and which go, but prajna is used when you see that way all the time, when the evanescent flashes have become a sort of permanent faculty which is always operating; then it is called prajna. But when that permanent faculty has become identical with your whole being, then that is called complete enlightenment. So you can regard vipassana, prajna, and enlightenment or Buddhahood as three successive stages, so far as the purely transcendental part is concerned.

Buddhadasa: I see.

S: The initial flash, the developed faculty, and the completely transformed individuality.

Buddhadasa: Yes.

S: So what this all boils down to in sort of ordinary everyday practical terms is that, yes, you get into your meditation, you experience as best you can a higher state of consciousness, and when in that higher state of consciousness you can, as it were, take up reflection on some important aspect either of the Buddha's teaching or existence itself or your own life, even your own problems if you like; not thinking about them but just trying to see directly into them. In this way what will arise is not just intellectual understanding but a real insight that will modify permanently one's whole attitude and one's whole being.

Voice: If for instance you're doing a samatha exercise and then you find that you are sort of looking into certain things, do you sort of like let yourself go with that or really sort of um...

S: You can do, provided you are quite sure that it isn't just the mind wandering. But it may be sometimes quite a good thing just to let the mind, as it were, exercise itself in that way. Through the samatha experience, you've developed a certain amount of energy, a certain amount of stability, even solidity, and it's then quite in order just to turn the mind to consider certain things. In this way you get an actual insight into them or into the situation which they represent, rather than just an intellectual understanding. Eventually of course one's samatha should affect one's [50] entire mental activity, so that your mental activity becomes an expression of wisdom all the time, whatever you may be doing or whatever you may be applying your mind to, or your energy to.

Voice: Didn't you mean then, you said samatha would effect all your life and you said that wisdom...?

S: Ah, well they were both. Samatha will affect your life, though it can always be lost, by way of refinement, as it were, but the vipassana will affect it permanently by way of permanent modification. So then, of course, wisdom or wisdom to that degree becomes your, as it were, permanent possession. So it is therefore operative in everything you do. So you become a healthy truly normal human being who is manifesting wisdom all the time, in the ordinary affairs of life. You're in a calm state and a clear state all the time, an emotionally positive state, and an intellectually penetrating state. Very often you find that behind people's intellectual penetration, such as it is, there's negative emotion. You find this sort of link up, this is according to Buddhist tradition too, that the intellectual, in the narrower sense, is also just the person with an aversion problem. But in the case of someone who is spiritually developed there's clarity, but based on calmness and positive emotion. His intellectual penetration is not, as it were, sort of sadistic, as it often is in a purely worldly context. There's clarity but there's calm too. He penetrates but without piercing, without wounding

certainly. So to be in that highly positive emotional state and at the same time to have complete mental clarity, I mean, this is the ideal. This is putting it in simple straightforward English. To be in a highly positive emotional state with abounding energy, and to see everything clearly, to see life clearly, your own life, the lives of your friends, your own activities, the meaning and purpose of it all. To see it all clearly, to know what you are doing and how you are going to go about it, and all the while in this very positive emotional state. I mean, this is simply putting it all in plain straightforward English without Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, and all the rest of it; even, if necessary, without robes, without retreats, well, except, well, you know, except for purposes of pure pleasure, as it were. [laughter]

All right then, that will be all for today, and tomorrow we'll be going into the external conditions for the practice of dhyana. [51] [tape 3 side A]

Voice: [reads from p.440-44] "The Ten Heads"

"(1) External conditions (2) Control of sense desires (3) Abolishment of inner hindrances (4) Regulation and adjustment (5) Expedient activities of mind (6) Right practice (7) The development and manifestation of good qualities (8) Evil influences (9) Cure of disease (10) Realization of Supreme Perfect Enlightenment

"These ten headings indicate the stages of correct Dhyana practice. It is imperative, if a follower of the Buddha desires to be successful in the practice, that the stages be closely followed and their meaning be put faithfully into practice. If these ten stages are faithfully followed the mind will become tranquil, difficulties will be overcome, powers for concentrating the mind and for gaining insight and understanding will be developed, and in the future Supreme Perfect Enlightenment will be attained.

"(1) External Conditions

"If a disciple undertakes the practice of Dhyana, and to put the lessons of this book into action, he must be in possession of five external conditions. (1) He must resolve to keep the Precepts (as to killing, stealing, sexual impurity, deceit, and use of intoxicants), as it is said in the sutra that it is in obedience to the Precepts that all intelligence is developed and all suffering is brought to an end. So it is the duty of every disciple to keep the Precepts pure. However, there are three kinds of disciples who observe the Precepts under different conditions. The first kind are those who, before becoming converts, have not committed any of the 'five highest offences.' Afterwards, happening to be in personal contact with some learned Master, they are taught the three Holy Refuges and the five fundamental Precepts which are to be observed by every faithful follower of the Lord Buddha.

"If there is no hindrance developed after conversion they are next taught to keep the ten additional Precepts of Disciples. Afterwards, as they become Monks or Nuns, they are taught to observe the whole spirit of the Precepts. If after conversion they are able to keep the Precepts pure, both in letter and spirit,

they are counted worthy followers of Lord Buddha and will assuredly realize the Buddha Dharma through their faithful practice of Dhyana. It is if their robe was perfectly white and ready for dyeing.

"The second kind of followers are those who keep the main Precepts but neglect many of the less important ones, but, because of their practice of Dhyana, are repentant. These are recognized as pure keeps of the Precepts, also, and they can progress in the practice of Dhyana and in the attainment of intelligence: it as if their robe, which had been stained and soiled could be worn again after washing and cleansing.

"The third kind of followers are those who have been taught to keep the Precepts but who fail to keep even the important ones and who, on the contrary, are breaking both important and as well as the less important. According to the rites of the Hinayana there is no way provided for removing the stain caused by the Four Main Violations (any kind of killing, theft, lust, and deceit). But in the Mahayana religious services are provided for the purification of such offenses provided there is evidence of sincere penitence and remorse. The Sutra teaches that there are two kinds of 'healthy' convert, namely, those who do not admit offences and those who having committed offences are sincerely repentant. The penitent should be in possession of ten indications of his sincerity: (a) a clear understanding and acceptance of the cause and effect of his offence. (b) To be in a state of fear because of it. (c) To feel humiliation. (d) To search for a means for purification, and when he finds them in the Mahayana sutras to be willing to take advantage of them. (e) A frank confession of his guiltiness. (f) To break off the current of his thoughts relating to the offense. (g) To take advantage of the protective courage which the Dharma offers him. (h) To wish for the emancipation of all sentient beings and to renew his vow to help them all. (i) To continually keep in mind the non-existence of both offense and repentance.

"If a penitent has these evidences of sincerity, he should prepare an alter with solemn adornments and purity. Then wearing clean, neat clothes, he should offer on this alter before Buddha's image an offering of flowers and incense. Then he should continue this practice as an evidence of his repentance for a period of one week, or three weeks, or a month, or three months, or even a year, or as long as the conception of guiltiness abides in the mind.

"But, you may ask, how will we know that our offense has been cleared away? When we are making wholehearted repentance in agreement with the rites as indicated above, we will experience many different emotions that will bring testimony to our understanding. In the course of our practice of repentance we may feel both our body and our mind to be in a state of briskness and lightness, and in our dreams we will see good visions. Or we shall happen to see wonderful signs of good omen, or feel our thoughts unfolding auspiciously. Or we shall feel our body as if it were a cloud drifting about in the free air, or as if, when we are practising Dhyana, we were sitting in a shadow cast by our body. Under all these conditions we will gradually come to realize my aspects of Dhyana, or all of a sudden, we may realize enlightenment. We shall then understand the

significance of all phenomena, and moreover, will gain a deeper conception of the meaning and the import of the teachings we have heard from the Sutras.

"There will be no more griefs or worries in our minds as we enter into a deeper enjoyment of the Dharma. We will recognize in all these experiences a manifestation and testimonial of our purification from the violation of the Precepts that has been a hindrance in our practice of Dhyana. Henceforth, keeping close to the Precepts, we can rightly practise Dhyana and it will be noticed by others that we have been purified. It is as if the robe that had been ragged and foul had been cleansed and mended and newly dyed.

"If any one, having violated the main Precepts, feels that it will hinder his successful practice of Dhyana, let him go before Buddha's image and in earnest humility make a frank confession of his violation. This method of practising repentance is not in accordance with the way shown in the Sutra, nevertheless, let him discontinue his recollection of guiltiness and resume his practice of Dhyana, sitting up straight with determination, recollecting that his wrong acts have no independent self-nature and keeping in mind the reality of the Buddhas in all the six regions. If his thoughts slip away from his practice, let him get up and go before the Buddhas image and with humble and earnest heart, offer incense, repeat his confession, recite the Precepts and a Mahayana Sutra. The hindrances to the practice of Dhyana will be gradually cleared away, the temptation to violate the Precepts will be overcome, and he will progress in the practice of Dhyana. In `The Wonderful Expedient' Scripture it is written:`Should anyone having committed crimes, come into great agony of spirit, and earnestly desire purification, there is no better way then the practice of Dhyana.'

"He should seek an open and quiet place, sitting up with determined and concentrated mind, reciting Mahayana Sutras. In this way he will gradually get rid of thought of his guiltiness and in time will realize the usual Dhyana and Samadhis."

S: All right, let's go through this in a bit more detail.

"If a disciple undertakes the practice of Dhyana, and to put the lessons of this book into action, he must be in possession of five external conditions." First of all, he must resolve to keep the Precepts, in other words we're on the path of regular steps, so sila comes first, before samadhi.

So the Grand Master is explaining here, with the help of a simile which actually goes back to the early Buddhist scriptures as found in the Pali canon, the simile of the cloth, that there are three kinds of disciples with regard to this matter of sila: those whose sila has always been pure and is pure, those whose sila has become a little damaged but is subsequently restored, and those whose sila has become very badly damaged - so that according to the Hinayana it could not be restored, but which can be restored according to the Mahayana. So the comparisons are: the first kind of sila, or the sila of the first kind of person, is like a robe which has always been fresh and clean. The next like a robe that has got just a bit muddied, a bit dirty, but which is subsequently washed and

then is as good as new. And the third like somebody's robe that has become really badly stained, maybe even torn, but according to the Mahayana even this can be repaired and washed and re-dyed if necessary and made if not as good as new, then certainly good enough. I mean the Mahayana as it were just doesn't give up hope with regard to anybody.

Voice: What are the five highest offences?

S: We're going to come to those. Anyone got any idea about those? They're usually rendered as the five heinous offences.

Voice: Killing a guru is one of them.

S: Yes, first of all taking the life of an arahant. These five were found in the very early tradition. Taking the life of an arahant, taking the life of a spiritually worthy person, even a spiritually developed, [52] a spiritually enlightened person. And secondly, wounding the body of a Buddha.

Buddhadasa: That's just combined in the one person?

S: These are two separate offences. According to the tradition, a Buddha cannot be killed. There is, as it were, a sort of cosmic law by virtue of which a Buddha, one who is a Buddha in the full sense, cannot be killed, but he may be wounded. One who is an arahant may even be killed. The distinction between these two offences, or the fact that there are two separate offences here, implies that there is already at this stage a real difference between the arahant and the Buddha. This suggests that the list of the five heinous offences doesn't come from the very earliest period of Buddhism where that distinction was not made, where there was no real substantial spiritual difference between the Buddha and one of his enlightened disciples, and the Buddha is quite clearly represented as stating, in the Pali canon, that there is no difference between his enlightenment and that of his disciples, that he was enlightened first and they were enlightened afterwards, but the content of the experience of enlightenment is the same. But subsequently it seems that the Buddha was regarded as being, as it were, more enlightened than the disciples.

Sona: Could it also be that if the Buddha sort of thinks in terms of sort of doing something in a certain amount of time and he can sort of exercise psychic powers to prevent anyone being killed?

S: It could be that.

Sona: Also it would apply possibly to a bodhisattva as well?

S: Yes.

Sona: But maybe an arahant may not have those powers, or he may have the powers but he may not have sort of set himself that sort of task.

S: Because the view which developed, possibly later, is that the Buddha, if one can use that expression, is more than just an enlightened being. He is the one who discovered the path to enlightenment at a time when the path was not

known. In other words, he is the spiritual pioneer. Obviously it's much more difficult to be a spiritual pioneer and discover the path to enlightenment at a time when it isn't known, when it's been forgotten, than to follow [53] that path to the end even, once somebody else has opened it up again. So it is on the basis of the Buddha being the path finder, or rediscoverer of the path, that probably the feeling that his greatness and even his spiritual attainments transcended those of the arahants eventually developed. But according to the Pali scriptures, in some places at least the Buddha did say that there was no difference between him and his enlightened disciples as regards the actual nature of their attainment. So perhaps we can say that those qualities of independence and initiative and so on, by virtue of which he opened up the path, after it had been lost, or after knowledge of it had been lost for many generations, many aeons even, may not have been, as it were, necessarily part of the enlightenment experience itself. It's more a sort of a great human endowment. Though again to what extent one can distinguish that great human endowment from something spiritual, that itself is a question.

But anyway, I'm simply pointing out that the fact that there are these two heinous offences here, taking the life of an arahant and wounding the body of a Buddha, suggests that by the time this list of five heinous offences was drawn up that distinction between an arahant and a Buddha had already set in as it were.

Vessantara: I always get the feeling from the Pali canon that it had set in, comparing it with the incident where before his enlightenment the Buddha's gone and studied under [Arada Kalama], and eventually when he's attained the same rupa dhyanas that [Arada Kalama] has attained, then says, well as am I so are you and now we'll both be teachers of our group and be absolutely equal, and there's never that feeling of the Buddha and the Sangha, there's always the feeling that the Buddha is the main teacher, and even if it's acknowledged that the ..[unclear].. attained his enlightenment, they always seem to be somehow subsidiary to him.

S: Mm, yes, it does seem like that. But perhaps that is how it appeared in retrospect. Perhaps there was a more sort of equal relationship say between the Buddha, Sariputta, Moggallana than has come down to us, though again there is this passage in the scriptures where Sariputta seems to recognize the Buddha's great superiority to himself.

Lokamitra: This would seem that the Hinayana putting across their point of view because they said that only the Buddha or we can't aim at being [54] bodhisattvas.

S: Right, yes.

Lokamitra: The only bodhisattva was the Buddha, so that this immediately makes a spiritual difference and...

S: Also, of course, it, perhaps, brings into question this whole idea or assumption of a definite final end. Maybe they are all going up the same spiral, perhaps the

Buddha is further on up the spiral, but still going on, you know, to turnings of the spiral that we can't even imagine, can't even conceive. And the Mahayana of course does very definitely envisage the arahants, even, as continuing their progress, if they wish. It represents them, for instance in the White Lotus Sutra, represents some at least of the arahants as being under the impression that they have reached Nirvana, they have come to a full stop. But then some of them at least realize that this is not so, they can continue, they can go even further up that spiral. Anyway that's by the way, that's just to explain the fact that there is the distinction between taking the life of an arahant and wounding a Buddha. Why do you think these are regarded as such heinous offences?

Voice: Because it means to do that all your positive emotions and all your insight must be completely done. You must be pretty taken over by poisons and delusions to be able to do such a thing.

Buddhadasa: Objectively you're depriving countless others of the possibility of enlightenment.

S: Right, yes, mm. This is why, for instance, in ancient India it was considered such a terrible offence to kill a brahmin. Not that the brahmin was considered in those days particularly holy as an individual, but he was the repository of all the traditional law of the community, he was the learned man; if you killed him you probably lost whatever was treasured up in his memory. Perhaps it wasn't treasured up in anybody else's memory. If you killed a whole family, a whole community of brahmins, then whatever they had learned by heart and handed down from generation to generation for centuries would all be lost. So there is this also in the background, so that to take the life of a learned man, or to take the life of a spiritually developed man, [55] is an offence against the whole community because you're depriving so many people of the benefits of that person's remaining alive or continuing to live. So the person who benefits humanity most is the Buddha, next is the arahant, as it were, so if you deprive the arahant of life, then you're destroying a source of great spiritual blessing to humanity, or if you injure the Buddha, if you put him out of action for a while, again you're doing the same sort of thing, and from the subjective point of view you're doing yourself great harm, because for you to be guilty of the offence of taking the life of an arahant, or wounding a Buddha, it means there must be terrible negativity in you, as there was in the case of Devadatta or as there was in the case of the disciples of the fifth patriarch of Chinese Zen who went in pursuit of the sixth patriarch and tried to take his life, that is to say in pursuit of Hui-Neng, after he'd been made the sixth patriarch by the fifth patriarch.

Voice: It seems to be sort of connected up with this thing about karma as well; if one offends a person of very high standing then the consequences on that person of his action are very profound.

S: Yes, because in order to commit that offence you would have had to be in a very negative state, a very unskilful state. But why do you think someone might want to take the life of an arahant or wound the Buddha? Or a Buddha?

Voice: Jealousy.

S: Jealousy. Yes.

Voice: A threat?

S: Yes.

Voice: Is it said that an evil man will see a good man as evil? And the more good he is, the more evil the evil person will see him as?

S: Yes, well the more threatening he experiences him as being. This seems to have been the case with Devadatta.

Lokamitra: The unpopularity of the new man.

S: Right, yes. [laughter] [56]

Sona: Upsetting the status quo.

Voice: I'm not sure of the context, but how much scripturally later did the Buddha say that even Devadatta would eventually gain enlightenment?

S: This is definitely in the Mahayana canon. Whether the actual historical Buddha said that is extremely doubtful. No doubt there is a thread of spiritual continuity going back to the Buddha from the Mahayana sutras or the tradition on which they were based or out of which they grew, but I think it's very doubtful whether any of the Mahayana sutras, except to the extent that they quote, as it were, earlier sutras, represent the actual words of the Buddha, however much they may represent his spirit. So certainly the sort of belief, the tradition, that even Devadatta would gain enlightenment one day, or could, is certainly much more in accord with the spirit of Buddhism and the spirit of the Buddha's original teaching and the Buddha's own spirit than any contrary view. I think even the Hinayana would quite definitely accept, if asked, that Devadatta would not suffer for ever; even though he was in a state of purgatory now, he would emerge sooner or later and would have another chance. I think this would be definitely quite acceptable to any follower of the Theravada inasmuch as no form of Buddhism believes in any everlasting, any permanent retribution for any unskilful action.

Ratnapani: Did we say just now that there was this third type of person whose sila is very badly damaged and according to the Hinayana could not be restored?

S: In this life. They would have to wait until another life, but the Mahayana believes it can be restored and renewed in this life itself.

Ratnapani: Ah, I see.

S: There's also in these two offences a reflection of the general Buddhistic, even Indian, principle or belief that the more developed the person with regard to whom you commit an offence, the more serious the offence. Just as it is a more serious matter to take the life of a human being than the life of an animal. A more serious offence to take the life of a horse or a cow than the life of an ant

or earwig. So taking the life of a Buddha is the most serious example of this sort of offence. That's not possible, the next [57] possibility is the taking of the life of the arahant, that is the most serious actual offence, because the arahant is the most spiritually developed, the more highly evolved being, leaving aside the Buddha who cannot be killed. So there's not only the question of your own mental state to be considered, but also the degree of evolution of the person against whom your unskilful thought and unskilful action is directed. There's a correlation, as it were, between the two.

Lokamitra: Technical point, if you kill someone unawarely, would that still apply?

S: No it wouldn't. The Buddha in the Pali canon has clarified this point, that intention is part of the offence, unless of course you do it through culpable carelessness.

Lokamitra: But then the intention must be the greater really to kill someone who...

S: Yes, you must know that it is a Buddha, know that it is an arahant, or know that it is at least a more developed person.

S: So really it still reflects very much on negative...

S: In that sense, yes indeed, yes. But this is an idea which is not at all in keeping with modern Western ideas at least, that the degree of gravity of the offence varies with the degree of development of the person against whom the offence is directed. There's a sort of little echo of this in England in the old days. For instance if your wife committed adultery, it wasn't a particularly serious offence. But if the king's wife committed adultery it was high treason. Yes? Because the king was the king, after all, so any offence committed against him was a more serious matter, and also the queen's adultery would imperil the whole succession to the throne. So it's a little bit that sort of thing.

Lokamitra: If you kill a policeman...

S: Yes, [laughter] then the magistrate takes a more serious view. This not so much [because] the policeman is considered a more developed being. [laughter] But by killing a policeman you are interfering with the whole machinery of the administration of justice, or maintenance [58] of law and order at least. Presumably it would be an [equally serious] offence to kill a magistrate.

Lokamitra: Killing a policeman is one of the four main offences that you could be hanged for, and still can. [This penalty was effectively suspended from 1965, tr.]

S: Ah, mm, anyway maybe there's no need to go into that any more. But these are the first two, that is to say, the taking of the life of the arahant and the wounding of the body of the Buddha. Oh, incidentally, I must mention that this wounding of the body of the Buddha was afterwards interpreted in a rather interesting way in the Sarvastivada and the Mahayana and is still so interpreted

by the Tibetans. It's also considered to include cutting or damaging a picture or an image of the Buddha. This is why they look upon it as such a serious matter. And it is also the point behind the Zen story of the monk burning the images. It would be regarded as a much more serious offence in traditional Buddhist circles in Japan or in the Far East than we would regard it. The monk burning the image of the Buddha to keep himself warm at night would be sort of breaking one of these five most serious rules or committing one of the five most serious offences according to the interpretation given to those offences, or this particular offence at least, in those Far Eastern Buddhist circles. He would be doing practically the worst possible thing he could do in their eyes. I mean we would regard it as just sort of slight manifestation of lack of devotion or lack of faith to burn a Buddha image in that way, but in the eyes of the other monks and the other Buddhists and the keepers of the temple it would be a very much more serious matter than that. So Tibetans, even now, feel very uneasy if they see a picture of the Buddha torn or damaged or something like that. Though I'm afraid that's wearing off a bit since they came to India. Originally this was very much their sentiment.

All right, and the third and fourth most serious offences are patricide and matricide.

Buddhadasa: Oedipus complex.

S: Yes, right, Oedipus complex and Jocasta complex. [laughter] But why do you think these are considered so serious? [59]

Lokamitra: Again because you'd have to be so negative...

S: Yes, because I mean father and mother are the two people that one can expect to be very positive towards. After all they've given birth to you, they've brought you up, they've educated you, they've given you your start in life, so you should feel very grateful to them, not only a biological but a cultural tie. So for it to be possible for you to breach that to the extent of taking their life would suggest something very, very seriously wrong with you, something very unskilful, some highly unskilful mental state.

Abhaya: So you think this still applies?

S: I think the principle still applies but in a much more complicated sort of way. I mean there is no doubt a great deal of resentment felt by children towards parents, and very often that resentment remains with them right into their adult life, maybe all the way through their adult life. Perhaps they cannot be held entirely responsible for that; it might have something to do with the way, perhaps the very bad way or negative way, in which they were brought up. But all the same, even though they may not be responsible, the fact that they cherish that resentment against their own parents means that they are in a very unskilful state to that extent. And I think if they are to make any overall spiritual progress that will have to be resolved, because the relationship with the parent is very basic, especially with the mother, and the less it is a

positive relationship and feeling then there will be quite severe complications psychologically for the person concerned. How you tackle it, that's another matter, you don't necessarily have to tackle it psychoanalytically, you could just resolve it through the practice of metta.

But perhaps it is significant that there is so much ill feeling between the generations, that so many people aren't on good terms with their parents, and I feel it's a great pity; there must be a very negative element there. As I said, it may not be the fault of the person concerned that he feels negatively towards his parents, but the fact that he does feel negative towards his parents means that to that extent he is in an unskilful mental state, and to the extent that he is in a unskilful mental state, he will not be evolving or she will not be evolving. Any thoughts on this anybody? Any reflections, comments?

Abhaya: I just felt there are so many factors going back such a long time that it would be difficult to judge where the blame lies, to label it as heinous is rather surprising. [60]

S: Though of course it is referring to actual murder. But you mean even in those cases possibly?

Abhaya: I'd forgotten that it was referring to actual murder.

S: But you feel murderous sometimes. Yes? And this hardly less skilful than the actual action.

Voice: No matter what the causes and background, even if they've been horrid parents it doesn't make it any different to one's own sort of progress. It doesn't make one less blocked towards metta to have them than if it was all your own fault.

S: So you have to resolve it whether it was your fault or their fault or both.

Buddhadasa: I had thought of it in terms of just as one has chosen the body in case of personal injury, you've also chosen your parents.

S: That's also true.

Buddhadasa: And you can only blame yourself in the long run.

S: Hmm, if you take the strictly Buddhist view you have almost literally selected your own parents.

Lokamitra: Also it doesn't mean that if you have resolved that that you have to like being with your parents...

S: Oh no, right.

Lokamitra: I think people often feel that because they don't necessarily enjoy the company of their parents that there is still this continuing.

S: No that isn't necessarily so. The fact that they happen to be your biological parents doesn't mean that after you have started developing spiritually you will

necessarily feel an affinity for them. But at the same time that does not mean that you have any negative feelings towards them. I mean there are lots of people towards whom you don't feel negative but you prefer not to have to put up with their company. [61] But certainly one should, as it were in principle, feel positive towards one's own parents and wish them well, and wish that they may get on and if you can contribute something to that. But if it isn't possible, perhaps they are so conditioned that it isn't possible, well just leave it and just, as it were, direct positive thoughts, have a positive attitude towards them, even though you may have no contact with them. Wish them well from a distance. This is something I did mention once or twice recently, that you shouldn't expect everything from everybody. And you shouldn't expect all your relationships to be complete relationships. Remember that your parents are only your parents and you shouldn't expect from your relationship with your parents to include every element. You shouldn't expect your parents to be your best friends. You shouldn't expect your parents to be your spiritual companions. No, they're just your parents. If you get on with them well on that basis, that's enough. Anything else is, you know, just extra. You shouldn't expect them to sympathize or share all your interests. Maybe they won't. But because they won't or can't it doesn't mean you're getting on with them badly. If it's not possible for them to share your interests, well just accept the fact and relate to them on a more limited basis but still positively. Perhaps your father won't share your interest in Madhyamika philosophy, [laughter] your mother won't read that book on the Abhidharma you accidentally left on the kitchen table; [laughter] it doesn't mean that you can't have any relationship with them at all, that you have to write them off as a bad job. If you can have that relationship with them, so much the better, but they are after all just your parents. So if you can relate to them just in a satisfactory way as a son or daughter, that's enough. This also applies to some extent to your wife, if you have one, or when you have one. [laughter] If she does share your spiritual interests, well, that's fine, so much the better, but if she doesn't, well never mind, just relate to here as your wife. The same applies to the girlfriend, but she's a more difficult case usually. [laughter]

But this goes back to previous remarks about not expecting every relationship to be a total relationship. I think this is why so many relationships founder: too much is expected from them. I think I've spoken about this several times before: that relationships nowadays are much more limited, much less varied. In the old days you had apparently a number of different kinds of relationships. All of which were very satisfactory, in all of which you felt a certain amount of satisfaction, into which flowed a certain amount of your emotional energy. [62] Like your relationship with your feudal lord or feudal superior, your relationship with your elder brothers or sisters, your relationship with parents, your relationship with the man you worked for, your relationship with your neighbours, your relationship with your kinsfolk - nowadays people don't have kinsfolk - your relationship with your wife, your relationship with your children, relationship with your servants, or your master if you were a servant. I mean there were a whole network of these relationships. But nowadays there are just one or two

rather tenuous relationships which get overloaded with all the emotional energies and demands and needs which formerly were invested in all these relationships. [63] [tape 3 side B] So something snaps. Anyway, no need to go into that too much, it's very much by the way.

Abhaya: What about the fifth most serious offence?

S: Oh, patricide and matricide, these are two separate ones, three and four. The fifth is sanghabheda or breaking up the unity of the spiritual community. Sanghabheda. This is traditionally regarded as a very serious matter indeed for obvious reasons. Well, why do you think that sanghabheda was such a serious offence?

Lokamitra: Well, it's so important that it continues.

S: Yes, the sangha is so important, kalyana-mitrata is so important.

Sona: It's one of the three jewels.

S: Right, any weakening of that, yes. There's no actual offence against the Dharma you notice. It all seems to be in a way rather on another level.

Lokamitra: How can you have an offence against the Dharma? Tearing up the scriptures?

S: Well, misrepresenting the Dharma, discouraging the preaching of the Dharma, hindering preachers of the Dharma, preventing the Dharma being more widely known.

Buddhadasa: It's almost as it, if you have respect for the Sangha the Dharma will take care of itself.

S: Mm, yes. So the point of my mentioning all these is that someone may come along to go for refuge and take the precepts and be ordained who may have committed one or another of these offences. [64] So it becomes very, very important that if a person has, it should be put right, or rather the unskilful mental state that led to their committing those actions should be put right, before they are permitted to go for refuge, and be ordained and so on. What would that correspond to in modern terms or contemporary terms do you think?

Voice: [unclear]

S: Yes, to some extent, though here more specifically.

Voice: Wrong views?

S: To some extent.

Sona: Confessions of faults.

S: Yes, it would include that. I'm thinking in more specific terms. Suppose you had an aversion for the Buddha, supposing you had read about the Buddha but had quite negative feelings towards him, even though you might sort of abstractly sort of accept the ideal of enlightenment, but suppose you had quite negative

feelings towards the Buddha and felt that he had done wrong in leaving his wife and child and going off as a wanderer and so on; or maybe you felt threatened by the ideal of enlightenment itself and felt rather hostile towards it, as negating or belittling you. Or maybe, suppose you had a very, very bad relationship with your parents, well that would suggest there would be a psychological problem, perhaps you should not be permitted to go for refuge until that had been cleared up at least to some extent. Or maybe you were a very quarrelsome person who wherever you went broke up the unity of the group or the community, then perhaps you should not be allowed to go for refuge or be ordained until you've come to terms with that and have resolved that tendency to some extent.

Lokamitra: The first one seems the most important in a way.

S: Which one?

Lokamitra: The illustration of the Buddha, that people should have total faith in the Buddha.

S: Well, if not total faith, certainly a very [65] positive feeling for and towards the Buddha and the spiritual ideal and the spiritual path and the spiritual community. It mustn't be just an intellectual thing. And also they should not be severely disturbed in their natural relationships, as it were, i.e. you know, relationship with parents. I mean, in ancient civilizations, especially in ancient India, to murder your father or mother was almost unthinkable. Some people even now refuse to believe that there is anyone who could possibly think of murdering his mother, father maybe, [laughter] but not mother. Father maybe, because, you know, father may be a king or he may be a very rich man and the son may be eager to come into his own inheritance and he feels that the father is a rival; these sorts of things are not unknown. In Sinhalese history there are several Buddhist kings who murdered their fathers or brothers, but no one as far as I remember who ever murdered his mother. That's regarded as absolutely unthinkable in many Eastern countries.

Buddhadasa: Well, in that sort of society there shouldn't be any need, she shouldn't be presenting any threat or she shouldn't be in a position where she was blocking...

S: Right, the father is much more of a threat, especially in the case of royal or noble families or wealthy families. Mother is always an amiable, indulgent, sort of figure, not be regarded too seriously.

So, it means therefore that if someone comes along wanting to commit himself or herself, or wanting to be ordained, with this sort of background, or the sort of background that is indicated, in traditional terms, by these five most serious offences, then we have to think very seriously before ordaining such a person and probably insist that they clear up some of this backlog of unskilful mental attitudes before the are ordained, before they are allowed to go for refuge.

Vessantara: Some people do have difficulties with their relationships with the Order or with Order members, this is a quite common thing.

S: You mean after ordination?

Vessantara: Well, before. I'm thinking in terms of people who want to be ordained.

S: Well of course there are difficulties and difficulties. For instance, I imagine some of those who would like to be ordained feel Order members [66] as a bit, as it were, threatening, like elder brothers who are sort of grown up and they would like to be grown up too. But they feel the elder brothers as maybe a but sort of threatening and too maybe father-like, parental, so they may develop a certain amount of resentment and hostility. There is that possibility, not looking up to your elder brothers as protectors and guides and so on, but just as threatening forces. I assume that this sort of thing does happen from time to time, at least with some people.

Vessantara: Do you think it's something that we ought to expect to be resolved before becoming ordained or...

S: I think it's a question of degree, and also what the total person is like. It may be that sometimes negative emotions of this sort are resolved by the mere fact of ordination. But it would be better if they could be resolved first I think.

Buddhadasa: It's a bit much to expect them to be resolved at this stage when Order members themselves experience negative feelings towards each other. But there's something I feel that we as Order members can do. I've observed this happening with Mitras and Friends. It does happen, you get people coming up to you and saying, what about so and so, he's an Order member, and try to wheedle all sorts of little bits of information out of you. You can do a lot in this respect in smoothing over troubled waters.

Lokamitra: It's not usually a personal view. It's more of a general view, it's more of a general feeling, that Vessantara's getting at, something negative towards the Order as a whole, and it seems to me before ordination there must be some definite positive feelings towards the Order. If there aren't, then this would seem out of the question.

S: But perhaps it appears to some people, especially those on the fringes, as though the Order is a sort of closed corporation keeping something to themselves, keeping everybody else out, you know, it's like a sort of exclusive club as it were, perhaps difficult to get in, perhaps impossible, as it were: so you think, or fear. So this makes you a bit negative towards it. It's like the man who isn't sure of his social position and who would like to apply for membership of a certain club but thinks he'll probably be black balled if he did. I think this is because, if it does happen, my guess is that people think in terms of, think of the Order, in terms of power rather than in terms of spiritual commitment. It's the ruling [67] body as it were, the people who have the power. They think of them perhaps in this way, or think of the Order in this way, rather than as the body of the committed, the people who exercise the power, especially because Order members are seen to be running things, you know, running the different FWBOs and so on, so

the Order becomes the body that possesses the power, and quite a few people feel negatively towards any suggestion of power, it makes them feel weak and impotent, inadequate and so on. But though it is true that the Order exercises power in this way, in the sense of running things, obviously it isn't primarily a power body or a power structure. It's a community of committed people who only incidentally exercise or appear to exercise power.

I think it is very important that on the part of mitras that there should be a positive attitude towards the spiritual community itself. I noticed a little bit of this in Finland on the part of one particular person who wanted to be ordained, very much wanted to be ordained, but it was almost as though he was having to force his way in, muscle his way in. He had a very definite resentment against Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri as though they were trying to keep him out and keep something to themselves and for themselves. It was quite marked, and strong.

Lokamitra: I get that feeling more from women than from men outside the Order, I don't know whether this is just what's happening at the moment or whether it's a general characteristic.

Padmapani: Maybe the women feel the Order's taking all the men away. [laughter]

S: Well in a way that's good if they have the feeling that once you're in the Order you're out of reach. [laughter] Though they are not literally taken away, they're still around.

Padmapani: No, I mean, but sometimes I feel that some of the women think like that.

S: I must say that this hasn't come to my notice before, but it may well be so. Or perhaps it is something to do with the fact that there are more men in the Order than women, so that the women who are not in the Order don't think so much in terms of a spiritual community as a body of men or a predominantly masculine group and react on that sort of basis possibly. [68]

Buddhadasa: I must put a word in here and say this doesn't happen in Brighton.

S: Ah.

Buddhadasa: A good cross-section of women come along and enjoy the classes.

Padmapani: Why do you think that is there?

Buddhadasa: Because they've got a good guy in charge. (laughter and comments)

S: They've got a man in charge.

Buddhadasa: No, basically there is a very positive attitude amongst the women. In one or two cases the wife is almost outstripping the husband in some ways. (laughter and comment) I've always said it's as much a women's trip as a man's trip.

Lokamitra: I'm only thinking of two real cases here which I can't see to that extreme among the men mitras, but I can see it very clearly among two women mitras and I can't see it among any of the men mitras. Or three perhaps.

Voice: Maybe it's just that they are particular characters.

Lokamitra: I think it might be that.

Buddhadasa: I think that we should stress much more, though, in general thinking, that Buddhism is for women as much as it is for men.

S: Though not necessarily in the same way.

Buddhadasa: Not necessarily in the same way but, you know, the potential is there and we should, you know, encourage them to. . .

S: And not for women as women.

Voice: As people.

S: Ah, hm, yes.

Voice: Well it's difficult to sort out really.

S: It is really. If you say it's for women too, which is correct in a way, they might take it, or probably would take it, to mean with all their typically womanly foibles as it were, and that they don't have to give anything of that up. Buddhism is just something added on as it were, but certainly one should make it clear that Buddhism is for all. It's for any individual or person who wants to try to evolve, [69] whether male or female, whether young or old.

Vessantara: I think some women have more difficulty with the Order which relates to what you were saying about seeing the Order in terms of power.

S: You mean that men have a monopoly of power, as it were?

Vessantara: Well, I think a couple of mitras, female mitras that I've talked to about that when they get ordained, pressure will be put on them to do certain things and to be committed in certain ways. And they feel they're going to be swamped by this pressure to do what's. . .

S: Well, some men feel it, not to speak of women.

Vessantara: Yes, but I think some of the women maybe feel less secure in themselves to be able to cope with that.

Voice: [unclear] ought to try it and see.

S: Though I have made it clear recently to several people, including one female mitra who wrote to me with apparently a big misunderstanding about this sort of thing, that upon ordination it was not expected that everybody become involved in organizational activities or in teaching even. I said that there were many vocations within the Order. One could, of course, help out with running things and taking classes, which was very important. Or one could devote oneself

to artistic activities, like Chintamani is doing, in producing icons which are needed for people's practice, or one could be wandering from centre to centre keeping up contacts, or one could be in retreat and devoting oneself exclusively to meditation; there were all these possibilities. But apart from this particular mitra who wrote to me I hadn't heard that mitras generally, or women mitras in particular, were perhaps under the impression that upon ordination many, many practical organizational demands would be made upon them. This particular one was thinking of teaching demands, that an Order member was necessarily a teacher, would have to be taking classes and so on, and I had been reported apparently as saying this, but I wrote to clear it all up. And she got this, so she said, from her two kalyana mitras, that this was my view, and so I had to sort of directly contradict that.

But anyway to summarize this part of the discussion, a positive attitude [70] towards the spiritual community, towards the order is absolutely necessary before ordination. If one doesn't have it before ordination when one is seeking entrance into that community then it's going to be very difficult afterwards.

Alright, let's go on.

So there are three kinds of disciple who observe the precept under different conditions. The first kind are those who before becoming converts have not committed any of the five highest offences. They come along with a very clean sheet even before they are ordained, even before they go for refuge. "Afterwards, happening to be in personal contact with some learned master they are taught the Three Holy Refuges and Five Fundamental Precepts which are to be observed by every faithful follower of the Lord Buddha." Here you notice the five precepts, the five precepts traditionally current in the East in modern times, as it were.

Sona: About this word holy, holy refuges, I rather like that, I know it's sort of got Christian connotations, but from what you were saying last week about even possibly leaving refuges out of some pujas, it seems to give it much more sort of, what's the word, sort of, reverence.

S: Yes, well presumably holy is used, here as equivalent to transcendental, they are transmundane, they are all aspects of the Unconditioned. It's the Buddha, as the embodiment of the highest truth, in a sense embodiment of reality, the Dharma in the sense of the Unconditioned, as the goal of all one's spiritual aspirations, not just the teaching as found in books, and the sangha in the sense of those who have actually reached and realized the highest stages of the transcendental path. So the refuges here definitely have transcendental significance and so therefore presumably are styled the holy refuges. Yes?

"If there is no hindrance developed after conversion they are next taught to keep the ten Additional Precepts of disciples. These are the ten precepts of the Samaneras. Afterwards if they become Bhikshus and Bhikshunis they are taught to observe the whole spirit of the Precepts. If after conversion they are able to keep the Precepts pure in letter and in spirit, they are accounted worthy followers of the Lord Buddha and will assuredly realize the Buddha-Dharma

through their faithful practice of Dhyana; it is as if their robe was perfectly white and ready for dyeing." [71]

There's perhaps something to be said here about the relationship between the refuges and the precepts. You notice that the Grand Master here speaks in terms of Going for Refuge, then in terms of a larger and larger numbers of Precepts, but the Going for Refuge doesn't lose its significance; the Going for Refuge is clearly the main thing, then you gradually add, as it were, to your number of precepts, representing a more thorough practice or application of your commitment on the practical ethical level.

Now the important point to be made here is that it's the Going for Refuge that constitutes what we call ordination, not just becoming a monk. You see the difference, eh? The Going for Refuge represents the basic spiritual commitment, the commitment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the spiritual ideal, the paths leading to the realization of that ideal, the fellowship of those treading that path. This is you basis spiritual commitment, it is this that makes you a Buddhist. And then as expressions in practical ethical terms of your commitment, you observe a certain number of precepts. So here, the difference between the layman, the novice and the monk is only the difference between the number of precepts which they respectively observe. But they all Go for Refuge. So there's a difference of degree behind them, not between them, not a difference of kind. They all Go for Refuge, all are committed, all are Buddhists, but some observe more precepts than others. In other words, some are making a more thorough and detailed application of their commitment on the ethical level. But all are Buddhist, all are members of the spiritual community. It's very important to stress this because in modern times, and by modern I mean for quite a few hundred years now, in the Buddhist east there's been a departure from this principle and broadly speaking we can say the difference consists or the departure consists in regarding the important step as being not the Going for Refuge, but the becoming of a monk. Not ordination in the sense of Going for Refuge but ordination in the sense of taking upon one's self the precepts of the monk or the nun, bhikshu or bhikshuni. So that the great division in modern times is not between those who have Gone for Refuge and those who have not Gone for Refuge but those who are monks and those who are lay people.

Lokamitra: In 'The Three Jewels' don't you make this distinction between the Bhikshu Sangha and the Maha Sangha? [72]

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: But you don't make a spiritual distinction?

S: An ecclesiastical distinction, yes. I mean you can have certainly a separate corporation of those who are observing the greater number of precepts but they shouldn't be regarded as identical with the whole Sangha, with the spiritual community in its entirety. But this is virtually what happens in most Buddhist countries in the East to-day. So the spiritual community is the community, that

is to say the spiritual community in its widest sense is the spiritual community of all those who have Gone for Refuge. Yes?

I think in modern times this needs to be more and more insisted upon because the traditional distinctions, or at least conventional distinctions between the monk and the layman, as regards observance of precepts are more and more breaking down. It's very difficult nowadays say what is a monk, what is a layman. Or who is a monk, who is a layman? Sometimes they give the example of, for instance, a Buddhist country in the east, say Ceylon or Burma, there's a monk, that is to say someone who has got monastic ordination, he's been ordained as a monk. But he's got perhaps a university appointment, he's a lecturer, maybe in Pali, in a university he draws a salary. He has got his own bungalow within the university campus, he's got a servant or two, so he's living virtually like a layman, he's certainly not living like the wanderers in the old days. On the other hand you may have someone who is not ordained as a monk, who is technically a layman but he may not be having any secular occupation or livelihood, he may be spending his entire time in a hermitage teaching meditation. Yes? Now technically in the Buddhist country concerned the first would be regarded as a monk, the second as a layman, which seems completely wrong and you can even you know push it to extremes and suggest that the monk who was a lecturer in the university might be living a quite worldly life but technically he would be a monk, but the layman might be leading a very spiritual life, only absorbed in spiritual things but technically he is a layman and will be treated as such, regarded as such by the public. If there were some formal Buddhist occasion the monk would be seated up on the platform the layman down on the ground even though he was a meditation teacher. So in this way we see the distinction sort of breaking down, and in a way that's a good thing because the criterion is the Going for Refuge, not just [73] monastic ordination in that narrow sense. So you see the distinction and it's very very important and that's why in our own movement, in the Western Buddhist Order we emphasize the Going for Refuge so much and the Going for Refuge represents first of all your determination to evolve. You have the idea or the ideal, rather, of human enlightenment very clearly before you and you have decided you want to evolve, you want to develop and you want to follow a definite path that will help you to evolve in the company of other people who are doing the same thing and this is what makes you a Buddhist, makes you a member of the spiritual community. Your life style, your particular life style is quite a secondary matter. But it's as though in the Buddhist countries of the East, the distinction is simply on the basic of lifestyle, not spiritual commitment, which seems ridiculous. Admittedly it's more easy to give expression to your commitment within the framework of one particular lifestyle sometimes than another, but that's still a secondary matter, secondary to the basic commitment represented by the Going for Refuge.

Ratnapani: In your previous example the life style of the so-called monk is an example of his lack of really having Gone for Refuge.

S: Right. Yes.

Ratnapani: So they are very much tied up.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: And you said that it's not the life style isn't important, surely it's the clothes you wear that are not important and the lifestyle that is.

S: Say that again.

Ratnapani: Surely it's the clothes that you wear that aren't important i.e. robe or long robe...

S: Right, right, yes. I meant lifestyle. In the case of the monk, in that case would be that he shaved his head, wore yellow robes and that would be the lifestyle as it were. But clearly the lifestyle in that sense isn't important or relevant at all.

But according to Buddhist opinion, the public in Buddhist countries, it's very, very important that the monk, the person they really [74] look up to is the man who wears the robes, not the man who is wearing ordinary lay dress but who is leading a spiritual life, they wouldn't look up to him very much in comparison at all, certainly not on formal occasions and it's that which I feel is all wrong.

Ratnapani: I think it's well permeated into UP even, I feel it in myself and I think I feel it around me too, you know, that those sort of robes they just look special and one can't help fell that someone with them on must be special when in fact he could be a useless lay about.

S: Or worse than that, there's worse things than a layabout. [laughter]

Ratnapani: One or two [inaudible comment]

Vajradaka: Do you think that this kind of concept of a monk or a priest even in a more sort of catholic sense as a medium between in the Christian sense between God and man and in a more Buddhistic sense between Buddha and layman... has sort of crept in here and, you know, in the safer example the monk doing the chanting of the invocation of the blessings, he's like become the medium between the three jewels and the layman.

S: There's no layman, there's no monk, there's no layman.

Vajradaka: Not truly.

S: The order members are not monks and they're not laymen.

Vajradaka: I'm not talking about in the order, I'm talking about in the east.

S: I don't think anywhere there's priests in the Christian sense, that is in the Catholic sense. This is something quite different, when you are ordained as a priest a certain, as it were, magic power is transmitted to you which has been handed down from the time of the apostles and you get it through the bishop who ordains you and by virtue of that magic power when you perform the mass the bread and the wine are transubstantiated into the flesh and the blood of Christ and become the means of grace for the congregation. No layman can

do this. No one who is not a priest can do this. Only the priest can do it regardless of his personal character and this is specifically stated by the teaching of the Church. The unworthiness of the priest does not affect the efficacy of the sacrament, their efficacy is [75] independent, so it becomes a magic ceremony which only the priest perform, so you need the priest to perform it regardless of your personal holiness if you are a layman, but there's nothing like this to the best of my recollection in any form of Buddhism. The monk or minister or whatever, however far people get away from this idea of the, you know, the refuges as being commitment and as more important than monastic ordination, the ordained person is never really in principle any more than something better of the same kind, someone more advanced than you on the same path. But you can do what ever he does apart from technical questions of ordination and so on, which are not regarded as anything as it were magical.

But western Buddhists have to be careful not to think of themselves as sort of priests and not allow other people to think of them in that way. I remember Christmas Humphreys, you know, when I first came to England took me aside and gave me a sort of little fatherly advice, you know, how I should conduct myself and how I should regard myself and my activities and he spoke about the Hampstead area and apparently, that was my area, you know, that was my parish as it were, and he said that I should think of myself as being the Buddhist vicar of Hampstead and he seemed to regard this as a very lofty ideal to aim at [laughter] and he said it in all seriousness and with quite good intentions I must say, you know, with the best of intentions, that this would be the role which I would fulfil as the Buddhist vicar of Hampstead. Needless to say, I won't say that I didn't live up to those expectations, let me say I transcended them, [laughter] I think he must have thought for a while that I didn't live up to them but I think he's changed his mind about that now.

But this is very difficult for people in the East to realize that the commitment that is expressed in the Going for Refuge that is the important thing, not being a monk in the sense of wearing the yellow robe or observing a few extra precepts. But unfortunately in most Buddhist countries in the East the difference is between the man who observes monastic precepts and the man who doesn't, not between the man who Goes for Refuge and the man who doesn't and that's because everybody in the whole country is considered to have Gone for Refuge, everybody is a Buddhist which is of course nonsense really. It's become something purely formal and ethnic and cultural. I mean that's not to say that many of the monks aren't good people and have not gone sincerely for refuge, even some of the lay people, but unfortunately the sort of ecclesiastical organization doesn't correspond very closely to the [76] spiritual realities of the situation. In this connection I've been thinking that it's becoming more and more inappropriate that the Western Buddhist Order is described as a lay order. In a way it's neither monk nor lay and that's the way it seems to be developing even if you think in terms of, you know, of lifestyle. There aren't many laymen in the order in the old eastern sense, you know, laymen living at home with wives, children, jobs, houses, furniture, property, fields to cultivate, you know there are very few

laymen around in that sense any longer. So many members of the order are virtually monks, inverted commas...

Voice: The word lay has connotations of sort of the keen amateur behind the vicar.

S: Right, yes. [laughter] the lady who arranges the flowers on the altar, faithfully every Sunday morning year after year. So I was thinking, well, I've been thinking for some time, that maybe we should revise our description of ourselves. We're much more than a lay order in the narrow, sense now, so perhaps we should be thinking just in terms of The Western Buddhist Order, neither monk nor lay, though still significant as compared with the Going for Refuge So maybe some members of the Order will be observing some precepts more strictly than others but I don't know, I doubt very much whether there's much required in a way of a separate ordination to signify that, if at all, something quite small and minor though still significant as compared with the Going for Refuge which is the main thing. But many Order members I'm glad to say do more and are much more into spiritual life in the true sense than many monks even elder monks who I have met in the East, there's no doubt about that.

So the nucleus of the Order is almost monastic in the real sense one could say in many cases, not just in the ecclesiastical sense but in the real sense, the sense in which, you know, some of the Buddha's immediate disciples among the wanderers, were monks. Even before there was any technical monastic ordination when the Buddha used just to say 'Come' you know like that 'Ehi bhikkhave' and that counted as ordination; they just got up and followed him, went round with him from place to place with their begging bowls, there was no ordination in those days - even for monks.

Lokamitra: You thought at one time, I heard, of using the term... what was it now?

S: Anagarika. I have been thinking about this. I think a stage may come [77] when there's definitely full time people within the order who definitely have no families, who are not married and who also have decided to lead celibate lives can become Anagarikas, by a single change of precept, instead of kamesu micchachara - abrahmacharya, and that would be all that was necessary and it would be a comparatively minor step, very, very important in a way but minor in comparison with the fundamental step of Going for Refuge.

Buddhadasa: Technically I thought that an Anagarika was a friend of the sangha, somebody who is not even a Buddhist in the technical sense and has not gone for refuge.

Voice: It means homeless, doesn't it?

S: No, no. It literally means without a city or uncivilized. Yes. [laughter] The word does occur in the Dhammapada once as a synonym for bhikkhu - which is rather interesting, but the word bhikkhu seems to have caught on more. In modern times, Anagarika has been used by a few quite well known people

like Anagarika Dharmapala who are living the life of a bhikkhu without being technically ordained which is again quite anomalous; if you are living the life, you are a bhikkhu surely. But people who like Dharmapala led the life, who have devoted themselves fully to the spiritual life and to Buddhism, who were not married, who were celibate, who had no secular occupation but were not ordained as monks. In other words, were really monks but who took the title Anagarika.

Voice: Hasn't Lama Govinda got that name?

S: Well, he had it originally and he sort of continued using it though not quite correctly because it definitely means someone who is not married and has no family, no family life and no secular occupation whereas Lama Govinda is now married. [78] [Tape 4 Side A] Before we go on with the study, does anyone want to ask anything about the five basic methods that I was talking about last night as correlated with the five mental poisons as their antidote. Is that all clear?

Padmapani: I don't quite understand Bhante the one about the nidanas, what it connected up with?

S: Ignorance. Ignorance in the sense of a lack of understanding, a lack of correct philosophy of life, as it were. When I refer to the nidanas, I mean the full teaching about the nidanas. First of all the general principle of conditionality. Remember that has two forms, those which I call the reactive and the creative. The reactive was explained in the twelve nidanas of the Wheel of Life in their, one can say, progressive and reverse order. But it's not progressive in the creative sense, and the creative path of conditionality as expressed in the twelve positive nidanas. The comprehension of the whole of this, or insight into the whole of this constitutes wisdom which is of course the opposite of ignorance. So therefore the method or the practice of contemplating the whole of the nidana series in its twofold form, reactive and creative, through that fathoming the general principle of conditionality. This is the antidote to ignorance. This is wisdom. So when you contemplate the nidanas understand or rather you see how in dependence on one the next arises. Both as regards the Wheel of Life and also as regards the Path or the Spiral.

Lokamitra: You say that the twelve positive links have only been,.. well you and Rhys Davids and someone else talk about them, but otherwise they haven't been used for a long time.

S: Apart from, to some extent, in the form of the Bodhyangas which roughly correspond, you know, to at least a section of that positive series of nidanas and of course, also the path as a whole to the extent that it constitutes a real process of spiritual development does correspond to or embody those twelve positive nidanas even though the connection may not be explicitly made in precisely those doctrinal terms, but it certainly ought to be made and it certainly hasn't been made for many hundreds of years. [79]

Lokamitra: So, say, in Ceylon one was practising doing this practise one would

contemplate the Bodhyangas rather than the twelve positive nidanas?

S: No. I'm afraid they leave that side out altogether where they practise at all and they would only contemplate the arising of the twelve nidanas of the Wheel of Life and their cessation and stop at cessation. Perhaps it wouldn't matter all that much inasmuch as they had a general feeling, you know, derived from their general study of the Dharma that what was left was ultimately positive, or at least, not merely negative. But for the Westerner, going there and practising in this way it could be highly misleading.

Abhaya: What was the fourth one, Bhante?

S: That was conceit, I think, wasn't it?

Abhaya: I've got that down as three.

S: Then it must be craving, the antidote to which is the contemplation of, sometimes of course, the ten asubha bhavanas are mentioned and sometimes the contemplation of death and sometimes the contemplation of impermanence in general. These are as it were the less and less drastic forms. If craving is very strong it's usually associated with the physical body, so you contemplate the ten stages in the decomposition of a corpse. That is really powerful medicine, as it were. But less powerful than that, though still very strong, is the recollection of death and bit more gentle than that is just impermanence in general.

Voice: Which one shall we be doing?

S: The middle one, recollection of death. [laughter] The middle one. I have a few words to say about that sometime later.

Voice: Could you go through all five?

S: There's first of all the practice of mindfulness. In this context recollection is probably a better translation than mindfulness, in the sense of the recollection, the collection together again of all one's scattered energies, as the antidote to distraction. Distraction representing the scattering of the energies, or the state of their being scattered. So as you practise recollection your energies are and more integrated, your attention is centred and your [80] wandering thoughts are brought under control. So in this way the practice of recollection or mindfulness is the antidote to a state of mental distraction or an antidote to the mental poison of distraction.

Padmaraja: I don't know whether this is a digression, Bhante, but we also lay some emphasis on the stupa visualization. I was wondering where that fits in?

S: That comes in under the six element practise of which there are several forms. We can go into that later on.

Then secondly there's the practice of the metta bhavana as the antidote to aversion or hatred. This is pretty obvious isn't it? Perhaps I should also mention that there's a whole cluster of practices here. We mustn't forget there are four brahma viharas. Normally of course we only practice one and that one is the

basis of the other three. But sometime or other we should go into these others an well. They all represent states of very refined positive emotion, but metta, you could say, loving kindness or friendliness is the antidote to aversion. But the other brahma viharas are also antidotes to poisons connected with that of aversion. For instance there's karuna or compassion, what would that be the antidote to?

Voice: Contempt?

S: Contempt. But even more than that. That's the near enemy. What would be the far enemy? Cruelty. Cruelty. So obviously cruelty is connected with aversion and hatred. And then what about sympathetic joy? Mudita or pramudita? Envy or jealousy. I take it that everyone knows what is meant by mudita or pramudita?. I think the best single ward is gladness. Gladness. That's when you're glad that something good has happened to somebody else and it makes you feel really happy. Gladness or you could say sympathetic joy. You don't feel any sort of envy, any sort of jealousy, you're really happy that that person is happy. You're glad. You rejoice even that that person is happy, that something good has befallen that person. They've all got near and far enemies. In the case of metta it's obvious, the far enemy is hatred or aversion, the near enemy is attachment, affection in the negative sense. What would be the near enemy for mudita or pramudita?

Voice: Selfish joy. [81]

S: No, not quite

Voice: Sympathy, just ordinary kind of sympathy?

S: No, not even that.

Padmaraja: Kind of vicarious pleasure.

S: Yes, vicarious pleasure, yes. You don't rejoice with somebody else's happiness, but you pick up something of it or from it, for you. You could call it vicarious satisfaction. And then fourthly, of course, there is equanimity. The far enemy is obvious and probably the near enemy too. The far enemy is obviously disturbance and turbulence and disquiet and so on. The near enemy is presumably indifference and dullness. So these are all positive emotions and inasmuch as aversion is connected with cruelty, with jealousy, with envy, disturbance of mind, turbulence, in the same way, all the positive counterparts, all the positive antidotes are interconnected. Friendliness is connected with joy, also with compassion, also with peace, so you've got a cluster of positive emotions as the antidotes to a whole cluster of negative emotions. So we must remember that though metta is the basic positive emotion here there are others which are the antidotes of the corresponding related poisons.

Buddhadasa: What is the near enemy of compassion?

S: The near enemy of compassion. The near enemy is contempt, far enemy cruelty.

Lokamitra: Equanimity, I always thought, would be attachment. You could link the two, attachment and disturbance.

S: Well, attachment is more the near enemy of metta. No, equanimity, the near enemy is indifference, because you're calm and quiet as it were, but you're indifferent to others. So in that way it would suggest that if equanimity is indifference that equanimity excludes metta, but it doesn't and this is a very important point.

Lokamitra: [unclear comment] [82]

S: Because, in a way, if you're not careful you tend to think of equanimity as something apart from, metta, compassion and joy but this is not so, the point is really clearly made in the tradition that you develop equanimity by stressing or by experiencing more and more or intensifying the element of equality in all your positive emotions. That is to say you feel friendliness to all equally not more friendliness to some and less to others. You rejoice and are glad at the good fortune of all, not only your friends, but also your enemies equally. Your compassion is towards all. So you develop equanimity by intensifying that experience of equality. So you don't leave behind the metta, the karuna and the mudita when you do ..[unclear].. they're all there, but they are all experienced more and more equally not selectively. The complete equality, or the element of complete equality in that experience, regarded as a separate brahma vihara is equanimity.

Lokamitra: That's why I thought it was attachment would be the enemy, because then that would be like stopping you... seeing all ... appreciating...

S: That's true, if you can feel very friendly to some people and not to others, sure, then that means an admixture of attachment. So that would represent a limitation. So if you look at equanimity like this it's quite clear it can't be indifference.

Nagabodhi: Can you not say that the near enemy of compassion is sympathy?

S: In a way, yes, but it is like contempt because you're in a superior position, sympathizing with the poor person who is in difficulties, may be in a slightly patronizing sort of way and when that becomes extreme it's just contempt. You're not really sorry for them. Well, there's an element of contempt your pity. You sympathize with them from a superior position. You look down on them. Well, they are unfortunate, yes, but, if you're not careful your springs of compassion dry up and you're just looking down on them as miserable, unfortunate, wretched people. So it's important perhaps to say, or even to put it in this way, that equanimity includes friendliness, compassion and joy. And equanimity develops when these three positive emotions are directed equally toward all.

Lokamitra: It seems to me that, just from my own experience, that the first three ... [83] I certainly find that depending on how I feel at the time, it will... the positive emotion will come up more as compassion one day or more as joy one day.

S: Well, yes, and also on the nature of the external situation. If you're in the midst of people who are suffering, then obviously compassion is going to come up more and if you are in the midst of very happy, joyful people, having a quite good time, well, sympathetic joy will come up more. And so on. One could also say, though I don't know whether this is explicitly said, in the tradition but it certainly could be said, that none of the first three brahma viharas, that is to say, metta, karuna, mudita, can be fully developed without equanimity, without equanimity also developing, so therefore each of these brahma viharas, each of these first three tends to, as it were, merge in equanimity from the standpoint, or from the angle of its own particular positive emotion. We see this when we come to the beginning of the fifth stage of the metta bhavana. There's metta equally towards those four persons so here also there's an element of equanimity coming in and it has to come in for the metta itself to develop. So if your practice of friendliness is selective there will be an element of disturbance. You'll sort of waver a bit. Do you see that?

Lokamitra: You won't be able to develop it.

S: Well, for instance, I've mentioned this before, maybe you haven't all heard it. There is an illustration given in Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga to illustrate the evenness of your metta towards the four persons that is to say self, friend, neutral, enemy and he says supposing you found yourself with these other three people in a lonely spot say in the midst of a jungle, that is to say yourself, your best friend, your worst enemy and a completely neutral person. Supposing you are all four together in that lonely spot in the jungle, and suppose suddenly there appeared a band of robbers and they wanted the life of one of you, either you yourself, your best friend, your worst enemy or the neutral person and supposing the leader of that band of robbers said to you, you decide. One of the four is to be handed over to us. We shall have his life and supposing at that moment, your mind did not incline towards giving one rather than any of the others, then your metta would be perfect, because you would have an even attitude towards all. But supposing your attitude towards all wasn't even you'd certainly waver. Well, at least [84] you may not waver very much between yourself and your worst enemy or even the neutral person but you might waver quite a bit between yourself and your best friend. Shall I sacrifice myself for him, or him for me? Whichever way you'd certainly waver, there wouldn't be equanimity. But if you had exactly the same metta towards each, there'd be no wavering, your decision would be according to purely objective factors. So if the metta, or the karuna, or the mudita is equal, if there's equanimity, there's no wavering. Well, that means that those emotions must be fully developed, equally developed, towards all or otherwise there is sure to be wavering. It's like say, a father with a number of children and supposing he's equally fond of them all and supposing there's an opportunity of him going away somewhere on a little excursion where he can only take one of the children. Well, if he's got definitely the same affection towards all then he'll just decide quite objectively which one to take, but if he's got a favourite then he'll tend just to take just the favourite which means there won't be equanimity, there won't be an evenness of attitude and if there's any

conflict and the other children kicking up a fuss and saying why not us too, then there'll be a bit of conflict in his mind.

Lokamitra: That seems to show just one aspect of equanimity.

S: Yes, yes.

Lokamitra: And the other seems to be in that but something else but detachment but not in a negative sense, but something that comes out of that.

S: Hm, yes, positive detachment, equal attachment. If your attachment is absolutely universal, you're strongly attached to absolutely everything, well, there's no attachment. If you're equally attached to say food and no food, and equally attached to friends and enemies well that's as good as complete non-attachment.

Lokamitra: But the texts make it into almost a different practice, I think, isn't recommended that you consider conditionality... I can't remember what else, I can't remember where I've seen this, in fact, that you consider karma and everything that you do has an effect on everything and so on. Once you've developed the metta in an equal sense as it were, then you go on to further, perhaps, considerations.

S: I don't quite see where this ties in.

Lokamitra: I've read it somewhere when reading about equanimity as a brahma vihara. [85]

S: Well, certainly equanimity as a separate practice is to be undertaken only after practising the previous three brahma viharas, this is quite definitely stated by Buddhaghosa and others otherwise the danger is just indifference and aloofness. Anyway, that's the second basic method - metta as the antidote to aversion or hatred.

Abhaya: Do you think we could practise these without learning the details, using the metta as a framework?

S: I think you could, I think you could, I mean the metta is the raw material. It's said that, in a way, compassion and sympathetic joy are not separate emotions, in a way. If you're in a very positive, mettaful state and you just encounter suffering, the metta just spontaneously is transformed into compassion. In the same way if are in a mettaful state and you meet people who are happy and joyful you will spontaneously share in their happiness and joy and rejoice in it yourself. So if you've developed metta you can develop the karuna and the mudita by simply conjuring up imaginatively the idea of people who are unfortunate or people who are fortunate. But if try to develop the karuna, the compassion by conjuring up pictures of unfortunate people without the strong basis of metta you'd only feel depressed. Or if you conjure up pictures of joyful people, fortunate people without yourself being full of metta, which means happy with yourself too, you may just feel envious and jealous.

Abhaya: You should always do like the first stage of the metta first?

S: Yes, or be in that state. If you find yourself in that state when you sit down, well, that's alright, you don't need to do it as a practise. But in other words, the person who is full of metta will naturally experience compassion as he or she comes in contact with other people's suffering and joy, sympathetic joy, as he or she comes into contact with other people's good fortune. But you can't have either compassion or sympathetic joy without metta and you can't have metta without a strong element of metta towards yourself too. So it really means, you can't be compassionate and you can't feel sympathetic joy unless you're happy within yourself with yourself. That's not the whole story as regards metta, but it's a very important part of it, It's even the starting point. So a happy person you can say will be a friendly person. A friendly person will spontaneously be a kindly [86] and sympathetically joyful person. I mean all these positive emotions seem to hang together. It's difficult to have one without having all. And as you have all of them, of course you have each one.

Then we have, I'm going now in the order that probably we shall adopt in the course of the week as regards the actual meditations. There are different orders given in the texts. I'm thinking now not so much in terms of the natural progression of poisons so much as the natural progression of antidotes. So having collected or recollected our energies, having become concentrated with the help of the mindfulness breathing, having developed all our positive emotions with the help the metta bhavana and allied practises. In other words having had quite a bit of experience of Samatha, having perhaps some experience of the absorptions, we can now turn ourselves to the development of Vipassana which means the getting rid of all ignorance ultimately. So first of all we have a general view and we have that general view way of a contemplation of the nidana chain or chains both in the circular and in the spiral forms and this gives us some understanding of the general principle of conditionality in its two major forms, the reactive and the creative and we contemplate this.

This means of course also as was mentioned yesterday that we have to do our homework. we have to know what the nidanas are. We should know them by heart, both the cyclic sequence and the spiral sequence, so that we can it were murmur to ourselves in our meditation, in dependence upon ignorance arise the samskaras, in dependence upon the samskaras arises consciousness, this for the cyclic chain, in progressive and reverse order. And then when we come to the positive chain, the spiral part the sequence we should be able to say, in dependence upon suffering arises faith, in dependence upon faith arises joy. This way, very slowly and meditatively we just review these sequences in our minds and in this way use the recollection of those doctrinal formulas as a basis for developing actual insight, or at least a deeper understanding than usual. But, as I said, this implies that we have done our homework and we're not just sort of vaguely and hazily thinking about conditionality with a very vague picture of the Wheel of Life in our minds. But that we know each item and that we understand the significance of each item, at least in a general way and we can just move

through the whole sequence in that meditative manner, sort of dwelling upon it, dwelling no doubt longer upon some than others according to our interest and the degree of our penetration. When we come to doing this [87] we'll do it as a guided group meditation. This will make it easier for everybody. Easier to begin.

So this is the contemplation of the nidanas as the antidote for ignorance. Through this contemplation one develops insight and wisdom in a sense of a broad general understanding of the whole pattern of conditionality. Conditionality in general and conditionality more specifically in the form of these two principal sequences, cyclical and spiral. If one simply reads up the relevant chapters of the Survey or even the little booklet on Mind Reactive and Creative and knows those contents thoroughly, that will give one quite enough material for contemplation here. The nidana chain gives one a sort of framework. You can certainly depart from that framework and come to it in the course of your contemplation or you can elaborate or go more into a certain link than into the others, but you come back to the sequence, that provides you with a sort of steadying element.

All right, and then we come onto the mental poison of conceit and its antidote which is of course the Six Element practice. And of course, with the Six Element practice in its full form and in its various forms, we also introduce the element of visualization which is very important. As a Vipassana method, the Sixth Element practice doesn't include, or doesn't necessarily include visualization. The visualization of the elements making up the stupa is more like a concentration exercise. In this respect it corresponds more to the mindfulness of breathing, but it differs a bit, at least for some people from the mindfulness of breathing inasmuch as it's in a way more interesting. There are forms, there are colours which perhaps draw the mind more, at leant as far as some people are concerned. But the form in which we do the practice in this particular sequence, is that in which we reflect to begin with, taking the elements one by one. First of all there in the element earth, that element earth is present in my own physical body, but it does not belong to it. I've borrowed it as it were from the element earth which is outside in the universe as a whole and one day I have to give it back so it is not really part of me. I should not be attached to it. I should be prepared to let it go back. I shouldn't identify myself with it. In this way conceit in the sense of the identification of the identification oneself with what in fact is not oneself is resolved, it's in fact broken up rather forcibly even.

So in this way, the contemplation of the six elements, earth, water, [88] fire, air, ether or space and consciousness is the antidote for conceit in this sense.

So, a word about the other forms of five or six element practice. This is the six element practice as a Vipassana method. Now there are two other forms of this practice one of which is a concentration method and that's the one I've just mentioned, that is to say visualizing of the yellow square, the white disc and so on. This is a concentration exercise, a samatha exercise inasmuch as here no element of vipassana or insight is directly involved. So a very useful preliminary exercise before one takes up the visualization of Buddha or Bodhisattva forms.

Then there's also the five element practice as more or a psychological exercise merely. Though it does verge upon mindfulness, in the sense of integration of energies. This particular version is not found in the tradition. This is my own particular contribution in the lowly form of a psychological exercise.

Voice: Have you ever done that?

S: Oh yes.

Voice: Which one is that?

S: I'm going to explain it now.

So here one first of all becomes conscious of and tries to feel that one is as it were in a state of blockage. Now this doesn't mean if you're not blocked, try to feel blocked, no [laughter]. If you're not blocked, for heaven's sake stay not blocked. Don't even pretend to be blocked. Assuming that you are in a state of blockage or supposing you've got a group of beginners you just say well look, your energy's not very free. You're in a state of blockage. Think of this as the element earth. I'm earth, so obviously earth is something heavy, something solid and our energies are often like that to begin with. So just experience your earthiness in that sense. You're in a state of relative blockage or petrifaction, your energies are not free. They're coagulated, stuck, hard, solid, frozen, petrified, at least to some extent. Well, if you're not at all blocked, not at all earth-like, just say, it doesn't apply to me and wait until the rest of the class [89] catches up with you and join in at the stage you feel appropriate. And then water, water represents energy which is beginning to move. But at first it can only move in a certain way. It can only move like this, from side to side. This is oscillating energy. It's just that when you're tightly bound and you're trying to get free, there's a little sort of slack gradually develops and you can move within that, you can wriggle yourself from side to side within the bonds. Or if you're in prison, in a very narrow cell, you can pace up and down, you're not tightly bound any more, at least. I've given all these illustrations in a lecture at some length.

Voice: Two lectures, yes.

S: You remember? It's so long ago I've started forgetting.

Then, the third stage is that of fire. The energy starts ascending, if you like, being sublimated, becoming more refined, escaping upwards, like the kundalini.

The fourth element, that of air, represents energy expanding in all directions. You feel very free, you can move in any direction and of course, space is as it were the objective possibility of that freedom. When you're actually not only free to move in any direction, you are in all direction simultaneously. You have expanded and fill whatever it is, in other words, space. [90] [Tape 4 Side B]

S: This particular sequence or this particular way of looking; at the five elements or experiencing them is intended as a sort of preliminary loosening-up exercise, just a psychological exercise.

Abhaya: That's four isn't it Bhante? You do the four?

S: Earth, water, fire, air which is expansion. And the space, I'm not sure whether it's necessary to do that, it probably isn't really. It represents a state of being expanded infinitely in all directions. Perhaps we need only limit ourselves to, or only do the four. Maybe that will help to distinguish between the different of kinds of method, the four element practice, the five element practice and the six element practice. But I understand the element practice as a sort of psychological exercise hasn't always gone very well. You've experience of that in connection with the stupa dance and I also this up with Mallika when I was up in Glasgow and Mallika had without my knowledge associated sounds with the elements and Vajradaka continued this didn't you when you went to Holland on that retreat?

Vessantara: Movement, more movement. I did it more with movement.

S: There was some?

Vessantara: Only if people wanted to do it.

S: They were told they could if they wanted to. So could you say a bit about your experience and what happened.

Vessantara: I sort of described, very much the same way that Bhante described, if there is any feeling of blockage then just allow yourself to see yourself as earth and immediately the atmosphere changed and people felt very blocked and no one in fact could say anything, they were so blocked, there was no sound at that stage and there was this awful atmosphere and, you know, people were just kind of like mummified and it took them a long time to be able to get out of it, you know, and I said, right, now we'll change into water and we'll begin to feel the energy move a little bit. They couldn't quite get out of that rock-like stage and they kind of got stuck, you know, I was kind of talking [91] to them and trying to get this movement, after a little while, two people began to move. But what happened apparently was some people did genuinely get into or experience this earth-like feeling. Some people saw that other people were getting into this blocked feeling and felt blocked because they couldn't get into it. [laughter] So what effectively happened was a room full of blocked people. It became very difficult for them to move through all the stages. Some people about half managed to get to fire and after that they completely left the others behind. But some people who really couldn't give themselves to the process got kind of stuck, you know they felt a bit inhibited. They wanted to be able to do it and they could see that other people could do it and then they felt blocked because other people could do it and they couldn't.

S: Yes, but it's not a question of can or can't, but if you are blocked just recognizing it and seeing it and allowing yourself to experience it, and then moving on. But not trying desperately to get into a state of blockage, because that is what the exercise is supposed to be.

Vessantara: I think that those people were so used to trying to force that, force themselves to experience something.

S: Well, it probably has behind it the good old miccha ditthi, it's good to experience your negative state, be negative, get through it in that sort of way and many of them were gestalt group people, weren't they?

Vessantara: All of them.

S: All of them. It also occurs to me, this is what I said to Mallika, that perhaps it would be better slightly to disguise the practice, and not speak in terms of blockage, even though that might be what you actually experience, but in terms of solidity. To start off by saying well now feel very sort of stable, very solid and then go on make them sway and feel a bit fluid, as it were, but put it in positive, rather than as it were, negative terms. This is what I suggested to Mallika and probably this would be better so that it starts off positively. It's not just blockage, it's also sort of solidity, not strength because that would get people straining to be all strong, but just sort of experience your weight as you sit on the earth, as you sit cross-legged, that you are solid, you're heavy. In this way, those who are a bit blocked will experience their blockage and those [92] who are not will just experience that they're sitting there firmly and solidly.

Vessantara: In the positive sense of earth?

S: Yes, in the positive sense of earth.

Vessantara: Do you see the practice as a kind of a sitting still practice or do you see it as a moving one?

S: It can be movement, but I'm very suspicious of movement in practice. I went into this with Mallika and I said I was quite in favour in principle of movement and even dance but that I felt that this could be so easily misused and get mixed up with some sort of encounter type thing that I preferred to go very, very cautiously. And also I heard that on one of the women's retreats which Mallika led she took the stupa dance and some of the women on the retreat just couldn't get on with it at all and reacted strongly against it, Madeleine particularly wrote me a quite long and sensible letter about it, a very clear letter.

Vessantara: Mallika was under the impression that Madeleine was just reacting against her and not against the practice.

S: There might have been an element of that but no I definitely felt that what Madeleine wrote at its face value was quite reasonable. Also she wasn't happy that practically the whole retreat was centred about the stupa dance and this became a quite sort of central thing. So this also brings us to the point of innovation. People should be very careful about innovating so I felt here as far as this stupa dance and all that was concerned there had been quite a bit of innovation of which I just didn't know anything at all until afterwards because no one ever asked me about those things. So I warned Mallika about this and I had quite a long talk with her on the subject. One really must know what one

is doing when one makes any changes. If one doesn't, well one should just stick quite faithfully to what has been established and laid down which means it has been tested and tried.

So we've got therefore in the case of the element practice, let's say a four element practice which is of the nature of a kind of psychological loosening up exercise, a five element practice which is a concentration exercise, on the one hand linked, as it were, with the Mindfulness of Breathing, or if you like, looking back [93] to the Mindfulness of Breathing and on the other sort of looking forward to the fully fledged visualization practice as of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Then you've got the six element practice as a vipassana exercise to break up the feeling of conceit or personal identity in the narrow sense.

Lokamitra: Ah, you said that we shouldn't do this with people, the visualization of the stupa in person, as it were, does this come into this section, or is this just a [unclear]

S: We don't do the visualization of the stupa when we do the six element practice as a vipassana. You can do the stupa visualization first if you like as a concentration exercise and then go on to the vipassana form of the practice certainly.

Lokamitra: Sorry, I didn't make myself clear, you visualize the earth, as the first chakra as it were and so on up, this is just another development...

S: That's just another development, yes. This may well, as it were, have different repercussions, yes, say within oneself and one's system, therefore I wouldn't advise anyone to take it up without going into it properly with someone.

Nagabodhi: We did this on the Easter retreat a couple of years back. I personally benefited enormously, purely psychologically, I'd say. I think a few other people did it on that retreat found it like me the most directly liberating practice I've ever done.

S: This is definitely psycho-physical and everything of this nature is to be handled with great care.

Lokamitra: It's alright for us as organizers to do it?

S: I think normally it would be alright for Order Members who are in a healthy mental and spiritual state, say, and not for others, or not when they happen to be in another kind of state even those who are normally healthy.

Buddhadasa: What's this, Bhante? Could you go into it a little bit more. I'm not quite sure what you're talking about. [94]

Nagabodhi: You visualize the stupa, you start, um, the way Devaraja led it was one started by...

Buddhadasa: Oh, equating that with the chakras?

S: Yes, because different elements are associated with different chakras.

Buddhadasa: No, I haven't done that.

S: This, by the way has not been introduced by me. I'm quite happy about the practice but again, technically this is another instance of something unauthorised, as it were, one must be quite careful about that. But in principle I'm quite in favour of this practice. It is quite good and quite efficacious and quite positive, but one needs to be particularly careful with this type of thing because you can stir yourself up quite a bit.

Nagabodhi: I certainly found that it was a practice that you couldn't, that is if you undertook to do it you had to do it right through because if you left off or in anyway didn't throw yourself entirely into it, when the practice was over you felt something left behind, you know, it would stay with you until I did it again and cleared it out. It would definitely be tampering with things.

S: This is still a samatha type practice. If we include this one too, then there are four practices under this head, one as a concentration exercise, two as samatha type practices, one out there and one in here and the last as a vipassana type practice, so it's quite a rich field in a way.

Vessantara: Did you just change it? Did you say the psychological exercises are concentration exercises? Or samatha?

S: No, no the four element practice can be described as a preliminary loosening-up practice, that is, a psychological exercise, though it will conduce to concentration, so to that extent it overlaps with the two specifically samatha-type practices. And also of course a very important practice to be stressed especially within the context of one's personal practice in the retreat situation, is that the best sort of safeguard are positive emotions. If there is a very positive atmosphere on the retreat and the puja is going well and there is a good devotional spirit and a lot [95] of friendliness and positive emotion, it's much more difficult for any practice of this sort to produce undesirable effects. If there's a bit of strain and negativity, it's being done more as an exercise, not much of devotion around, there's a much higher risk of something going wrong. I mean, positive emotions are very, as it were, protective, cushioning in this sort of way, in this sort of respect.

Lokamitra: With regard to that, it's a long time for a lot of people before they can experience any feeling of metta and often if you try to encourage people say to practice it once a day on a retreat, they find it very difficult.

S: To practice what?

Lokamitra: The metta bhavana. Can you suggest any way to assist that, to...

S: Well, in a way, it's sort of reciprocal, only to practice the Metta-bhavana and sort of be more friendly generally, and be in a more positive atmosphere, of course the metta-bhavana will contribute to that and then that will contribute to the Metta-bhavana. Or maybe a more vigorous use of imagination.

Voice: Could you go into that a bit more?

S: Well, if you find yourself really dry, well just go back in imagination to scenes in the past, especially in connection with a good friend where you had a happy time together, sort of recreates it, re-experiences, lives through it again. In this way, you know, in one way or another, just get some positive sparks going.

So that's four of the five basic methods and the fifth is the, well the fifth mental poison is that of craving. It doesn't usually come last but it's last here in this sequence because I'm thinking more in terms of the sequence of practices than the sequence of poisons. To get rid of craving you can practice the ten asubha bhavana stages in the decomposition of a corpse, or the recollection of death or the recollection of impermanence, or perhaps contemplation is a better word here.

Buddhadasa: What's the contemplation of impermanence?

S: That all things are impermanent, that nothing lasts, that things will pass away, whether it's a flower, or whether it's a planet or whether it's a whole galactic system ... [two voices, unclear] [96]

Now in connection with the practice of the different antidotes to craving, there's always the danger of falling into negativeness. For instance there's the case I mentioned, I think, yesterday of the Buddha, well it might have been on the previous retreat, the Buddha shortly after his Enlightenment, or not very long after his Enlightenment was teaching a number of monks and he gave them the recollection of death to practise and he went away for a while. When he came back he found they'd all committed suicide. Now what do you think this means?

Abhaya: They were in a very bad state of mind...

S: Yes, it seems that they had reflected, 'Well life ends in death; life is no use; what's the good of being alive; we're going to die anyway.' It took this sort of turn. Yes? Which was quite negative and which the Buddha hadn't intended at all. So one has to be very careful and also the exercise is designed for the destruction of craving and I think one has to be quite careful in the west, especially, how one approaches this, otherwise one can get the impression, or even start feeling that the whole approach is anti-life in a very negative sense. Do you see what I mean? That it doesn't become something spiritually positive but something which is merely negative. It doesn't affirm something spiritual but merely negates the worldly.

Vessantara: I remember when I was... I started taking refuge at Samye Ling, I was in retreat and I was given a little book which I was to spend four hours a day studying and that was basically concentrating on the unpleasantness of life and impermanence and so on. And after about three days I went through a period.. I was getting really depressed, really bad. I got through it and came out of it but if I'd been feeling in a less positive state I might just have sunk without a trace.

S: Right, yes, So if you take the extreme view, the sort of literal-minded kind of view, that you've got to get rid of craving, craving is bad. You've got to get rid

of all your appetites, that everything ends in death and well, what's the use of it anyway. If you reflect in this way too vigorously you get in a very negative state of mind and feel that life is not worth living including that it's not any use making any positive spiritual effort about anything. So if one engages in these practices and reflections being already a very positive person with some spiritual experience, that's entirely another matter, but [97] most people are just not in that state, not for long anyway. So therefore there must be great circumspection about this particular method. So I've been thinking this over quite seriously and I came to the conclusion that it would be beet to practise this particular method in the form of having recourse to the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Because certainly the Tibetan Book of the Dead is concerned with Death but it's concerned with it in a very positive way, with death as a means to liberation as it were, and death is also given a sort of, not exactly symbolical significance, but a more positive spiritual significance, it's the gateway to eternal life, as it were, if you know how to use it. So here the emphasis is not just on death but it is on eternal life you can say and also the imagery is very attractive, the visualizations, one sees the figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas... And this of course, this is going a bit beyond the Hinayana framework, but never mind, I think it is good to do so at this stage and that makes possible a transition to the visualization practices which go beyond as it were the five basic methods. We're not going to sort of go through the whole Tibetan Book of the Dead but only certain verses which we shall use at an appropriate point.

Sona: During the seminar?

S: No, during the meditation sessions.

So you, see the sequence? It is not just five methods but there's a definite sequence. First of all you concentrate your scattered energies through the Mindfulness of Breathing, you develop your positive emotion through the Metta bhavana, you then have a general broad if not insight into, at least understanding of, the basic things, the basic realities, conditionality, the reactive form, the creative form, you see what you have to develop, you have to develop that creative sequence and then you go a bit more deeply, you try to break up the old empirical self by way of a contemplation with the six elements and then you begin to appreciate that as not just a negative but also a positive thing with the help of the verses from the Tibetan Book of the Dead. That opens the way to even more advanced practice and experience by way of the mantra recitation, the visualization and so on. In this way one has a quite clear sequence.

Vessantara: Having now become acquainted by the end of this seminar with these methods what sort of implications do you think it might have on our practice, our work with mitras? [98]

S: Well, in the general classes one confines oneself to the Mindfulness and the Metta bhavana. One could cautiously introduce the visualization the five elements for mitras, I think, but I think one would have to be quite careful about it and think about it.

Sona: What, the stupa you mean?

S: Yes, but I think it's quite important who actually leads it and this is something that we've been thinking about and talking about recently. We talked about it in the last seminar. That the mental state of the person leading is quite important and it becomes all the more important when it comes to visualizations and things of that sort. What I am saying is not to be taken as giving carte blanche to all Order members to take any group of mitras. It's very important that the Order member concerned should be in a truly positive state and be able to convey that by just the way he leads the whole practice. And it's quite clear that there is quite a lot of negativity, or negative energy around as one can see quite clearly from what has been happening in the puja and chanting both on the last retreat and on this. It seems to me simply that just a lot more positive emotion needs to be developed.

Vessantara: It brings up the point about the difficulty people have had about getting at the metta... [unclear]... it's very common to Order members...

S: Right, indeed.

Voice: Do you think so?

Vessantara: Yes.

Vajradaka: Do you think that there is a direct correlation just because people have difficulties with metta that it's because Order members themselves aren't experiencing metta?

Vessantara: Considering people who come along to classes now compared to say six months to a year ago, it's my experience now that people seem to find it easier to do metta on the whole and that's because now Order members or more Order members are finding their own practice of metta as being deeper. I can't see any other reason why...

S: It's quite certain that someone who is leading the practice can very strongly influence those whom he is leading one way or the other. [99]

Nagabodhi: It's also a matter of a general opinion. I remember when there used to be a quite doom-laden feeling... oh the metta, you know [laughter]. What meditation is it going to be tonight, the metta, oh god.

Voice: It's still like that.

Nagabodhi: Much less because I think there's quite a strong body of people who have quite a positive experience of it, whereas in the past it was quite universally seen as a bit of an assault course [laughter]. I also think this helps to do it out loud, to do it as a guided group meditation. I think that if one feels that the metta for a week or two has not been what it should be one should, you know, as once in a way, do it in that way. I think it always... of course the metta is an expression, there's a more maybe tangible communication between the persons leading and the people being led through the practice.

Nagabodhi: I think if you're stuck in a negative state during the metta it's quite good to be pricked into consciousness of it because a very incestuous state of that kind of negativity can be got into and to be woken up out of it every ten minutes is a load of good [laughter].

S: Mm... by something more than just a little bell.

Nagabodhi: Yes.

S: The whole subject of positive emotion is very, very important. I think that though improvements have been made there is still less of it around than there should be.

Lokamitra: I was quite surprised to realize how many mitras have difficulty with the metta, mitras who I thought wouldn't have [unclear]... mitras in groups. I think it's something we should encourage much more.

S: At any rate that didn't fully answer your question did it? That's what we started from or does it? That is once you've gone through all these methods, what effect it's going to have on your own practice and also on your relationship with your mitras. Well, if you've gone through all these practices even just a few times you should be in a much more positive state and that cannot but do good. Exactly how may not [100] be possible, even necessary to say, but the effect will be positive in one way or another.

Voice: Will we be able to go on doing these on our own? Just after this brief...

S: Maybe we'll talk about that at the end of the retreat, after seeing how everything has gone, maybe asking people how they felt about it all.

Anyway, I think now it's time for coffee. I think it's good to pause there unless anyone still wants to ask about anything we've done so far. And then after the coffee we can...

Voice: There is one thing that occurred to me, you said that this sort of sequence led onto the mantra recitation and visualization and also in the last year you emphasized the importance of the sort of path of regular steps.

S: Yes.

Voice: I'm just thinking, I can't quite formulate the question properly, but thinking perhaps would it be a good thing to sort of leave the mantra recitation and visualization and concentrate more on the five basic practices?

S: Yes, for many Order members I'm sure that that would be good and they could then, they could either sort of continue the mantra recitation and visualization but before they do that, do more of one or two or three more basic methods, even stop doing the mantra recitation and visualization for a while and go back to it when they feel they have consolidated the base more thoroughly.

Vajradaka: I feel my own practice of mantra visualization has trailed out very long and thin and more or less ended because of lack of substance at the roots,

very much during the last six months. I got off to a jolly good start, you know, it seemed a complete breakthrough to the potential of meditation, but it died away.

Sona: I think also that a lot of Order members, actually, haven't got a proper practice. They've been given a sheet, but they haven't done a sort of retreat and so you haven't sort of got that sort of substance, [101] that sort of solidity there.

S: Well, this obviously has to be done when there is time. This is also why I am doing this in detail first. At least now we have a seminar around this material and we go through these basic practices at least a dozen people are going through them and it is on tape and then hopefully we can go forward from there and go more in detail into the visualization practices but obviously one can't go into detail in all of those for everybody until one has gone into detail in one of these. I'm afraid it is taking rather a long time to do everything which is a pity, but it seems, you know, difficult to have it otherwise. Again it's all part of the general upgrading and getting more and more into the path of regular steps. We've had everything in a preliminary rather sketchy form with quite a few gaps and now we have to go back to the beginning as it were and more thoroughly traverse those earlier steps and then more thoroughly and deeply get into the as it were more, you know, advanced and later practices.

Sona: At the time of ordination I think all Order members are given a practice or given a mantra. Where does that sort of tradition come from? I've never really very fully understood the reason for that.

S: If one asks in a technical sense which tradition it comes from then it is mainly Nyingmapa. I mean inasmuch as most of my own teachers, Tibetan teachers and this is of course more a Tibetan type of practice were Nyingmapa lamas. So it is mainly, you know, from that source or that tradition though not in any narrow or sectarian sense because the chief of these lamas who was Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche was the leader of a very important movement both in his present life and in his previous life, as it were, a movement known as Rime which means no boundary. It was for breaking down the boundaries between the different Tibetan sects and schools and he believed in the propagation of a unified tradition that are not split up into mutually exclusive schools and several of the other Nyingmapa lamas in one way or another were connected with ... and it is called the Rime movement... Rimpoche who by the way who is in London now is also connected with this and it occurred to me that the Friends attitude of being just Buddhists, not identifying with any particular school, a sort of universalization within the field of Buddhism of this particular attitude, well why stop with the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Why not in a sense break down the boundaries between all the different schools. It doesn't mean sort of just mixing them all up together in a confused kind of way, but ... [102] I won't say selecting, but sort of drawing upon, in a natural spontaneous way, all the elements which are useful, especially in the West under modern conditions and allowing them to blend harmoniously together into a single, unified tradition. So what we're doing in this way is a sort of widening of what Jamyang Khyentse

Rimpoche was trying to do simply in the context of Tibetan Buddhism. So this is where the tradition comes from in that sense and the basic function, I mean the basic function of the mantra recitation and visualization practice is to give Order members something, as it were, more inspiring and more definitely as it were, spiritual and more definitely connected with the Going for Refuge than just the concentration exercises which was virtually ... all that was in general circulation at least at the beginning. Now some of these other methods like the six element practice are beginning to get into circulation.

Sona: I suppose ideally with the general upgrading of ordination that you probably foresee a time when mitras are people that are going to be ordained but sort of practice all these basic practices first.

S: Oh yes, indeed, this is very much the idea. This would be really excellent and also when we have meditational retreats where we do all the five methods. Suppose you have a ten day retreat where you have two days predominantly for mindfulness, two days predominately for metta and so on, working your way through. And certainly eventually the aim should be that all or at least most mitras, you know, have got some experience of all these, or at least know the details, even if they haven't actually practised them. If one wants to follow very regular steps indeed, strictly regular, then you shouldn't practice vipassana type methods until you've actually Gone for Refuge, so if you want to be very strict, mitras should have a good actual experience of the mindfulness and the metta bhavana and then Go for Refuge and be ordained and then take up the vipassana type practices; and also the mantra recitation and visualizations contain an element usually of vipassana but in a Mahayana form. Those who have done the Manjushri practice will have appreciated that but mitras I think should certainly know about the vipassana type practices before they are ordained and perhaps could have been led through once or twice.

Lokamitra: Vipassana means insight, so if one experiences this sort of properly one is going to have broken the first three fetters.

S: Yes. [103]

Lokamitra: So it seems quite a high implication, so presumably often vipassana will take at first, will take the form of just subjective insight?

S: What do you mean by subjective insight?

Lokamitra: Well, not insight in the true Buddhist...

S: Yes, it will be very weak, so weak that the effects, though there are some, are not really perceptible, or only barely perceptible. It's very difficult sometimes to decide whether its a very deep understanding or whether it's a flash of insight. [104] [Tape 5 side A]

S: So Dharmapala was a Theravada Buddhist from Ceylon and in Ceylon very great importance has always been attached to the observance of very minor rules. Rules, some of them, so minor and in a way so superfluous that observing them

would mean that you could do very little work for Buddhism in the modern world. So Dharmapala felt that if he was ordained he would be obliged to follow these rules, that that public opinion at least would force him to observe and he recognized that he would then not be able to do very much for Buddhism. It's rather strange situation when if you want to work for Buddhism you can't be a monk because being a monk gets in the way. So he didn't become a monk, he just called himself Anagarika Dharmapala and he certainly observed all the essential precepts, in fact he led a very ascetic life indeed. For instance there is a rule that a monk a cannot ride behind a horse in a cart. So this would mean that he couldn't use the horse drawn ekka in Calcutta, you know, in pursuit of his work for the Maha Bodhi Society there. There were no motor cars in those days of course, and he wouldn't be able to handle money if he followed the precepts strictly, so this meant he wouldn't be able to carry on his Buddhist activities. So he had not to be ordained as a monk so that he could work for Buddhism which is completely ridiculous. But the present position is that the majority of monks in Ceylon do not observe these extra precepts but they take them, but they take them knowing that they're going to break them and I feel this is just a very unhealthy state of affairs. It's best just to drop them completely rather than take them knowing that you're not going to observe them. But whatever is taken, whatever precepts are taken should be observed and what is going to be observed should be taken. So this is why in the Western Buddhist Order we just have the Ten Precepts which are quite enough. There's no point in having extra precepts which people aren't going to observe. For the Theravada bhikkhu there are two hundred and twenty seven precepts and only three or four precepts are absolutely essential, the rest are matters of detail about giving warning to the sangha about the type of cottage you're going to build and how many feet round it should be clear and so on and so forth, you know, which are connected with conditions in ancient India, nothing to do with conditions nowadays.

Voice: Who would be the authority to change this?

S: Ah, that's the crux. They say there isn't any authority, no one has any authority. That's the official Theravada view. So therefore nobody can change anything, that's the official view and if anyone suggests, it's considered as [105] great presumption. 'Who do you think you are? Do you think you're another Buddha? Changing the rules?' This is what is generally said. In this way no changes can be made. But many monks, many monks indeed, privately think there must be come change and recently there has been a little bit of discussion about it. But it's usually the lay people who are up in arms against any change, for some reason or other, especially in Ceylon or Burma, even the government, in some places like Thailand. In Thailand the police can arrest any bhikkhu breaking any rule and take him to the police station and from there he's taken to his monastery, even for breaking very, very, minor rules which are rot at all important even according to the Vinaya itself. In Thailand they keep the monks very much under control and the Sangha is controlled by the Minister of Education, the Sangha is under the charge of the Minister of Education. It's he virtually who appoints the head Bhikkhus of different monasteries in consultation

with the Sangharaja. But it's all virtually run by the State.

Abhaya: A bit like the Church of England?

S: Like the Church of England, yes, and all the Bhikkhus get a small pittance from the state, pocket expenses.

Vessantara: Did the Buddha give the monks permission to dispense with minor precepts?

S: Yes, he did, but then they point that Ananda forgot to ask which were the minor ones [laughter]. So Ananda was taken to task. So this is why I feel sometimes a clean break with all this is needed otherwise we shall get nowhere.

Lokamitra: Even Rahula said some of these things weren't necessary.

S: Yes, but he's not in a position to do anything about it because he hasn't got any disciples.

Nagabodhi: In his article in The Middle Way he never suggests that they were dropped, he simply suggested the legalistic ways of getting round them without changing them.

S: Right, ah, this is what they tended to do in Ceylon which has developed a very unhealthy atmosphere, to find loopholes, this is what it really amounts to. I think this breeds a terrible mental climate. Anyway, [106] I'm in the process of writing a review on his little book 'The Heritage of the Bhikkhu' and I'm very, very, unhappy and displeased about it, but anyway, I shall, you know, give vent to my views in the review which will be quite lengthy. It's already eight typed pages and there's a lot further [laughter].

Nagabodhi: Newsletter colour supplement... [laughter].

S: But the point I'm emphasizing and the Grand Master here seems quite aware of it, is that the precepts are very, very, important and he doesn't say anything particular or special about becoming Bhikkhus or Bhikshunis. Come into personal contact with some learned master, you are taught the Three Refuges, the five fundamental precepts, then you gradually add to the number of precepts that you observe and that seems quite clear and straightforward except that I think as far as we are concerned we shall rest content with ten precepts and those heroic souls who decide to lead celibate lives can change their third precept from Kamesu micchachara which means refraining from sexual misconduct to Abrahmacharya which means to practise, ... to refrain from non-celibacy. Again celibacy is rather a narrow rendition; abrahmacharya was originally the term for the whole spiritual life, especially in the sense of dwelling in higher states of consciousness. So the idea was that if you were dwelling in those higher states of consciousness then sex wouldn't trouble you very much, so in this way the idea or the word abrahmacharya became associated with celibacy, but it's not so much a giving up sex as to be so absorbed in more positive states of consciousness that you think very little about sex, you maybe don't think about it at all, it's much more like that. So if some people do reach that level or that stage then they can

consider making that change in that particular precept. They will then make up in the wider sangha, as it were, an Anagarika sangha, of real full timers.

Lokamitra: It seems to me that it implies, well, that the positive version of the third precept, at the moment, that is, implies much more than just sex ... it implies indulgence in any way it seems.

S: Well, no, though contentment is a quite broad term here, it means contentment, if one is married say, with one's own marriage partner, or if one is single with the state of being single. [107]

Lokamitra: I was wondering if one could say neurotic craving with food and so on.

S: No, no, not as the positive counterpart of this particular precept, no not in that context.

Voice: It's more the eighth precept when you cover that.

S: Hmm, craving.

Lokamitra: Well is it? I've always seen that the two ... indulgence in sleep and ... very very much going together.

S: Well, yes, this is true, yes.

Lokamitra: And I was quite struck, I told you this once before about how Gandhi, and I know the way he did it was strange, but, you know, how he made an effort to bring them all in line.

S: I think this is quite important, yes.

Voice: It's like where that third precept does merge or is like an outer aspect of that eighth precept.

Lokamitra: But you can't say that eating is more of a mental function than sex, for example, and the eighth precept is definitely, is one of the ... ?

Buddhadasa: Isn't the third precept more objective inasmuch as we should not cause harm through our sexual practice. whereas eating is a subjective thing and it only causes harm to yourself. It's quite a big distinction.

S: I think you can't sort of completely, neatly and tidily reduce it all to a formula or a list of precepts, it's sort of delightfully untidy. One shouldn't try to tidy it up too much. But where the celibacy ties up with being the full timer is obviously that if you have a regular sex life, sooner or later that leads to a permanent sexual relationship and sooner or later that leads to settling down and in most cases to children, then you have a family and then that means that you have to have a regular job, a full time job and that means a lot of your time and energy goes in that particular way. So in this way if you can observe [108] celibacy in a positive sense, you avoid all that and are able to devote yourself fully and completely to the spiritual life and spiritual activities. So therefore I do envisage the possibility, though I haven't come to any definite conclusion about

it, that there may well be within the Upasaka Sangha, as it were, an Anagarika Sangha who are more definitely the full timers and who've given up all hope, as it were, if that's the right word [laughter] of family life.

Lokamitra: But just a point there, Buddhadasa, the first three precepts aren't... surely one should include oneself, harming oneself and so on, not just other people.

Buddhadasa: Of course.

S: Anyway, we're getting on well, but not very quickly. So here the Grand Master is describing the first kind of persons who observe sila. That is to say, those who are really following the path of regular steps very perfectly even before they come into contact with Buddhism, they have a relatively clean sheet, no serious offences, no very unskilful states of mind or very unskilful actions. So they come into contact with the Sangha, they come into contact with the Teacher, they Go for Refuge, they commit themselves and they start observing the precepts and their observance of the precepts becomes more and more thorough. This is expressed by observing a greater and greater number which in traditional Buddhism is associated with successive ordinations, but not necessarily so, but the pattern that emerges is quite clear. Someone Going for Refuge and observing precepts more and more faithfully without any breach. So this sort of person is like one with a robe perfectly white which has never been stained, never been dirtied and is perfectly white and ready for dyeing. So this is as it were the ideal condition of observing sila as a preparation for the practise of dhyana, don't forget that. It's sila as a stepping stone for dhyana. So this is the first kind of person in respect to the observance of sila, as a preparation for dhyana. You come along with a clean sheet. Even as a non-Buddhist, even before you've committed yourself you were in a pretty healthy and skilful mental state. Then you commit yourself and you practise the precepts, more and more thoroughly and you're never guilty of any breach; from the time that you Go for Refuge you have [109] a very consistent and very thorough application of your commitment on the ethical level. You observe the precepts faithfully and you keep on as it were adding to them, observing them more and more thoroughly and deeply. So this is the ideal situation as regards the practice of sila prior to taking up the practise of samatha and vipassana. You're the man with the clean robe which has never been even a little bit dirtied.

I think we have to stop there because we have been going on nearly four hours now and have our coffee break. I think we'll stop there partly because there follows a quite important section. This is about confession and repentance. I think there's probably going to be quite a bit there that we need to go into quite thoroughly. After that perhaps we can hasten on a bit.

Now, any final questions before we do conclude? [110]

[Day Three]

S: So we were on the first chapter yesterday, External Conditions. In fact we

read the whole of that chapter but we only discussed in detail the first paragraph. We lingered rather a long time over that first paragraph because it is important. I think from this session we have to move on a little more quickly because we've quite a lot of ground to cover.

You remember the Grand Master was speaking of three kinds of persons as regards the practice of sila as a preparation for the practice of Dhyana. Those who have never been guilty of any breach of the precepts. They come along with a clean sheet, having lead an ethical life, Go for Refuge, take upon themselves different sets of Buddhist precepts and are never guilty of any breach or any violation. They are like people whose robe is perfectly white, it's never been soiled, it's ready for dyeing. The second kind of person are those who keep the main precepts but neglect many of the less important ones but because of their practice of Dhyana are repentant. That's interesting, 'but because of their practise of Dhyana are repentant.' Do you see any particular significance in this?

Voice: In the practise of Dhyana you are brought up against yourself.

S: You are brought up against yourself, yes, but it also means you are compelled to recognize that you have been on the path of irregular steps and that you have to get back to the path of regular steps. You have to consolidate your practise of sila before you can go on to further your practise of Dhyana.

Now at this point I think there's something that should be cleared up about sila. I don't know that I've spoken about it in detail before. We're speaking about the practice of sila, sila as preparation for dhyana. But what is sila? It isn't fully brought out even by these lists of precepts or these groups of precepts, the five and the ten and so on. The Pali tradition, in fact the general tradition distinguishes two kinds of sila, what is called in Pali pakkati sila and what is called pannati sila. Pakkati means natural, it's the same word as the Sanskrit: pakrita, it's natural, natural morality, but pannati is conventional. So there's natural morality, conventional morality. Now what does one mean by this distinction, [111] natural morality and conventional morality?

Voice: It means natural morality one doesn't have to make the effort, while in actual fact it's naturally done.

S: No, no.

Vessantara: I think it has more to do with .. some things which are inherently - in inverted commas - good and bad and there are some things which are connected with society...

S: Yes... yes. Natural morality is the morality which is directly related to mental states, whereas conventional morality is that which is related simply to custom and observance often of a very local kind.

Voice: Could you say that natural morality is psychological?

S: Yes, you could say it is psychological, but not psychological simply in the sense of subjective.

Nagabodhi: The difference between good and bad and skilled and unskilled?

S: Yes, yes, provided of course you are definitely limiting good and bad to matters of custom and observance.

Nagabodhi: Is it the unconscious acceptance that some things are right and some things are simply because you have been conditioned into them and so... and so you ... [unclear] ... because you don't really think about them.

S: For instance, to give you an example, that you should try to get rid of craving, this is a matter of natural morality. That you should try not to commit those actions which are based upon craving, especially in its more neurotic forms. This is a matter of natural morality. Yes? But that in any given society you should, for instance, be permitted to have one wife, or two wives, or four, that is a matter of conventional morality. So you see the difference?

So within Buddhist tradition there are some precepts, especially precepts to be practised by monks, which have nothing to do with natural morality but only conventional morality. This is clearly recognized in the Theravada tradition itself, though this is in [112] principle, in theory, though often in practice matters of conventional morality for once are regarded as no less important than matters of natural morality. For instance, that you wear a yellow robe and shave your head this is only a matter of conventional morality according to the Theravada tradition itself, but in practice, at least as far as public opinion is concerned, very great importance attaches to it, as much as to even some of the more important precepts of natural morality. Yes? And that is rather unfortunate. So the sila which provides you with the foundation for dhyana is natural morality so we have to very carefully distinguish here and make sure that we are practising natural morality, in this sense, and not just conventional morality and also make sure that if we are expecting anything of other people, that what we are expecting is a matter of natural morality and not merely conventional morality, customs and observance.

Is this clear in everybody's mind?

So much that is regarded as a matter of morality is simply local custom, local observance, local tradition, local belief, convention and has got nothing to do with the practice of dhyana. It doesn't matter one way or the other. But unfortunately sometime people feel very guilty about not observing matters of conventional morality if especially the society to which they belong attaches great importance to these matters of conventional morality, virtually as though they were matters of natural morality. For instance, in some societies it is regarded as moral to work and therefore immoral not to work. So a person who doesn't work, in the sense of being gainfully employed is looked down upon a bit as a slightly immoral sort of person and even perhaps made to feel guilty, even perhaps does feel guilty, as though he has actually done something wrong, something against natural morality when he's only going against custom and convention.

So, when it is said that sila is a necessary foundation for the practice of dhyana it

is decidedly natural morality that is meant. And the precepts of natural morality are those precepts which prevent you from committing unskilful actions, that is to say, actions based upon craving, aversion and ignorance and help you to perform actions based of the opposites of those factors, that is to say, on skilful states of mind, such as generosity, love and wisdom and so on. [113]

Nagabodhi: If you are living outside conventional morality and that's causing you guilt and anxiety which in turn is affecting your meditation perhaps you should you do your best to see through the conventional morality or is it, may it be advisable to live within it a little?

S: Probably at the beginning when you are struggling with your meditation, it's better to try to live within it a little, but as you succeed with the meditation as you become more firmly established in skilful mental states and as you become more sure of yourself, then you should not give the conventional morality so much importance in that sort of way, unless it's something, as it were, neutral that doesn't matter either way as it were, you just go along with society because you feel it's not worth fighting over, worth that expenditure of energy; you feel that it doesn't represent any question of principle. Doesn't hinder you from doing something that you really need to do.

Lokamitra: To some extent, just to a minor extent, we have it seems to make our own conventions, in that we have to follow some kind of conventional morality, the way we receive people for example at the Centre and so on. But we have to be aware that it is only conventional. But there do seem to be one or two areas like this.

S: Yes... Well again it's conventional and not conventional. The spirit, of course, is not conventional but the form is conventional in this case. So that you should make people welcome, you know, this is a matter of natural morality, whether you offer them tea and coffee according to local custom and convention, that's a matter of conventional morality and tradition. In Buddhism things like manners and etiquette shade off into conventional morality. But we may need to create some social conventions of our own as it were.

Voice: Don't you think that it will happen just naturally?

S: I hope so but it may be that we have to take some and push it a bit, otherwise nothing happens. It's rather interesting to see a society like the Tibetans, in the old days that is, in which there was a common pattern of social observance, etiquette and so on throughout the whole of the society which everybody knew and everybody observed. Admittedly the aristocracy would regard it in a somewhat elegant way and the ordinary lay folk and the peasantry in a less polished way, but it was quite definitely the same etiquette the same manners, the same customs running through the [114] whole of the society. But we don't have anything like that.

Voice: ... An etiquette based on natural morality perhaps?

S: That's quite difficult to say. In principle, yes. But some of the elaborations

which afterwards developed I felt became almost sort of hypocritical. Certain of the conventions were based on the principle of dana. For instance, if you go to see somebody you always take something, you always make a little gift and I don't think this ever becomes entirely mechanical. If you meet someone, you make polite enquiries about their health and so on. But I remember a rather fearful little story told me by one of my aristocratic Tibetan friends, coming from one of the most aristocratic families in Lhasa, he was a very good sort of person, he was almost a next door neighbour in Kalimpong and he was married to one of the Sikkim princesses. I used to see rather a lot of him, he was very very affable and easy going, a typical aristocrat, he hardly did a day's work in his life. He had a sort of official post and used to look in his office once or twice every three months, but that was about all. He used to spend his time with his friends, especially with Tibetan monks. He was very, very interested in anything religious. He never actually did any practice but he was a completely harmless and well meaning sort of person. So he tells me that some years before there had been some political plotting in Lhasa, apparently connected with the question of the regency. I don't remember the details, it was before the Dalai Lama came of age, when he was sixteen, when there was a regent exercising his powers. So that there was a certain amount of plotting and intriguing and at one point there was a change of regent. So this friend of mine got mixed up in all that, quite innocently, he wasn't really involved at all. But he happened to be thrown into prison and was there for three months and he happened to have a personal enemy, another official, another aristocrat and he was mildly tortured while he was in prison and this particular enemy sort of supervised it and was quite enjoying the opportunity of getting what he felt was his own back on this friend of mine and he was there for three weeks, nothing was found against him and he was released, but he had been quite badly treated, badly shaken up. Some weeks later he went to one of these aristocratic parties where, you know, the Tibetan aristocracy foregathered and there was the other official who had supervised his torture. So as soon as this official saw him, he said, 'Ah, how are you, where have you been, how are you keeping these days?' As if nothing whatever had happened, apparently with complete sincerity. But this friend of mine said, 'That's what the Tibetan aristocracy are like. These fine manners on the [115] surface, but underneath it's something quite different.' He was making these tender enquiries after his health... 'Why haven't we seen you all this time. Where have you been?' So he made also the corresponding replies. 'Oh, I was busy with my private affairs. I wasn't able to see anybody.' No one felt in the least embarrassed or anything of that sort. So this is what I mean when I refer to these sort of complicated developments which rather stray away from, you know, Buddhist ethical principles. But he told this story quite good naturedly. He said he'd got over his experience. He told it quite as a sort of joke almost.

So it is, to make the point once again, the natural morality that is the basis for the development of dhyana. It isn't always easy to see what is a matter of natural morality, let's be quite sure about that. Therefore the understanding of the ten precepts becomes very important. That is to say, the ten precepts

of the Upasaka, because they do represent certain basic principles or basic applications of principles of natural morality. Principles rather than rules as I've often emphasized.

Nagabodhi: ... [unclear sentence] ... that the Buddha seeing the danger of rules gave the following precepts. Is this seeing the danger of conventional morality even, reminding...

S: Yes, not just conventional morality even, but all sorts of Brahminical practices and observances which had nothing to do either with morality or with spiritual practices.

"The third kind of followers are those who have been taught to keep the Precepts but who fail to keep even the important ones and who, on the contrary, are breaking both important as well as the less important. According to the rites of the Hinayana there is no way provided for removing the stain caused by the Four Main Violations. But in the Mahayana, religious services are provided for the purification of such offences provided there is evidence of sincere penitence and remorse."

You could say that this attitude is typical of the Mahayana. The Mahayana Doesn't give up hope. In fact you could say that even on the evidence of the Pali scriptures this was the Buddha's own attitude. But so far as the Theravada school was concerned, it seems that in the course of centuries a certain hardening of attitude took place, so that people who had committed certain offences came to be regarded as absolutely [116] beyond the pale. There was no hope for them, certainly not in this life. They had to wait and be reborn and start all over again. But the Mahayana did not take this view and the Mahayana took the view that it was possible to mend your torn robe, as it were, remove the stains, however deep they might be, however dark they might be. But it certainly didn't say this lightly. It certainly didn't say that offences weren't offences but it did believe that something could be done about them. For instance in the Hinayana they would tend to say that if you had committed a murder for instance then there was no hope for you in this life. It wouldn't be possible for you to reach the Dhyana state on account of that very serious breach of natural morality. But the Mahayana would say, not so. Not that the Mahayana would say that it didn't matter or that it wasn't a very serious breach. No, the Mahayana would say, Yes, certainly it was a very serious breach, a very deep and dark stain on your robe as it were, but it can be removed. There is still hope for you provided you are sincerely penitent, and then there's the ten indications of sincerity. In a way this was a more human, a more compassionate approach on the part of the Mahayana.

Voice: What are the ten signs of sincerity?

S: Pardon? Yes, they are listed here and we're going to go through them.

So, first of all, the first of the ten indications of the sincerity of one's repentance, "A clear understanding and acceptance of the cause and effect of his offence."

What do you think is meant by that?

Abhaya: What your motives were for committing it.

S: Yes, what your motives ... what your actual state of mind was.

Supposing that you had committed a murder, to see quite clearly that you committed it out of a very unskilful mental state which you had allowed to build up perhaps over a long time. A state perhaps of anger, of hatred, of malice, jealousy, revengefulness, possessiveness. That you had allowed all these unskilful mental states to build up in your mind and as a result of that you committed the action and that the result of the action would definitely be suffering for you in the future. To see this clearly.

Voice: In the four main violations listed here, it doesn't seem an awful lot [117] that you can do that isn't a main violation. Apart from the first...

S: Yes. Deceit here by the way has got a very special meaning. It means Falsely pretending to spiritual powers. It isn't deceit in the ordinary sense.

Buddhadasa: Could you say that again?

S: Deceit is falsely pretending to spiritual powers or attainments. Perhaps I should say a few words about this because Buddhism has always considered this a very important matter. This is why there is a sort of convention, almost a sort of spiritual etiquette in Buddhism not to claim that you have reached any particular degree of spiritual development or advancement, especially in the Theravada countries this is quite pronounced. These sort of things are left to be understood or felt. No explicit claim is ever made. It's regarded as a sort of spiritual bad manners to do that. To sort of say. 'Oh, I am a stream entrant.' Or even to say 'I think I'm a stream entrant'. This is regarded as a sort of spiritual bad manners, forming possibly a basis for egotism. So if even this is regarded as undesirable, how much more undesirable to pretend to attainments that you don't actually possess. But I must say from my own experience that this is one of the very sort of healthy attitudes which has been kept up in the whole of the Theravada tradition with very, very few exceptions. No claims are made in this sort of way, even when there is or would be adequate grounds for such a claim. People are very reticent about these matters. They feel that if there is any sort of spiritual attainment it should be obvious from the persons whole way of life. You shouldn't have to say such and such is my attainment. On the whole it seems a very healthy, very circumspect sort of attitude, a very sober sort of attitude.

Voice: Particularly in a land which abounds with perfect masters and sons of Brahmin and...

S: Right, right. And you could well imagine the Buddhist tradition developing this sort of feeling and attitude [118] [Tape 5 Side B] in the midst of that sort of atmosphere. And usually Theravada Buddhists, if they're asked about anybody's spiritual attainments, they'll simply say, 'We don't know.' They won't say one

way or the other. This is the usual thing. They're very reticent about expressing any opinion of this sort and certainly laying any claim to spiritual attainment themselves. So consequently, the making of any false claim, deceiving people in this way, saying that you are this, that and the other is regarded as a quite grave offence. So by the four or main violations quite extreme forms of there particular unskilful actions are to be understood, for instance the taking of human life. If you happen to kill an ant or a fly this in not such a serious matter as we were discussing yesterday. The seriousness of the offence to some extent depends upon the degree of development of the person that the offence is committed against. So, it's the taking of human life and theft - not exactly on the grand scale, but theft which would land you say in a court of law and which would result in your being imprisoned or punished in that sort of way and not just borrowing someone's pencil and then not returning it - and lust, the actual committing for instance of adultery, or habitual committing of adultery and deceit in the special form that I've mentioned.

So first of all then, "A clear understanding and acceptance of the cause and effect of his offence." And then: "To be in a state of fear because of it". This is a realistic healthy fear. You realize that you have committed an unskilful action and you know that there is going to be an unpleasant consequence so quite naturally and quite healthily you are afraid of that consequence. That was the situation with Milarepa knowing that he had indulged in black magic, he'd been responsible apparently for the death of a large number of people so he knew that he was going to hell when he died, so he was terrified and then he started looking round for means of purification and came to understand that only the Tantric path was, as it were, intensive enough to get him to nirvana quick enough before he died, [laughter] before there was time for his karma to catch up with him. So onto that Tantric path he got as quickly as he could, quite sensibly, in the nick of time, as it were. Fear in this sense is a quite positive emotion, fear of the consequences of one's own unskilful actions or maybe it would be better to translate apprehension. It's not fear in the sense of running away, it's more fear with regard to what you are trying actually to face up to. [119]

Lokamitra: It seems to be the opposite to guilt in a way because guilt seems to be not accepting what you have to face up to, to some extent.

S: Mm, yes.

Lokamitra: Or up to the consequences.

S: Yes, certainly guilt seems to involve not really facing up to, especially where it is irrational guilt. But here you recognize quite objectively, I've done something unskilful, there are going to be unpleasant consequences. You feel a natural terror because no one looks forward to suffering and you don't disguise from yourself the fact that you are going to suffer; because you have done an unskilful action suffering is inevitable, so your natural, in fact normal state in this case is one of some trepidation, some fear.

And then thirdly "to feel humiliation". Luk translates that "strong feeling of

shame". So what do you think that represents? Don't forget that the context is that of someone who has Gone for Refuge, who has taken the precepts himself, or herself but who has been guilty of gross violation. So it is this person who is said to feel humiliation, to feel a strong sense of shame. So what does that represent bearing in mind the context?

Abhaya: Realizing that he hasn't lived up to his commitment.

S: Yes, not lived up to his commitment. It's not shame in the sense of an irrational guilt. It's not on account of what other people might say, it's your own consciousness that you've not lived up to your own commitment, your own ideal. You've fallen short of the ideal which you set for yourself. You've let yourself down. You could put it that way, the consciousness of having let your own self down.

Lokamitra: Having to accept too that you're not perfect.

S: Yes, having to face up to that fact. Not only that you're not perfect, it's more than that, that you've not lived up to your promise, to yourself at least to fulfil those conditions which will help make you more perfect, or less imperfect, anyway.

Vajradaka: Feeling that one is the son of the Buddha and that one has violated the family. [120]

S: Mm... yes this is sometimes mentioned.

And (d) or is it one two, three , four, this is very important, "to search for means of purification, and when he finds them in the Mahayana Sutras to be willing to take advantage of them."

So what have you done, you've violated the precepts, the precepts of natural morality despite your commitment, so you see what has happened, you see you have done something unskilful, and you see that under the ... [law of karma?]... you are going to suffer on account of that. So you feel in a state of fear and apprehension and you also feel humiliated, you have not lived up to your commitment, but you don't, as it were, wallow in it, you don't give way to despair, you search for means of purification. You start thinking well, how can I make it all right again. How can I purify myself, how can I restore myself to my original integrity? "And when he finds them in the Mahayana Sutra, to be willing to take firm advantage of that". Find some means of purification, that is. Some people when they commit a mistake or they do anything wrong they feel it's the end of the world - there's no more hope for me, I've got to give up - they give way to despair. Now why do you think this is?

Lokamitra: They don't want to partly, they can't make the effort.

S: Not just that. It's conceit. They're so angry with themselves that they made a mistake, that they could have fallen back, that they want to punish themselves and not forgive themselves. This is conceit, So this is why it says "to search for means of purification and when he finds them in the Mahayana Sutras to

be willing to take advantage of them." Not to say, 'I'm such a great sinner. I've committed such a big mistake. I've been so foolish, so wicked, so ignorant, there's no hope for me; nothing can wash away my stain.' This is conceit.

Padmaraja: You ... out of touch with the idea one has of oneself.

S: Yes, right, yes. You're really angry with yourself that the high opinion that you had of yourself has now been disproved. And sometimes of course people will try to hide that fact from themselves, that they have done anything wrong at all. They'll try not to face up to that but if they are forced to face up to that, they're so angry with themselves on account of their conceit basically, they don't want to forgive themselves, they feel humiliated in a very negative sort of sense. [121] So they don't want to take advantage of the means of purification. They want to stay in the state, almost sort of wallow in it, but as I said, this is simply conceitedness.

S: Beat themselves, yes.

Vessantara: It's interesting that people who seem to be in that state have a very low self image and so every mistake that they made was just one more log on the pile of... terrible things.

S: You do find people of this sort too, yes, who start off with a low self image.

Padmapani: Can you go into that more?

S: Well people who don't think much of themselves. But I think that people who don't think much of themselves will probably not make the original commitment anyway. Would not feel that they could live up to it.

Padmapani: You don't mean that they don't feel that they can because as a matter of fact they feel that they are very important. You mean in the sense 'that they are so conceited that in actual fact they, you know...

S: Well, when I speak about people being conceited, they're over confident. Well of course I think I can commit myself, I am committed, of course I can observe all the precepts, even the most difficult ones. I'm virtually perfect, but when temptation comes along and they yield to the temptation, they perform an unskilful action, they're so angry with themselves that they don't want to forgive themselves and this is on account of their original conceit. But for other people who may have a low self image and you just feel almost genuinely in a way that there's no hope for them. This isn't due to conceit, this is just due, as Vessantara says, to their general low self image. They don't think enough of themselves. They feel they're hopeless, but they will be flagellating themselves, I think, in the way that the conceited person would be. They'll just be feeling, well, I'm not good enough after all, I knew it all the time, I knew I couldn't make it and then they need a lot of encouragement. [122]

Lokamitra: Some people sometimes go from one extreme to the other, from a very strong conceited attitude of themselves...

S: Yes, because you may have, in your conscious mind a very high self image as it were and in your subconscious mind a very low self image. And it depends, you know, whether the conscious, or the unconscious, or the subconscious rather is uppermost at any given time, whether you are flagellating yourself or just feeling a bit hopeless.

So of course inasmuch as these means of purification are found in the Mahayana Sutras, there's also a suggestion that you should be ready to accept the Mahayana Sutras because in the Hinayana Sutras except to a very limited degree these means of purification are not found so it suggests that some people, due to their rigid attachment to the Hinayana tradition might not be willing to take advantage of the means of purification because they're found in the Mahayana Sutras.

Abhaya: Are there any particular Sutras in mind do yon think? Any Mahayana Sutras.

S: Yes, the, let me think, I think it's the Akashagarbha (?). It's quoted very extensively in Shantideva's Siksasamuccaya But it doesn't survive complete.

Abhaya: Akashagarbha?

S: I think it's the Akashagarbha. I've got the Sutra Siksasamuccaya up in Norfolk so I could check it up. It certainly begins with A, the name of the Sutra, I think it was the ...

And then next, number five, "A frank confession of his guiltiness". A bringing of it all out into the open, usually the confession is either in the spiritual community itself, or to one's teacher, but later on we shall see that the Grand Master suggests another method. But the confession is extremely important. Of course I should have mentioned the Sutra of Golden Light. This contains quite a lot of confessional material.

Lokamitra: This would, be, five, a specific confession of the actual deed done?

S: Yes, and how one felt about it. I mean a sort of complete unburdening [123] as it were, yes, mm? In the Pali scriptures we find sometimes people confessing to the Buddha and sometimes confessing within the context of the spiritual community, so in the place of the Buddha there was naturally one's own spiritual teacher. So one either confesses to the spiritual teacher or to the spiritual community, sometimes to some trusted elder brother in the spiritual community, as it were. As I said later on we're going to suggest another method. We'll take that up when we come to it.

Nagabodhi: Did they ever have confession sessions? [laughter]

S: Well, the early Sangha did, I mentioned this when we were doing the Udana seminar, that the Sangha seemed to have gone through a stage of public confession in the quite early days. If you had committed any offence then you confessed it at the uposatha, the meeting, and later on the practice developed of reading out the clauses of the Pratimoksha, that is the Pratimoksha considered as a list or

rules which it had come to be considered at that time not just as the stanzas of the Dharma, and any monk who had violated any of the rules would confess it on the spot. Later a different practice developed, that is to say the rules would be recited congregationally, but there was no confession on the spot, the confession took place before the meeting began in twos. Before the meeting began all the monks would get together in pairs. The junior would confess any offence he might have committed to the senior and the senior would confess any offence he might have committed to the junior. In this way they would purify themselves and then they would attend the uposatha meeting and then the Pratimoksha in the sense of the list of rules would be recited and nobody would own up to any offence because already it had been confessed and they were purified. This is the method still kept up in most Buddhist countries where that particular observance is still kept up. Lokamitra: It was suggested that we do this at the order retreat.

S: mmm... I've also mentioned for instance that there was a practice that at the end of the rainy season retreat monks asked one another's pardon for any offence committed in the course of the session. This was not so much an offence against the rule so much as a personal offence if someone had been rude or inconsiderate, then they asked pardon for that. Was it this that you were referring to?

Lokamitra: That was what I was referring to. [124]

S: But the whole idea of confession or practice and confession is very, very important. I think that it's quite good that people should feel free to sort of own up to any misdeeds within the context of the order. It need not be a very formal thing, in fact perhaps it should not be a formal thing, but if someone feels rather upset and annoyed with himself about something or feels that he has let himself down, well it can be quite sort of informally brought up at a gathering of Order members, preferably no doubt a smaller one rather than a bigger one. One should beware of exhibitionism and the desire to play a part and be a bit theatrical about it or one can just get together with one or two Order members who one trusts and say look well this is what's happened and I'm not very happy about it what do you think I should do? And so on. And also of course if any Order member feels that any other Order member is backsliding he should feel free to bring the matter up either with that person personally or within the context of an Order meeting. Obviously it's to be brought up in a sort of friendly positive way.

So that's number five "A frank confession of his guiltiness". And then the next, six, is very interesting, "To break off the current of his thoughts relating to the offence." Once you've confessed it, once you've purified it, as it were, then stop thinking about the offence. Otherwise you go on thinking - oh well how terrible, just think what I did. You'd go on like that. Once you've confessed and purified, break off the current of your thought relating to the offence.

Now this again is one of the very positive emphases of Buddhism, that you may commit unskilful actions from time to time. They are unskilful actions, you

shouldn't try to disguise that fact, try to rationalize it or cover it up. Face up to the facts, admit your unskilful behaviour, confess it if necessary. Do what is necessary to put it right, purify yourself and then forget about it. Don't keep thinking about it once you've done all that.

Lokamitra: The whole confession I find is such a positive thing, yet most people attack that when they start the puja by saying that's the most negative aspect. It's quite difficult sometimes to get across anything...

S: Why do you think that is?

Nagabodhi: I think it's people, at first, people who are sort of quite unconscious of their guilt, they don't want to confront it and yet to them it is [125] perhaps a frightening prospect and whether they're consciously aware of it or not, it's going to hurt to accept things that one has done and maybe that it appears one half knows one's living with.

S: Perhaps also there's an admixture of rational and irrational guilt. Do you know what I mean by rational and irrational guilt?

Voice: No, I don't.

S: Has anybody got any ideas, it should be fairly obvious?

Nagabodhi: Well, there's the ... there's... well in a way one knows that one has shortcomings consciously and one may be quite prepared to be open about that. Also there's a whole area where one thinks things, one has hints that things are wrong; and it's not at all clear, maybe one... very vaguely...

S: Rational guilt is objective guilt, you feel guilty, you feel bad on account or things that you have actually done and about which you should feel bad, that's rational guilt. Irrational guilt is feeling bad about things that you've no reason really to feel bad about at all. You've been conditioned into feeling bad about those things which are very often matters of purely conventional morality, if matters of morality at all. But in people's minds or in people's experience feelings of rational guilt and irrational guilt are all mixed up together, so if you ask people to confess you are only asking them to confess actually unskilful actions which they have committed but they don't feel it like that, they feel that all their irrational feelings of guilt and their sort of negative feelings towards themselves, all being brought up along with that and it's very likely that they resist all the more - being made to feel guilty as it were but actually they should sort out their irrational from their rational feelings of guilt, completely get rid of their irrational feelings of guilt, and then honestly confront and do something about their rational feelings of guilt.

Voice: Could you say that irrational guilt sometimes to me anyway seems to be ...?... further, it's what I call myself almost existential guilt whereas it's not even triggered off by conventional morality or anything apparently.

S: You feel guilty at being alive, as it were, you've no business to be existing. You know, in extreme cases maybe your mother didn't want you, [126] maybe

your father didn't want you, you were a totally unwanted child and you were made to feel that maybe when you were still in the womb so that when you were born and as you grow up you feel you have no business to be here, you've made some mistake. It's your fault that you are here, you feel guilty at merely being alive in the world. So this must be got rid of, this is irrational guilt.

Voice: What are the main ways, the best ways of overcoming that kind of irrational guilt?

S: If it goes very deep I think you can't do very much on your own. I think you need the co-operation of other people and this is where the positive attitude of the spiritual community towards you helps. In this particular case you feel, well, the spiritual community was glad that you're alive, they accepted you and welcomed you and loved you, so this would dissolve your feelings of irrational guilt about being alive eventually. So here again the spiritual community and its sort of positive emotional warmth is very, very important and usually irrational guilt is of this sort. You've been brought up, you know, to think that something is really bad, it might be something quite trivial. It's really bad and you know that you do it and you feel really bad about it, all these irrational feelings of guilt, but sometimes, if you confess to the irrational feeling and everybody laughs, well, you're feeling guilty about that, you know, that's really silly and then you laugh yourself and you get over it and you don't feel guilty any more. You think there was nothing in it after all what was I bothering about. But you might have been feeling very bad about that particular thing, you've been conditioned into feeling really bad.

Voice: Childhood memories often...

S: Yes ... so you need to confess your irrational feelings and just get them laughed right away and feel it's alright people accept you, they don't think you're an absolute monster of iniquity [laughter] when you've done these things, they're quite trivial things even if they are a bit negative, well they're not all that serious. It might sometime happen that in very unfortunate cases something which is quite positive has been labelled negative and you've been made to feel guilty about it and then when you confess your so-called weakness you find that people are saying, well that's not a weakness, that is a very good thing, you should develop it. It's not a bad thing it's one of your good qualities and then you start perking up. [127]

Vajradaka: Although I think that being able to laugh at irrational guilt is very useful, a lot of people think they're being laughed at and that makes it even worse.

S: I was thinking about the context of the Order, the spiritual community. Well then in that case there's something quite seriously wrong. Either they've brought it up in the wrong way or people have received it in the wrong way, or - I tell you another thing - the other people themselves secretly feel guilty about it that very matter, embarrassed about it being brought up. I think this is very often at the bottom of it. Mm... [laughter] now can you give a concrete example

without mentioning names just the actual... sort of details ... Vajradaka: Yes, someone expresses a fear because in a certain situation they were being rejected, that another person was rejecting them and you say, well, OK, tell me what the situation was and they say, oh, when they said that and when they said that they were definitely rejecting me. So you look back over the situation and they tell you exactly what happened and you see that in fact that person who was supposed to be rejecting them wasn't saying anything of the sort. There was no hint of rejection at all in what they were saying. You know, that fear of rejection was totally unfounded and so you could say well, look, you know, it's so obvious that there is no possibility of any rejection in that. It's just funny that you sort of feel that and they laugh and you know...

S: But that's something quite different from what we were talking about, we were talking about guilt. Not about feelings of that sort. I don't think it's a parallel case.

Lokamitra: I think those sort of things you just want to dismiss with a laugh as quickly as possible because...

Vajradaka: Sure

Lokamitra: Often...

Vajradaka: I think that that's true, but with some people...

S: No, it's a difference...

Vajradaka: ... even laughing, for example mother and father used to laugh at the child in dismissive kind of way just reinforcing the whole thing. [128]

S: But this seems to be a case off as it were, projection. I don't think... I mean... projection is a very strong thing sometimes, so the fact that someone's projection just is unreal to others, I don't think that would normally strike them as funny. Yes? But when someone suddenly brings up some really ridiculous thing that they've been feeling guilty about and they say, you know, well this is what I've been doing and I feel terrible about it, and then everybody else sees and feels that this is not very serious at all, it's some little matter, some peccadillo, they can't help laughing and the fact that they laugh means that they are not taking it seriously and that's a tremendous relief to the person confessing and that's of course a quite different situation I think.

For instance, somebody, maybe some little boy once stole tuppence from his mother's purse and there have actually been instances... not simply little boys stealing two pence but feeling bad about it for years and years and years, and feeling real criminals and if ever mother found out that they'd stolen that tuppence, ... well you know, he would be sent off to prison, mother would never have anything to do with him again and they end up being real criminals and maybe eventually they can come round to say, when I was a little boy, I was really bad, I was really wicked. You say, oh well what did you do? Oh I couldn't tell you it was so bad and you say well, what was it? And you think, good

heavens did he kill his little sister or something? Oh no, I can't tell you, you'll think so badly of me. I did a really wicked thing against the person I ought to have loved best in the world. Well what was it? And with great difficulty he says, I stole tuppence from my mother's purse when I was six [laughter]. You say, Good heavens, that's nothing at all, well I stole a shilling, [laughter] from my mother every week and she never found out [laughter] and that way you think, this is absurd - and they can get over it. This in the sort of thing I mean, but some poor wretched people, they go on feeling guilty about little things, also maybe somewhat more important things for years and years and if this can be brought out, this irrational feeling of guilt and you know, just the ... it's not laughing at them, you know, they can't help laughing themselves as soon as you start laughing, so the whole atmosphere becomes healthier and then you can also confront your rational feelings of guilt. So I think sometimes when there's the question of the confession of faults, it's not simply people's rational guilt which is being as it were everywhere attacked but irrational guilt because it's all being mixed up together and therefore there's a bit of resistance.

Or sometimes people are feeling guilty about the whole idea of their feeling guilty. Sometimes they do feel guilty, but they say, oh no [129] I'm not guilty. I don't feel guilty. What have I got to feel guilty about? I'm not a guilty person, I'm not a sinner. Why should I confess my faults? I've not done anything. So that seems quite defensive.

Lokamitra: There seems to be a miccha ditthi here.

S: Well, say it...

Lokamitra: Umm not [laughter] that, that [laughter]

S: Well, don't spare me, [laughter]

Lokamitra: That any guilt is due to conventional.

S: Umm, ah.

Lokamitra: Yes? I get this sometimes when I've talked to several people, several people within the Order. They say, oh, you make me feel guilty, and as if it's something I've done wrong, but it's not in fact, it's just the way they've responded.

S: Or perhaps you've made them face up to the fact of their objective guilt which has offended their over positive self image.

Vajradaka: And they couldn't take responsibility for it.

S: And also along with that, stirred up irrational guilt. These things do, perhaps.

Ratnapani: And to feel guilty someone must have the potential for guilt in them. I mean if they really don't like it they must have irrational potential in them or else you couldn't trigger it off.

Lokamitra: The miccha ditthi being something like that all guilt is not due to you, it's due to something outside you, the society...

S: All this is irrational, this is what it means, that there is no such thing as objective guilt. Therefore if you're making people feel guilty, you're putting guilt into them, they're quite guiltless, they're quite good. All guilt is irrational, they are saying in effect. There's no such thing as objective guilt. In other words there's no such thing as responsibility. There's no accountability. [130] You cannot hold them accountable, which is what you really mean in that sort of approach, that they are accountable.

Anyway we've got a bit away from the actual point... "to break off the current of his thoughts relating to the offence", to clear it all out and then you've finished with it once and for all.

And then "to take advantage of the protective courage which the Dharma offers him". There is a definite contradiction with Luk's translation, "keenness to protect the Dharma". I think I prefer Dwight Goddard taking "advantage of the protective courage which the Dharma offers him,"

Padmaraja: Does that differ at all from 'd', "to search for means of purification"?

S: I think this is more general and also after you've effected the purification. Strengthening yourself by the Dharma. Because, presumably if you're sincere, if you've committed unskilful actions, you feel rather alienated from the Dharma. Yes? So that after you've confessed and purged it as it were all away, you feel again in contact with the Dharma, and you feel again the Dharma giving you strength and support and you accept that, you open yourself to it and in this way you take advantage of the protective courage which the Dharma offers. In the same way if you commit an unskilful action you might feel alienated from the Order, from the Sangha, from the spiritual community, especially if you think that they haven't been guilty in that particular way but you have, so you can feel alienated from them. So once you've purged it and have been, at least in your own eyes, accepted back, you feel in contact with the Sangha again and you feel the strength of the Sangha supporting you, not as it were threatening you any longer. This was a point made to me in a letter by an Order member living outside England and looking at the scene here maybe quite objectively, saying that they thought that Order members who lived in isolation and were trying perhaps to do things a bit on their own, had no regular contact with the order, couldn't help feeling that they weren't doing all that well, in fact probably wouldn't be doing all that well, but at the same time feeling that the other Order members who were in contact with one another were doing very well. And then started feeling that they weren't doing as well, they weren't doing enough, they were falling behind. Then starting to feel guilty, and then starting to feel alienated and then getting more and more out of touch and eventually drifting away and this seems quite reasonable. So if you feel that you're not keeping up, if you feel that you've committed some unskilful actions or you haven't committed enough skilful actions, the thing to do is to confess it, not

[131] to start feeling bad and then feeling a bit alienated and then gradually drifting away and then even breaking off, so you can see how the sequence of negative nidanas, as it were, develops.

There's also another point that I didn't mention in connection with this question of guilt, we are accustomed obviously in our culture, at least in the past to being made to feel guilty by the Christian tradition, being made to feel that we are a sinner, we are wicked and so on and perhaps some people, at least when they resist this idea of guiltiness, they're still reacting against that Christian conditioning, so that if one sort of brings in this question of confession of faults, perhaps in some cases, without making it into an excuse, perhaps in some cases they feel that they are being pushed back into the old Christian attitude, or brought under the influence of Christianity virtually again and once again they are being made to feel very guilty, but this of course is something irrational that must be weeded out and again one would confront the real objective guilt if there is any and certainly one shouldn't for that reason react against that part of the Sevenfold Puja.

Alright then, lastly: "To wish for the emancipation of all sentient beings and to renew his vow to help them all." This is of course in the context of the Mahayana, the vow being to help all beings to Enlightenment. The Fourfold Great Vow, one could say. So one renews one's vows.

Voice: It's the Bodhisattva vow, the Bodhisattva vow.

S: Well, it says here, "renew his vow to help them all" so I assume it's the Bodhisattva vow which is being referred to, because presumably this whole text is addressed mainly to followers of the Mahayana.

Voice: If one has committed one of these four main violations would that involve going through another ordination or (does) one retake mentally one's vow to be sufficient?

S: In the case of the Bodhisattva precepts it would be usually mentally-doing that. The Grand Master [132] [Tape 6 Side A] mentions this later on, though not exactly within a typically Mahayana context. For instance, in the case of a Bodhisattva it would be an offence even to think one day, Well, it's just too much, people are just too stupid and too silly, I'll just have nothing more to do with them. If he thinks that for an instant, it's an offence, to be confessed.

Voice: Could you do that mentally?

S: He could do that mentally. I mean, a Bodhisattva can of course confess within a community, or spiritual community of Bodhisattvas. If he is a Bodhisattva in any meaningful sense of the term, he will sort of feel one of the universal community of Bodhisattvas and be, as it were, aware of the presence of other Bodhisattvas spiritually and always be in the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So he will just confess.

Perhaps the general principle is that when one confesses to others it's within

the context of the spiritual community to which you naturally belong. If you're an ordinary Upasaka, well then to fellow Upasakas. If you're a monk in the traditional sense, then to other monks. If you're a Bodhisattva, well to other Bodhisattvas on the appropriate plane, maybe Bodhisattvas in the flesh, maybe purely spiritual Bodhisattvas. You make your confession within your own particular spiritual community or on your own particular level of the spiritual community.

At this particular indication of sincerity clearly refers to one who has taken the Bodhisattva, vow, but it can be given a more general application that whatever you feel you have breached you renew that. Someone did mention some time ago, one particular Order member that he thought he wouldn't mind being as it were re-ordained as a sort of reaffirmation of his total commitment, feeling that he had been guilty of a few breaches here and there, nothing over serious but certainly he felt his practice hadn't been as perfect as it might have been. So I did say that might be considered but he didn't raise the matter again.

Abhaya: Perhaps there's also a reluctance to confess openly because there may [133] be like subconscious sort of spiritual competition going through.

S: Mmm, yes, that is so, yes.

Abhaya: Perhaps feeling oneself, or certainly choosing whom one will confess to for competitive reasons, I think perhaps you've got to analyse this too.

S: There is this whole question of the general confession and the specific confession. For instance, when we recite the appropriate section of the Sevenfold Puja, it's a general confession. You're not owning up to any specific offence that you've actually committed. So this is quite easy, it doesn't go very far, like the general confession of the Church of England, but to admit to a specific offence, or to own up to a specific offence or unskilful action in the presence of other Order members in a meeting, say, of the Order, or to some other individual Order member privately, this is a rather different matter.

So, so far, we've had only the sort of general confession, but only in a few informal instances with some perhaps unusually honest people has there been any, you know, specific owning up, as it were.

Padmaraja: But if one is doing the puja properly and fully, then presumably specific feelings would arise.

S: Oh yes, you might even be thinking, while you recite those words, well yes, there is this specific offence, but you wouldn't be disclosing it to other Order members, it would be a private matter between you and the Buddha as it were. But I think the point that Abhaya is making is that even this might leave a sort of loophole and undermines the fullness and sincerity of the confession.

Vessantara: What about this unconscious rivalry that happens not only between individuals, but also I see traces of it between different Centres a lot and I've also seen Order members coming from outside London who were perhaps not so

in touch with others, rather isolated, very, to start with, very critical and really looking in London as if things couldn't possibly be going right and I had the feeling that that was very much a projection because they were rather isolated and the Order had become a sort of parent figure, a father figure out there somewhere who was watching them and they were, as I [134] ... [unclear]... you said, inadequate. I wonder about the whole thing of, we hear a lot of Order members saying, we do such and such a thing in Glasgow or wherever it may be, whether this is a healthy trend or an unhealthy one of competitiveness.

S: I think there's such a thing as healthy rivalry. I don't think one should exclude that urging one another on, as it were, to do more and more good, but certainly not competitiveness, as it were, in a sort of commercial sense or an egotistic sense.

Abhaya: Well, I don't know whether this is a projection of my own, but it's a sort of feeling that I sometimes have in, sort of Order gatherings that there is this element of, you know, sometimes it's reasonably marked, and it doesn't last but comes and goes, I just wondered whether anyone else had this or whether it was just possibly my own projection.

Voice: What precisely?

Abhaya: An element of sort of spiritual rivalry, it's a feeling that people aren't being open because, or I myself am not being open because I don't want to appear, say, less evolved than Order member B, or you know, I can't speak to him in this way now but when someone else comes in perhaps I won't say this because I don't want to appear in this particular light with him.

Ratnapani: I think [two voices together, unclear]... comes from underneath, the person who is a bit worried, as it were, about their spiritual status. spiritual standing, I think that will tend to rise from underneath, rather than people - I haven't noticed anyway - on top being superior. I think it's usually people who do feel inferior. Lots of people feel superior in practical matters; they think, I'm getting it on with such and such and you're sitting around wasting your time but I don't think in spiritual...

Lokamitra: To some extent it's bound to happen, surely, inasmuch as the spiritual community won't be completely spiritual but will be to some extent a group.

Ratnapani: Mm, yes... particularly unhealthy ... [unclear]

Vajradaka: I think that it only becomes unhealthy when some people really feel [135] that they can't open up in an Order meeting, for fear of being jumped on, or have some overwhelming: kind of competitive ploy put on to them.

Padmapani: Yes it appears that some people have different faculties and some of these faculties are more acquainted with Order meetings. For instance somebody who's very good with speech, has got a good intellect and can put his words across very well can quite easily overpower somebody who's emotional or an

intuitive kind of person [laughter] I think certain Order members, I think certain things I pick up, I'm not even an Order member but I pick up that certain Order members who have got a very strong, you know, have got very strong feelings but feel crushed because certain Order members, sort of, over-ride them with speech. You know they seem to sort of put them, you know ... [unclear]... in these terms and you know they go wheeeew [laughter] ... [unclear]... get really frustrated and they go whooo... they feel very sort of hurt as well, you see it's that sort of thing that breeds...

S: Also of course it raises the question of why they are unable to express their feelings.

Nagabodhi: I think it's got more to do with that, I'm thinking specifically of Lokamitra, he operates in group situations, he operates entirely from his feelings, totally inarticulate most of the time, but he has his way and is quite effective in those situations [laughter].

Padmapani: Yes, I've picked that up because Lokamitra says things with a lot of energy and some people don't say it with much energy although they might be quite articulate.

Ratnapani: You know, there's two things from this, there's one thing which Bhante was talking about yesterday which is preciousness and that combines with a feeling of inferiority .. . anyway .. . inadequacy, people can't come across whatever type they are, and I see most often, people who just don't feel confident and feel a bit guilty about various things, particularly if they're being put on the spot.

S: Perhaps these are the people who find it most difficult to, as it were, confess because if you confess something unskilful then they feel that lowers their status in the eyes of others and therefore there's less and less possibility of them being able to confess. So it really means that you can confess only if you feel, unless you're a [136] quite exceptional person, only if you feel a really warm and encouraging atmosphere around you. I you feel a very positive atmosphere around you, so that you don't feel, well, if I confess something unskilful my status is going to be lowered, it's going to tell against me, but you just feel if I confess I shall get a really sympathetic response and people will want to help me, if you feel in that way - and it's difficult for some people to feel that way for purely subjective reasons - then there's no difficulty about confession.

Lokamitra: And in an emotionally honest atmosphere too.

S: Mm, yes, right.

Nagabodhi: Yes, certainly in one particular Order meeting I can think of, it was like even the sort of most timorous of souls was jumping in because the energy was going and there was a lot of very direct talking and all sorts of people who normally wouldn't ... [unclear]... their ways [laughter] were having their little go, obviously benefiting from it enormously.

Ratnapani: But... I don't think I've felt the atmosphere in an Order meeting where I would feel like confessing or seemed at all appropriate to saying, you know, I've done something really bad please listen to what I have to say. I don't think I've experienced an atmosphere where I would to do that.

S: Luckily presumably you've never done anything really bad.

Ratnapani: No, nothing at all... [delayed laughter].

S: I think also it's connected with the question of the size of the meeting. For you to be able to get things off your chest in that way there has to be a sort of atmosphere for want of a better word of sort of intimacy and real contact and I think certainly at the present time it's very difficult for say twenty or twenty five or thirty or even forty people to all feel simultaneously in warm contact with one another so that confession or something of that sort is possible within such a meeting. It seems to me that if any confession of this sort is to be made it can only be within the context of say four or five Order members so perhaps that's the basis on which it should be done if at all, just sort it out with just a few Order members maybe, you know, as the thin end of the wedge, some concession to [137] weakness alright, get together your four or five favourite Order members, the ones that you feel are really with you and will sympathize. It's something if you can confess even to them. Perhaps it would be asking a bit too much at first to ask you to confess to Order members or in the presence of Order members that you feel whether rightly or wrongly are unsympathetic towards you. But even if it happens to be a meeting of your own favourite four or five Order members, well they are Order members and you have made your confession - so it's a step in the right direction at least, very much so.

Voice: Is this mainly for serious offences?

S: I don't think this is probably very realistic to think about that at present because I certainly haven't (myself) heard of anyone committing any really serious offence. I think it's mostly comparatively ordinary day to day matters like someone being rude to somebody or not listening to him patiently or being a bit inconsiderate or maybe someone who is getting into a rather messy situation of alleged personal relationship outside the movement and wanting to get it off his chest. He's probably not sure that it's skilful or unskilful or whether it's subject matter for confession or not, but just wants to talk it over with a few people. It's that sort of thing more often, not so much some really dire unskilful action, like good heavens, perhaps I've robbed a bank, you know, what shall I do, nothing like that [laughter, inaudible remarks]. As Mephistopheles says in Faust, what is it, 'Holy Mother Church without a question has for ill-gotten gains the right digestion' [laughter]. Anyway perhaps we can leave that part of the subject?

Padmaraja: Can I just... you were talking about confession in the Puja and made it seem a bit lukewarm, you know, like a kind of a very general thing, but presumably it does work much more effectively as a kind of a catalyst.

S: If people feel that they actually are confessing and if they, as it were, bear in mind at that time perhaps that there are various unskilful actions that they have committed.

Padmaraja: You're almost kind of beyond the conscious level sometimes though, bringing things up...

S: I think it's even good that one even says it. I think to speak of something unskilful quite specifically to certain specific individuals is a quite [138] different matter. Unless you have a very, very vivid realization of the presence of the Buddha, as it were, which I think probably nobody has, only then would it be a real confession, as it were.

Voice: If you confess it to the Buddha in a puja then you certainly shouldn't mind confessing it to an Order member ... in the sense

S: Yes , even then...

Padmaraja: I wasn't saying one rather than the other, I was just talking about the puja as such... its design... that section...

S: It's certainly designed to sort of ease the way. I think though from what I know of the majority of people, majority of Order members, that if there is anything specifically unskilful it would be better if it was opened up to and with other Order members, at least a few of them. I don't think that general confession is really enough. I think it could, be enough if, as I said, the people concerned had that very vivid sense of the Buddha's presence, that the Buddha was actually there, that they were confessing to the Buddha. That is a possibility but I don't really think anybody has that at present and as has been said, if they did have and were confessing to the Buddha they'd have no difficulty at all about bringing it out in front of the whole Order because if you can bring yourself to tell the Buddha, I'm sure you can bring yourself to tell the Sangha.

Padmaraja: I was thinking in terms of deeper things than the kind of ... even the personal kind of unconscious, for bringing up really deep things like...

S: Unskilful things?

Padmaraja: Just very deep embedded feelings of guilt and...

S: Again I think it's best to talk over with people because it's people who've given you those feelings of guilt, not the Buddha. I think the harm can be undone best where it was originally done with people.

Padmaraja: I mean sometimes you're not even aware of it, like for instance, like when I came into the presence of the Dalai Lama, I became [139] aware within myself just for a fraction of a second of a tremendously deep embedded feeling of guilt that was almost so bad I couldn't I couldn't even stand to live with it, that in a sense I'd rather be dead than live with it, that in a sense it had been pushed right down. I wouldn't begin to know where that came from.

S: It's just a question of where one makes a start. I think for most people, the general confession in the puja is only a start, luckily in, you know, practically all cases the unskilful things that they have to confess are, you know, lots of little things, not anything very dreadful or catastrophic. But I think if there was anything very specific, a real breach of precept I wouldn't personally consider it enough to include that in the general confession. I think it would be better, decidedly better, you know, brought up in front and with a few Order members. It would be a much more real and genuine acknowledgement because as I said, I don't think, I'm sure not only the majority, even all the Order members have that really vivid sense of the Buddha being there. They would be as it were making their confession into thin air in most cases, in which case it wouldn't be a confession at all because you confess to someone, well first you admit to yourself and then to somebody else. That person has to be there and you must be in touch and in communication with that person. If you are in touch and communication with the Buddha, fair enough but if not and I think it will be a case of not, then to your brother Order members with whom you are in actual contact and communication. Otherwise I'm afraid the confession may be used as a sort of way out, a loophole and a means of avoiding real confession even though the general confession itself is a step in the right direction even as such.

Padmaraja: I think in your lecture on the puja you describe that phase of the puja as being a purely psychological... [aircraft noise may have obscured some words]...

S: I'm not quite sure what I meant by that, [very loud aircraft noise obscured quite a lot] ... it's meant to bring out into the open ... eradicate unskilful states ... in that sense it's psychological.

Nagabodhi: When I was on my solitary retreat I was about into my second week I started being very submerged in things to the point of feeling like I was living under water all day and most of the night and I really wanted [140] to confess. So what I started doing before my puja every evening, for about ten minutes I'd sit down and just write up anything I could that I thought that I was guilty of and then during the puja I'd present it to the shrine. And I found the first couple of days it was all neatly folded and I went through this big sort of .. it was quite a feeling of breakthrough when I presented it open, so that - as it were - it could be read. [laughter]

S: I think this is very sound psychology.

Nagabodhi: The feeling of - I don't know what the word could be - the feeling of - by the end of that week - the feeling of cleanliness and contact with compassion. I really feel it was a very sort of .. it went beyond simply psychological feeling of freedom, of release, I really felt in touch with something ...

S: Well then, it's as the text says, "to take advantage of the protective courage which the dharma offers him". This is what it is once you've confessed - as it were. You've again established real contact with the dharma. Incidentally this practice of writing down the confession is very, very good because you, as it were,

objectify it and there it is, confronting you, objectively, and you can either offer it to the Buddha or you can burn it as a little sort of fire offering. Sometimes this is done, you know, you write down all your sins and then you burn them in a little charcoal brazier in front of the Buddha.

Nagabodhi: I used to do that after the puja, I'd burn them.

S: Yes. Anyway, the writing it down symbolizes, you know, the objective occasion of it, the full and real confession. And the burning, well, the obliteration of it all, it's gone up in smoke.

There is, of course, also the question of reparation if your unskilful action has offended or hurt some other person. For instance, supposing you've stolen some money, well, it's not enough to confess it and write it down and burn your paper. You should restore that money. So there's also reparation to be considered. And resolve for the future, this is mentioned too: that you won't perform that unskilful action again. This is included of course in renewing one's vows.

Now I think we'd better move on a little quickly now. [break in recording] [141]

S: Yes, you're right, Luk gives one ... one seems to be missed ... "constant remembrance of all Buddhas in the ten directions."

Voice: Is that the tenth?

S: That is the ninth actually. We have in fact only had eight ... yes ... Dhyana for Beginners for some reason or other misses one. It might be just a misprint. "Constant remembrance of all Buddhas in the ten directions." In other words, a sort of establishing spiritual contact with the Buddhas and with the spiritual states and forces which they represent. Because if you're thinking of the Buddha, and much more so if you're thinking of the Buddhas in the ten directions, you are mentally occupied with something positive, spiritually positive even, even if you're not in actual contact with the Buddha, though one could say that, to the extent that you think about the Buddha, to that extent you are in contact with the Buddha. But to the extent that you even think about the Buddha, then you are dwelling upon a highly positive thought. You are turning your mind away from the current of you unskilful actions, or rather turning away the current of your thoughts from the unskilful actions. You're developing what is positive within you and if you're thinking of the Buddha, then it's very unlikely that you're going to have an unskilful thought and commit an unskilful action. And also, thinking of the Buddha, or thinking of the Buddhas of the ten directions, you experience such positive emotions as faith and joy and serenity and peace, which are all highly skilful mental states. So in this way you disconnect from the old offence and the possibility of committing a new offence becomes more and more remote as you become more and more positive, more and more preoccupied with the thought of the Buddha.

And of course, tenthly and lastly, "to keep continually in mind the non-existence of both offence and repentance." What do you think this means? This is a very bold Mahayana note as it were.

Ratnapani: Ultimately sunyata?

S: Ultimately sunyata, but you think this at the end [laughter], after sincerely repenting and after possessing the other indications of sincerity. There's no point in just mentally reflecting upon this right [142] at the beginning. This comes at the end. You think, after having done this, after sincerely repenting, after having fulfilled the other nine indications of sincerity, then you think that in the ultimate analysis, even these ideas of skilful and unskilful, conditioned and unconditioned, all such dualities ultimately, though only ultimately, are resolved into sunyata. In the ultimate sense, there's no offence, no repentance. So in this way your mind is set finally at peace.

This is what I remember - one of my own teachers said something to me in this connection which I had occasion to remember many times afterwards. He said, 'The Hinayana is like a clay begging bowl, the Mahayana is like a brass begging bowl, and the Vajrayana is like a begging bowl made of diamond, solid diamond.' So what do you think this means?

Abhaya: Getting more and more refined.

S: Er, no.

Nagabodhi: Light? To do with light?

S: No, well that too, but..

Lokamitra: The Hinayana won't support very much, it will break very easily and you can't put it together again.

S: And you can't put it together again, yes. The clay bowl can be broken and not put together again. You have to guard it very carefully. So long as you guard it very carefully, yes, it remains intact but it can be very easily broken, it can't be put together again. According to the rites of the Hinayana, there is no way provided for removing the stain caused by the four main violations. Once you've violated your Hinayana discipline, well, that's that. You have to wait until the next life time if the offence is very serious.

Lokamitra: How do they .. who's that robber? Angry-lama, or whoever ..

S: Angulimala?

Lokamitra: How do they account for that? [143]

S: Well, Angulimala, of course, they would say, had committed his offences before he met the Buddha.

Lokamitra: Ah.

S: But there were quite a number of cases in the Buddha's day of monks who perhaps lived very badly but whom the Buddha, as it were, took in again and again and who eventually gained enlightenment. But the Hinayana tradition became more and more strict. So the Hinayana, especially the Hinayana discipline, is like the clay bowl. The Mahayana discipline is like the brass bowl; it can be

dented, it can be knocked about quite badly and bent out of shape, but it can be hammered back into shape again. It can be mended. So this is the Mahayana attitude: the Mahayana discipline, the Mahayana precepts, can be mended. A breach of them can be put right, though not easily. But the Vajrayana precepts cannot even be broken [laughter] because there's nothing to break and nobody to break them. So that's the attitude of the Vajrayana. So you can't break the Vajrayana precepts, in a sense, even if you tried. Of course you could go on like that, but it's only sort of mental gymnastics. The Vajrayana precepts aren't even anything you take etc., etc., etc. It becomes a bit like pseudo-zen; better say no more. But the possibility is indicated and that should be your last reflection, that in the ultimate sense there's no offence and no repentance, no subject, no object. All that belongs to the world of illusion. But this is only a final reflection, a final insight, if it is in fact that, and you entertain that insight only after you've fulfilled all the requirements of Mahayana repentance. But you can mend your battered Mahayana bowl.

All right, I think does really bring us to coffee time.

Vessantara: Do you think it would be worth providing a short space at local order meetings for the possibility for people to bring up anything that is bothering them?

S: Possibly, or you sometimes say, well, 'you're not looking very happy, you know, what's bothering you?' You know, you can say in a friendly way, not 'well I think it's time for you to make your confession,' [laughter] In some cases they might be only too pleased for an opportunity to talk about what is bothering them. They might not even be sure whether it's, you know, something unskilful or not. I mean that itself may need to be sorted out, whether they're feeling rational guilt or irrational guilt [144]

Sona: You sometimes have the situation where you feel that it's just a little thing that's bothering you, but it's still bothering you and you don't really want to sort of waste anybody's time sort of telling them, and I think quite often when you tell them, you realize how little it is and it all goes away, but in doing it does sort of get rid of it.

S: I think you shouldn't mind wasting people's time because it isn't really wasting it. It may not be justified to, you know, to expect a large meeting of the order to devote itself to your tiny peccadillos, but you can get together with two or three friends, or even one, and just talk it over. If it makes you feel better then it can't be wasted time, for anybody.

Lokamitra: When I've felt like confessing something or like baring my chest or opening, saying something, it's been after doing the puja with the order in a small group and it's really been to consolidate or crystallize my repentance, if you like. I've accepted the situation and to some extent through the puja I've come to confess that, and it's just really to strengthen that and to help resolve in the future too, I think.

S: Hmm, and also perhaps to resolve any practical implications. I mean, supposing you were rude to someone, well obviously it's something to be resolved practically too, you know, with the person concerned and maybe with others who were present, and that conduces to the, you know, smooth functioning of everything.

I mention rudeness as a purely abstract illustration. [laughter] You could just as easily have been guilty of an understatement or something like that, [laughter] or undue reticence. I think also, as I said, a lot depends upon feeling a very encouraging atmosphere.

I also think that if someone makes a confession it isn't enough to be very sympathetic and receive it and help them to feel all right but if necessary point out what they should do about it, not just an indulgent harkening to someone's confession but making practical suggestions so that they don't repeat that, don't fall into that again, and helping them to take it seriously themselves in that sort of way.

Lokamitra: Or sometimes help them not to take it seriously. [145]

S: Right, yes. Yes, if it's something irrational. Of course it isn't actually mentioned here but one mustn't forget the complementary side, the rejoicing in merit.

Lokamitra: To wish for the emancipation of all sentient beings, isn't that partly .. I mean wouldn't that partly be implied?

S: Hmm, sort of, but it isn't really very explicitly mentioned. I mean especially one's own merits, not hiding one's light under a bushel, you know, rejoicing in your own merits and letting them be seen and known just as much as other people's, not hiding your good side. Some people are quite shy of showing the better side of themselves, the more positive side, they don't let that out sufficiently.

Vessantara: It's just a matter of conventional morality.

S: Right.

Vajradaka: Couldn't it be that it's not moral to let out your positive emotions?

S: Well, it's not done. [laughter] It's not a question of not being good, you know, or being bad, it's just not done. [laughter]

Padmapani: This is what happened to the people in the Tibetan aristocracy.

S: Hmm, yes, it was just not done to behave in any other way at parties when aristocrats got together, everyone was very polite, very friendly, even though they might have been sort of cutting one another's throats the night before.

It does seem to be tied in with that part we listened to yesterday, to the part in the Udana on openness.

Sagaramati: It seems to be .. the flavour is exactly the same: guilt, confession, conventional morality, being open. It's almost like, people don't want to be open because of ..[unclear].. sort of inherent guilt or because they weren't allowed to be when they were brought up, conventional morality. [146]

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: It's not right to be open.

S: Well perhaps openness is inappropriate in the wider social sphere, but it should certainly be the norm within a spiritual community. Otherwise there hardly could be a spiritual community.

Vessantara: When we were talking about Tibetan society just having one basic social pattern of manners and etiquette, and that this might be something for the Friends. . .

S: You meant that they had a common language?

Vessantara: Yes. Do you have any sort of specific thoughts about the kind of thing that might develop?

S: I can't say that I have. I have, though, sometimes felt that there was a lot of possibly sometimes unintentional sort of rudeness in the Friends and that sometimes behaviour is very uncouth. I've felt this quite often at the Centre. Do you know what I mean? There might be a newcomer and you might want to give him a cup of tea and 'Want some tea?' 'Yes, please.' You sort of plonk it down in front of him and it slops in the saucer and that doesn't seem at all proper. But you see a lot of that sort of thing, at least I have, in different ways, a certain uncouthness and, you know, lack of manners in a sense partly because perhaps one has discarded the conventional middle class manners but hasn't found any new set of manners . . . not the conventional Buddhist ones or the traditional Buddhist ones.

Lokamitra: I think it's convention in a negative way: you project your situation onto others and you expect others just to fit in with how you are.

S: I can't help thinking that if people actually felt more positively they wouldn't behave in this sort of uncouth way which is sometimes really jarring: no sort of manners at all, not just in the sense of, you know, nothing sort of conventional, one isn't thinking of that, but of a genuine social expression of, you know, positive feeling and a certain amount of sensitivity. Some Order members are better than others but the general level I think is quite low.

[147] Tape 6 Side B

[0-250 is still part of the coffee break discussion dealing with manners, etiquette, squatting etc.]

S: All right we're still on page 442. [laughter] So one has put oneself in possession of the ten indications of one's sincerity after one has been guilty even of quite serious offences. But even that isn't enough. Mental reflections, even verbal

expressions, confession of the offence, there's also something to be done. So then the Grand Master goes on to talk about that. "If a penitent has these evidences of sincerity, he should prepare an altar with solemn adornments and purity", that is, set up an image table. I don't like this word altar because really altar means something on which a sacrifice takes place. So you should get ready an image table, a shrine, install the image of the Buddha, if it's already there dust it, decorate it, light candles. "Then wearing clean, neat clothes, he should offer on this altar before Buddha's image an offering of flowers and incense." In other words he should perform a puja, even the sevenfold puja. "Then he should continue this practice as an evidence of his repentance for a period of one week, or three weeks, or a month, or three months, or even a year, as long as the conception of guiltiness abides in the mind." So long as you actually feel guilty, objectively guilty, rationally guilty, you should keep up these practices. Not only repent, not only confess, but also do these various things.

"But, you may ask, how will we know that our offence has been cleared away? When we are making wholehearted repentance in agreement with the rites as indicated above, we will experience many different emotions that will bring testimony to our understanding. In the course of our practice of repentance we may feel both our body and mind to be in a state of briskness and lightness, and in our dreams we will see good visions. Or we shall happen to see wonderful signs of good omen, or feel our thoughts unfolding auspiciously. Or we shall feel our body as if it were a cloud drifting about in the free air, or as if, when we are practising Dhyana, we were sitting in a shadow cast by our body." That is, feeling very cool. "Under all these conditions we will gradually come to realize many aspects of Dhyana, or, all of a sudden, may realize enlightenment." That's also quite significant. [148] You notice the sort of signs that the Grand Master mentions. They're all the opposite of that feeling of guiltiness. When you're feeling guilty, you're sort of very heavy and bowed down, but as the feeling of guiltiness lifts, as you practise the puja, as you carry it on, carry on with it day after day, week after week, even month after month, you start feeling very light, you have good auspicious dreams, your thoughts, as it were, become much more creative, you feel as if you're floating, drifting, just like a cloud, you feel cool and this, strange to say, can lead you on into dhyana states and dhyana experiences. You feel so sort of happy, so relieved, so glad that you're freed from the burden of guilt that this feeling of happiness and gladness can become so intense that you enter upon dhyana states in this way and even make some approach towards enlightenment.

"We shall then understand the significance of all phenomena and, moreover, will gain a deeper conception of the meaning and import of the teachings we have learnt from the sutras." So there's even a suggestion that insight may develop. "There will be no more griefs and worries in our minds as we enter into a deeper enjoyment of the Dharma. We will recognize in all these experiences a manifestation and testimonial of our purification from the violation of the Precepts that has been a hindrance in our practice of Dhyana. Henceforth, keeping close to the Precepts, we can rightly practise Dhyana and it will be

noticed by others that we have been purified. It is as if the robe that had been ragged and foul had been cleansed and mended and newly dyed."

Then the Grand Master goes on to make some contribution of his own. "If anyone, having violated the main Precepts, feels that it will hinder his successful practice of Dhyana.." Presumably he hasn't yet taken up the practice of Dhyana, or not yet got far with it, or not encountered any obstacle ... "let him go before Buddha's image and in earnest humility make a frank confession of his violation. This method of practising repentance is not in accordance with the way shown in the sutra, nevertheless, let him discontinue his recollection of guiltiness and resume his practice of Dhyana, sitting up straight with determination, recollecting that his wrong acts have no independent self-nature and keeping in mind the reality of the Buddhas in all the six regions. If his thoughts slip away from his practice, let him get up and go before the Buddhas image and with humble and earnest heart, offer incense, repeat his confession, recite the Precepts and a Mahayana sutra. The hindrances to the practice of Dhyana will [149] be gradually cleared away, the temptation to violate the Precepts will be overcome, and he will progress in the practice of Dhyana. In 'The Wonderful Expedient' Scripture it is written: 'Should anyone having committed crimes, come into great agony of spirit, and earnestly desire purification, there is no better way then the practice of Dhyana.'

"He should seek an open and quiet place, sitting up with determined and concentrated mind, reciting Mahayana sutras. In this way he will gradually get rid of thought of his guiltiness and in time will realize the usual Dhyana and Samadhis."

So it seems here as though the Grand Master is suggesting that even if one has violated the Precepts, even the Main Precepts, one can go on with Dhyana practice provided that in between, as it were, you're also making this kind of abbreviated confession and so on. Whereas the former method was to confess and do the puja and so on even for months or years until such time as all feelings of guilt disappeared. But here he's suggesting an alternative method. You're carrying on with the Dhyana, you're also confessing and reciting sutras in between whenever the thought of guiltiness, as it were, recurs, and he also suggests that the practice of Dhyana itself is a means for the purification from offences. But once again the whole approach is very positive.

Nagabodhi: Does one recite the Heart Sutra in the puja as part of the purification process?

S: No, though one could look at it like that because it comes under section six, where one is entreating the Buddha to teach, so there is the teaching. You entreat the Buddha to teach and he, as it were, gives the teaching. But certainly the Heart Sutra is used in this way, in fact any of the Perfection of Wisdom texts which speak of Sunyata, because you're reminding yourself that ultimately offence and repentance are void. But one does get the impression that the Grand Master is speaking very much from experience. No doubt he has many disciples

and they were practising Dhyana. Some of them no doubt had been guilty of breaches of the precepts and they had come to him, he'd advised them on the basis of what the sutras taught, the Mahayana sutras, also on the basis of his own understanding and experience. So here he's giving, as it were, the benefit of all that experience with those monks and [150] with his own pupils. So one gets the impression that it's all very close to reality as it were.

Of course, there's also the point that if you're regularly keeping up the practice of the puja, the Sevenfold Puja or any other, this is a highly skilful activity, skilful mental states are being created, and this will help one in not committing unskilful actions, and even if one does, if one feels a little bit guilty, then the practice of the puja every day will help remove that anyway. So from this point of view also it's good to keep up the practice of the puja, reciting it every day as a sort of permanent counterbalancing factor to any unskilful thoughts or unskilful actions that may arise or that may be committed, as a permanent counterweight, as it were. All right, any query on all that?

This whole question of repentance is obviously very important, not only repentance but repentance and confession. So let's just remind ourselves exactly where we are. This is the first chapter of Dhyana for Beginners and the Grand Master is speaking of external conditions, and the first of those external conditions is that one should keep the Precepts. There are five external conditions and so this is just the first of those, that one should practise sila, morality, as a stepping-stone to Dhyana. So if you want to practise Dhyana, sila comes first. So he's gone at some length into that. He's very aware, as it were, of human weakness, and he also gives great encouragement. So any query on that before we go onto the next, the second, of the external conditions?

And of course we are on the Path of Regular Steps. There's a suggestion there of slightly irregular steps towards the very end. You might have noticed that. That you can keep up with your Dhyana even before your feelings of guiltiness with regard to any unskilful actions have been completely purified, but on the whole he adheres to the Path of Regular Steps. But if there's any breach of Precepts that must be put right, that must be purified, you must get rid of your feelings of guiltiness before you go back to, or carry on with, or start up your practice of Dhyana. [151]

Nagabodhi: That seems to be the approach we have in our movement.

S: Hmm, it seems to be.

Nagabodhi: I don't really foresee how it could ever be otherwise. One couldn't really put adverts in the paper attracting people to lectures on morality and offering nothing else, no meditation, though somebody perhaps whose been in the movement for some time might feel that they wanted to stop meditating and concentrate on developing sila. Do you think that's possible?

S: I wouldn't advise it. I wouldn't encourage it because meditation will help you practise morality, help you be more skilful. Meditation itself is simply the

development of an uninterrupted flow of skilful thoughts. So the best way of ensuring that you continue to act skilfully is to think skilfully and to experience positive skilful states.

Lokamitra: The Buddha always, well not always but often, in his preliminary discourses to someone when they came to see him, he would talk about sila and they would love it and then he would give them a higher teaching and ... but maybe one day people will be attracted to that sort of thing here.

S: Hmm, hmm, yes.

Vajradaka: Well, it's like something Bhante once said, you can only really start at the beginning after you've been on the path quite a long time. I think that quite a lot of Order members and friends who've been coming along really now do treasure our teachings on actual behaviour.

S: Hmm, you start off being attracted by teachings about sunyata and so on. That's what draws you in. And then you have to gradually work your way back to the beginning, and then make a serious start. That might take several years. I remember some years ago, in a study group, I asked people what is your favourite Buddhist scripture or text, and they nearly all said the Diamond Sutra, and I was quite surprised. I think one person said the Dhammapada but nearly everybody said the Diamond Sutra, which was a bit surprising at that time, at that stage, as it were. That really was irregular. Not that you can't have some appreciation of it from the very beginning, but the fact that it was the favourite scripture, well, text, of so many people seemed a bit [152] unbalanced.

All right, let's carry on then, can someone read from paragraph two on page 444, just that paragraph, the second external condition.

Abhaya: [reads from p.444] "The second external condition that one must possess if one is to hope for success in the practice of Dhyana, relates to clothing and food. We should consider clothing from three viewpoints. (a) If we have the fortitude to endure exposure we should follow the example of the great masters of the Himalaya Mountains and have but a single garment, just sufficient to cover one's nakedness. (b) If we move about in the world as itinerant monks, we should follow the example of Maha Kasyapa and limit our garments to three and these old and castoff garments. (c) If we live in cold countries, we are permitted by Buddha to have an extra garment. As for a hundred other things that seem to be necessary, we are permitted to retain only one and be satisfied with that. If we permit our minds to become avaricious for many things, our thoughts will become disturbed and the many things will become a hindrance to gaining enlightenment."

S: Right, let's stop there for the moment. This is mainly about clothing. Any comment on that? Or any query? How does that affect us?

Abhaya: Wouldn't there have to be some readjustment?

Ratnapani: I think to us it implies that we are just modest and moderate

and what really matters is what he says at the end: if you get caught into avariciousness it disturbs you.

S: Right, yes.

Ratnapani: The number and type of garment isn't quite so important.

Vajradaka: It's simplicity.

S: Yes, simplicity ... and a certain amount of elegance perhaps. I think I've mentioned before that it was quite noticeable in Auckland that the Order members and friends there were much more as it were dress conscious than people are in London, especially people around Archway, and once a week they sort of dressed up for the big weekly puja. It was quite nice, and the climate of New Zealand was obviously such that you could dress up in a different sort of way. Many of them had sort of kaftan-like garments that they kept just for the puja, and quite thin, some cotton or muslin. But everyone looked quite not just colourful, but it was clearly a special occasion for them, that weekly big puja and meditation and so on. Their dressing up was all part of the puja, as it were, something a bit more colourful, something a bit more special, and it seemed to create a very positive atmosphere indeed, and I think they practically all did it. Some kept their special puja gowns and shirts at the centre and just put them on when they arrived. Certainly not anything particular expensive, except perhaps in one or two cases, mostly [153] quite simple cheap things from India, but a bit colourful and a bit special. So there's not only the question of simplicity but also the aesthetic appeal too, the colourfulness, especially on occasions like that of puja.

Anyway I don't think there's much need to say anything about that. Most people dress sufficiently simple, sometimes a bit too simple, as regards dress I mean. All right, on to eating.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.444] "Next, in regard to eating: there are four ways of living. (a) The first way is the way followed by the great masters of the high mountains, who live on herbs and seasonable fruits. (b) The second way is the way followed by the itinerant monks who live by begging their food and who are able to resist the temptation to live by the four wrong ways, namely, working for others for pay, living by astrology foretelling the changes and effects of the heavenly bodies in human affairs, by geomancy and fortune telling, and finally by flattery and dependence upon the rich and the mighty. The danger of these ways of wrong living has been described by Shariputra. (c) The third right way of living is to take up one's abode in some secluded place and to depend in faith upon the gifts of generous Laymen. (d) The fourth way of right living is to join some brotherhood and participate in their communal life. If we are living in any one of these four ways of living, we are sure of all the food and clothing that is necessary. What does this mean? It means that if we lack any of these good conditions, our minds will not abide in peaceful quietude and that would be an impediment to enlightenment."

S: So don't forget that we are concerned with the external conditions for practising Dhyana, and these external conditions imply an adequate supply of clothing and of food. But just what is enough and obtained in the right sort of way. So with regard to eating there are four ways of living, the first way is the way followed by the great Masters of the high mountains who live on herbs and seasonable foods, that is, they gather just what is naturally available, they don't have to bother about cooking or going to the market or anything of that sort, they just live on fruits which are available in the forest and herbs. In this way you get your supply of food and you don't have to bother much about it. You can get on with your meditation.

The second way is the way followed by the itinerant monks who live by begging for food and who are able to resist the temptation to live by the four wrong ways. So this was very much of course the practice in the Buddha's day. Most of his wanderer followers got their food in this way, going for alms to the houses of sympathetic householders. So in this way too you get your food, you get what is necessary in this way, and you don't have to bother very much, you can then get on with your meditation. So monks who get their food in this way, living on alms, resist the temptation to live by the four wrong ways. This very much harks back to conditions in India in the Buddha's day. Working for others for pay, this is definitely prohibited for the monk: a gainful secular occupation. Living by astrology, foretelling the changes and effects of the heavenly bodies in human affairs, this is prohibited for the monk, and the emphasis here is making a living [154] from on it. If you do possess some knowledge of these things and you do communicate that knowledge to others for their benefit freely, it seems to be permissible; certainly it's regarded as permissible in many Buddhist countries. But to make a living out of astrology is regarded as a wrong means of livelihood for a monk. And geomancy - this seems to include a Chinese development - and fortune telling, it's the same sort of thing or same sort of principle as in the case of astrology. And finally by flattery and dependence upon the rich and mighty: just to attach yourself to a rich man as a sort of private chaplain and be a hanger on in this way, and in that way get support by having to flatter that particular person and go on with his whims and fancies. This is a wrong way for a monk to get his board and lodging. And the dangers of these ways of wrong living have been described by Sariputra, presumably in a sutra.

"The third right way of living is to take up one's abode in some secluded place and to depend in faith upon the gifts of generous laymen." That is to say when you go off and meditate in a hermitage and you know that there are friendly householders round about, and you just rely upon them to bring you food while you get on with your meditation. This is certainly possible in a Buddhist country even today in many cases.

"The fourth way of right living is to join some Brotherhood and participate in their communal life." That means you join a monastery or some kind of spiritual community which has got its own resources in which you share, and of course you make a contribution to the life of that community either by your teaching

or your labour or just by your being there.

So these are the four ways of getting food, four right ways of getting food, if you are really intent upon Dhyana. You can either go to some mountainous region and live on fruits and herbs without having to bother about cultivation or cooking or shopping or other people supplying you, or else you can just beg from door to door and get your food in that way and spend the rest of the day meditating, or you can live in some hut or hermitage and rely upon sympathetic householders to bring you food every day, or you can join a brotherhood or a community and share in the resources of that brotherhood or community. [155]

So it seems quite clear that under present conditions in the West the only alternative is the fourth - this seems quite clear - for those who want to get on with a lot of meditation. Well perhaps there are other possibilities, perhaps you might get a friend to support you, or you might save up enough money by working first and then treat yourself to a period of retreat somewhere. But broadly speaking the most practical, or the only practical alternative, is that of joining a brotherhood, that is to say you join a spiritual community where provision is made for people who want to devote a lot of time to their meditation, or at least there's a very positive atmosphere even though meditation might not be the only activity going on, a very positive atmosphere in which meditation is possible.

So this is obviously not just monastic life in the narrow conventional sense but finding a community of people, a community of Buddhists, a spiritual community, an order house or something like that where the atmosphere is positive and where perhaps you can be supported or partially supported and where you can get on with your meditation in the right sort of environment.

Abhaya: Do you envisage this as a possibility? ..[unclear]..

S: In what way do you mean?

Abhaya: Well, where all Order members could become self-sufficient by contributing somewhere to . . .

S: I think there is this tendency at present because there is quite a bit of support coming in. That support comes, much of it, from mitras and friends, I think less and less from actual [156] [Tape 7 side A] Order members who are giving more and more of a spiritual contribution. So it may well be that eventually it will be possible for quite a large number of Order members to be attached to a centre where provision is made for board and lodgings and where they can be devoting themselves to teaching, to editing lectures, or preparing lectures, from which they can be giving lectures, and where they can also be devoting themselves to meditation and so on; maybe some centres, some communities in the city attached to centres, others in the country; some functioning perhaps as retreat centres, others not; some run, as it were, purely along monastic lines or semi-monastic lines. There seems to be the tendency though, you know, how long it will be before the greater number of Order members are living in this

sort of way it's very difficult to say. There's a lot of preliminary work to be done, a lot of material work, a lot of raising of funds and all that, which at present is being done mainly by Order members themselves, and obviously one has to be very careful of that sort of development creeping in, which did creep in in India, when the Sangha became so popular and there was so much support that people started thinking that to be a monk and join the Sangha was just, you know, to be in on a good thing, and to be looked after and cared for and lead an easy, inoffensive life. So one has to watch that too, otherwise people might be rolling up, please can I be ordained, and go away to the country and stay there happily and be looked after and have a quiet life. But this isn't what being an Order member means. But, of course, an Order member may very well have a quiet life, from time to time, in this sort of way, but you know, that isn't one's motive or shouldn't be one's motive for seeking ordination because seeking ordination means willingness to commit yourself to your own growth and development individually in association with others, and that may take various forms. Any further query about that?

And this is being discussed [you] notice, or don't forget, in the context of getting food. After all, this is the basic requirement isn't it, clothing and food, especially food. So if you are going to take up the practice of meditation, you want to be sure of getting regular clothing and food simply so that you don't have to bother about [157] these things and can get on with your meditation. You're just trying to see what [are] the least troublesome ways of getting food and clothing, ways not only not troublesome but also in accordance with right livelihood, and then forgetting all about it and just getting on with your practice. All right, on, then, to the third external condition.

Vajradaka: [reads from p.444-5] "The third external condition that one must possess if one is to hope for success in the practice of Dhyana, relates to shelter. A retreat for a follower to be satisfactory must be quiet and free from annoyances and troubles of any kind. There are three kinds of places that are suitable for Dhyana practice: (a) a hermitage in the high and inaccessible mountains. (b) A shack such as would serve a beggar or a homeless monk. These should be at least a mile and a half from a village where even the voice of a cowboy would not reach and where trouble and turmoil would not find it. (c) A bed in a monastery apart from a layman's house."

S: Bear in mind one is not thinking just of the external conditions for spiritual life in general but specifically external conditions for meditation. Either a hermitage in high and inaccessible mountains, a shack, or a bed in a monastery apart from a layman's house.

Once again, it's the monastery, the spiritual community, that would seem to provide the solution, a room in a spiritual community, this is the sort of contemporary equivalent of ..[unclear].. centre, your own cell if you like. (Perhaps that doesn't have quite the right sort of association.) Or your own flat in the community.

So apart from possessing sila, one should have an adequate supply of clothing and food and a suitable shelter, that is, a place to stay and get on with your practice. Now onto the fourth external condition.

Voice: [reads from p.445] "The fourth external condition that one must possess if one is to hope for success in the practice of Dhyana, relates to freedom from entanglement in all worldly affairs. (a) It means to withdraw from conditional engagements and social responsibilities. (b) It means to give up all worldly friends, relatives and worldly interests. This means to cut off all social intercourse. (c) It means to give up all worldly business such as busies craftsmen, doctors, clerks, traders, fortune tellers, etc. (d) It means to give up general study even of a seemingly good kind, such as reading, writing lectures or books, attending lectures, etc. For what reason should these things be given up? It is because if we are interested in these things our minds are not quiet and free for the practice of Dhyana and the attainment of enlightenment. Moreover, if our minds are disturbed or weary or not at peace, one can hardly practise Dhyana."

S: So this seems quite sweeping and drastic, and once again one must remember that it pertains more specifically to the practice of Dhyana. For "the fourth external condition that one must possess if one is to hope for success in the practice of Dhyana, relates to freedom from entanglement in all worldly affairs. It means to withdraw from all conditional engagements and social responsibilities." If you are to get on with full time Dhyana practice then you just can't be involved with conditional engagements and social responsibilities. "It means to give up all worldly friends, relatives and worldly interests." That is, if you're going to practise Dhyana full time, as it were, then you must cut yourself off from those things at least for the period of your [158] Dhyana practice. Maybe if you follow the Bodhisattva ideal, well you come in contact at least with your worldly friends and relatives afterwards, but not while you're trying to practise Dhyana full time. Full time practice of Dhyana is quite incompatible with those things. Even a life devoted predominately to Dhyana, much of this does of course apply to the spiritual life in general as well as to Dhyana specifically. "It means to give up all worldly business such as busies craftsmen, doctors, clerks, traders, fortune tellers" and even general studies. Presumably it means secular studies, but if one is a full time practitioner of Dhyana even a study of Buddhist literature may not be very helpful, maybe a form of distraction. I mean, the study of Buddhist literature, attending lectures and all that, may be good from a general spiritual point of view, but when one e takes up the full-time practice of Dhyana, then you have as it were to deliberately limit your interests.

"Moreover if our minds are disturbed or weary or not at peace, one can hardly practise Dhyana." No doubt you can keep up a very good regular practice of even one, two, three, or four hours of meditation a day and still lead a quite actively, busy, social, even worldly life against the background of your basic spiritual motivation, but if you want to get full time into Dhyana then obviously you have to give up all activities of that sort.

It's just a question of deciding what would be good for the time being. Here the

Grand Master has very much in mind a full-time meditating monk.

Ratnapani: In those circumstances this is perhaps specifically appropriate to a solitary retreat rather than say being...

S: Yes, right, yes. I mean the general pattern for most Order members would be that they keep up their regular meditation, at least an hour in the morning, an hour in the evening, and they're getting on with other things in between, perhaps even with a secular job or certainly with studying, maybe activities for the movement. One mustn't again interpret Dhyana in too narrow a sense. As has been made clear even in this text, one can develop insight even as a result of study, even as a result of listening to lectures.

So if one is thinking in terms of practising Dhyana in the more [159] specialized sense, then one has to cut oneself off from social and even ordinary religious activities in many cases, certainly of the more organized kind.

Vessantara: Do you think as regards the stage of development of the Movement that for most Order members the full [time] practice of Dhyana is a kind of luxury, [for] which one is going to have to wait until we're more established.

S: I don't know that anyone is ready for it. Luxury suggests that they could benefit from it if circumstances permit. I don't think anybody is in a position to benefit from full-time meditation, maybe for a week or something like that, but not for longer probably. When I say full-time, I mean full-time, not reading in between or anything like that.

Ratnapani: Sitting in meditation all waking hours?

S: Yes. I'm quite sure quite a few Order members could sustain a month or even three months of combined meditation and study and letter writing, and that would be certainly very good and have an extremely positive effect, but it's not a sort of full time meditation practice the Grand Master seems to have in mind when he speaks in terms of this fourth external condition. Presumably he's excluded even letter writing to other Order members. That's not to say that that kind of retreat where you just go away and you cut off social contact virtually with the whole world and you're just getting on with your meditation, keeping your hut or chalet in order and doing a bit of study, writing, letter writing - it's not to say that that isn't an extremely positive and helpful thing to do, for several months on end if possible. Certainly I think every Order member ought to have some experience of this from time to time, ideally a month at a time, a solitary retreat with meditation and study, and possibly a bit of letter writing too for a bit of light relief, every now and then. Some of you have had this. I know Buddhadasa did six months, who else has had a few weeks or a month or so? You've had a?

Vessantara: Month.

S: You've had a month. It would be good if everybody had this experience [160] from time to time, and perhaps later on we shall sort of be able to make it

possible for Order members to do this. If, say, we have a semi-monastic centre in the country and there ought to be one or two little chalets dotted about the grounds where people can go, where they can, you know, live in this sort of way, where their shopping can be done for them so they don't have to go out anywhere or have any sort of contact with other people.

So that's a rather negative condition, the fourth one, let's go on to the fifth now which is more positive.

A voice: [reads from p.445] "The fifth external condition that one must possess if one is to hope for success in the practice of Dhyana, relates to association with people. We should keep in close relations with three kinds of noble minded people: The first kind are those outside the brotherhood who supply us with our food and clothing, and who are competent in taking good care of us and in protecting us from annoyances and troubles. The second kind of noble-minded people are the members of our Brotherhood with whom we live in intimacy and mutual forbearance and kindness. The third kind are our Teachers and masters who instruct us and guide us in the use of expedient means to meet both external and internal conditions, and to show us how to become interested and to enjoy ourselves in the practice of Dhyana."

S: So that seems very clear and straightforward doesn't it, eh? Again it relates, it seems, more to those who are living as monks, and one can say that in many of the Buddhist countries even now those who are living as monks are really looked after by the lay people, who really do care for them and who do shield them from annoyances and disturbances so that they can really get on with their Dhyana and their other practices and so on. Unfortunately they don't always take full advantage of this sort of opportunity but the opportunity is there even now.

Lokamitra: It's the second time he's talked about enjoying ourselves in the practice of Dhyana.

S: Hmm, yes, well so we should. So these are the five external conditions for the practice of Dhyana. First of all that one should resolve to keep the precepts, that one should cultivate sila, and secondly that one must have adequate clothing and food, thirdly adequate shelter, fourthly freedom from worldly entanglements, leisure, and fifthly the right sort of spiritual contacts, contact with spiritual friends who would help in various ways either as supporters or brothers or teachers.

Any general comment about all that or query about all that? Bearing in mind it's a general discussion about external conditions for the practice of Dhyana? [161]

Padmapani: It's seems very clear and concise and to the point.

Voice: Integral.

S: Hmm. It's also significant perhaps that external conditions come first before

even internal ones. It's like going away on retreat into the country and then you get on with your practice whatever it may be. External conditions are very important, this is something I think I was talking about on the previous retreat, previous study seminar. It's very sort of pseudo-spiritual to say, well it all depends upon your own right attitude, don't bother about external conditions so much. Sure, your own attitude should be right and shouldn't be totally dependent on external conditions, but external conditions do make a very big difference. We see this again and again when we go away with people on retreat. Sometimes it's as if that is all that is necessary up to a point, you just take them away and put them in the midst of more favourable conditions and they are at once in a much more positive state of mind without even any meditation practice at all. Just change the conditions, it's as simple as that, such a simple and obvious step. So one certainly mustn't despise external conditions even though one knows that in the last analysis it is your own mental attitude which is the decisive factor. But especially in the early stages external conditions are so important. If the external conditions are right, well, it's three quarters of the battle already won. Can anyone think of any external conditions not mentioned here?

Padmapani: Climate.

S: Climate? Hmm, in what way?

Padmapani: Well, I mean, a certain climate conduces to maybe the external conditions in the sense that well maybe you don't have to have a lot of clothes and all that. A greater freedom of space and movement.

S: Well certainly I noticed that in New Zealand.

Buddhadasa: Coupled with climate is also time, because in Scotland, obviously because it was winter, it was dark for a greater part of that time and ..[unclear].. in climate could have a ..[unclear].. effect. There was one particular [day] when it was dark the whole day. [162]

S: They have quite a lot of that in Finland.

Padmaraja: Did he mention the fact of actually finding a teacher?

S: I think that is implied. "The third kind are our teachers and masters who instruct us and guide us in the use of expedient means."

Lokamitra: It seems that certain things are assumed before. I mean before you start this practice of sila you have to want to develop. you have to ... and so on .. so here .. presumably before you start the practice of Dhyana in full seriousness, you've gone through ...

S: I think he probably is addressing Buddhists for want of a better term. He's speaking very much within a cultural and religious context of Buddhism, where people nominally at least in principle do accept Buddhism.

Voice: There's nothing said specifically about noise.

Ratnapani: There's nothing about aeroplanes, diesel engines, football crowds.

S: But freedom from noise is very important because noise can be a really sort of shattering experience, especially if you're trying to meditate.

Buddhadasa: Did you notice the aircraft this morning in meditation?

S: No.

Voice: A very deep one. It just shook up the whole atmosphere. [Unclear comments from various people.]

Ratnapani: A disadvantage of Norfolk of course, isn't it? You're on a flight path; you've got it worse than we have and we get a lot of noise too. Almost everywhere in Norfolk is on a flight path without exception. [At the time of this seminar, Sangharakshita was living in Norfolk, tr.]

Nagabodhi: [Something about the shortcomings of the Archway Centre] really appalling.

S: It's very, very difficult to get anywhere which is really quiet. I must say we didn't hear many aeroplanes in New Zealand. Also in Finland. I think the whole time I was there I only actually heard one aircraft [163] and even that very faintly. There must have been more, I mean, they come and go from Helsinki itself, but I only actually heard one. I think the airport is quite a way out of town. They may be just more strict about noise enforcement.

Ratnapani: I must say I find that about the worst thing, noise, I sort of ..

I wondered whether it was that I was just a bit neurotic about noise but I do find it extremely upsetting, more than I think most other external conditions. I find it very deeply shattering quite often.

Voice: I think that I find this too. I think it's linked because noise is directly human motivated. There's always a culprit behind it. Someone is trying to impose himself or herself upon you.

S: If it's thunder you don't feel so upset?

Voice: ... react aggressively to man-made noise.

S: It is in a way someone's inconsiderateness very often. People ride their wretched, noisy motorbikes up and down the street. This did occur to me some time ago: that if there is any society, I think there is, for abatement of noise, I think it should have the strong support of all Buddhists.

Voice: That's a very good idea because there are some very rich people in that too.

S: Ah ... ah ... yes a good means of contact with them then, we're all for abatement of noise, you're for abatement of noise, but we're for abatement of noise so that we can meditate, and so that other people can meditate. I have sometimes been wondering, well, what are the sort of positive public

activities and movements that we could have some contact with, but there are hardly any because some are of such mixed motivation, but I did think that this was something which was probably relatively unadulterated and we could wholeheartedly support, you know, any movement for the reduction in the total volume of sound that impinges upon our eardrums. There are certain laws about the number of decibels permitted and apparently that law is going to be changed and they are going to allow more decibels. This is what I was reading in the paper some time ago: that at least there are proposals to permit a higher level of noise, presumably in [164] cities with regard to traffic and all that. I think this is ... well, I think there is actually a society for .. is it the abatement of noise? I think we should have one or two new members there and be in contact with these people, because Buddhist or not they've certainly got the right idea and it is something that we can honestly support. We can also give an additional reason for the work that they are doing. It would be interesting to see what sort of people belong to it or run it.

Lokamitra: Well there's a very rich merchant banker [laughter]. I don't know...

S: Well, I think someone should join and go along to meetings if they have meetings.

Voice: What do you think about hunting?

S: Well, I've heard all the arguments pro and all the arguments con. I think it's a bit peripheral in view of all the slaughter that does go on. If you're going to bother about that sort of thing, well, what about meat factories, you know, what about broiler hens? If you're going to tackle that angle well, there's very much bigger sort of vested interests than just a few fox hunters. I don't feel happy about fox hunting or anything of that sort but I think that as an issue of that kind, it's very peripheral.

? Well, in that case the Vegetarian Society should perhaps be more...

S: Yes, but there again there's mixed motivation. There's a lot of crankiness, there's no doubt about that, and do we want to be associated with that?

Vessantara: How about Friends of the Earth?

S: Friends of the Earth would seem to be much better.

Vessantara: [unclear]

S: I think we have to be aware, in this sort of field, of crankiness. I don't think they are on the whole, from what I've gathered, but very often people who do that sort of thing are really cranky. And we [165] don't want much to do with that kind of thing.

Vessantara: [unclear]

S: I mean certainly we should encourage the sort of health food movement, but there's another angle of it: why are health foods so wildly expensive? It seems to be associated with, to my mind, with just profiteering and exploitation,

gross commercialization, I don't want to support that. You pay, I don't know what it is, for a wretched, tiny packet of brown rice, you pay, you know, some unmentionable price. You know, it makes you really pay for your health food. Someone's making a big profit. It's really big business now and one doesn't want really anything to do with that. It's one of the reasons why I feel we should gradually develop our own community farms and supply ourselves with our own organically grown foods. By-pass all this big business, vested interest.

Voice: Apparently organically grown food is catching on more and becoming more economical to do without artificial fertilizers.

Ratnapani: Yes, quantity does affect price anyway, and it would be more pricey than a big commercial like ..[unclear].. that is in very, very big demand.

S: But it seems really so ridiculously illogical that the unspoiled natural products should be so expensive, but the processed product is much cheaper. And where does the cost come in? It's not even sort of particularly well packaged.

Right, so external conditions. Any others anyone can think of? I think climate is also important psychologically. When the sun shines you feel in a more positive mood don't you? If it's raining all day you can't help feeling a bit depressed, unless you're a farmer. [laughter]

Ratnapani: [unclear comment about drought]

Voice: I's say not near the sea if possible.

S: Not near the sea, yes. I'd be inclined to say that from the Dhyana point of view, having lived next door to the sea for a while, yes. [166]

Buddhadasa: You know, over a long period of time it has quite a disturbing influence. You get into the habit of the sea and you begin to pick up that it's never still, it's never resting.

S: It's constant noise.

Buddhadasa: Constant noise, yes. [More unclear comments about the sea]

S: According to Tantric tradition the ideal site for a hermitage is with it's back to a mountain, preferably a lofty mountain, overlooking a lake, or at least a river, preferably still water.

Voice: Still water can be very calming.

Padmapani: Why is that Bhante?

S: I don't know.

Ratnapani: We were saying that a wise man likes mountains and a compassionate man is attracted to the sea or waters.

Voice: Who said that?

S: It was a slight misquote from something I said, I'm afraid. The Nyani loves the mountains and the Pakhta the sea shore. The Nyani is the wise man; he loves the mountains. It's not the compassionate man but the devotee who loves the sea shore.

Ratnapani: I got it from the Car Supplement once in the days before I got into Buddhism, yes, a propos Bertrand Russell who went to live near the Welsh mountains near the sea.

S: Well, probably they couldn't make any reference to devotees. Compassion was the nearest they could get to it.

Voice: [unclear] ... disciples or more devotional...

S: A more devotional person. It's a Hindu saying. I don't know whether it is so or not. l have quoted it in a lecture. [167]

Vajradaka: I can't get a kind of direct link but I somehow feel an external condition which should be overcome before one actually goes into Dhyana retreat in the kind of sense the Grand Master is meaning, is that all kinds of relatives and, um, relatives of all different kinds, wives and things like that [laughter] ...

S: If you've got a wife you don't deserve to go into Dhyana retreat. [laughter] These things are meant. It means to give up all worldly friends and all sort of worldly interests. But were you thinking of, you know, sort of friends and relatives beyond that? A sort of wider circle?

Vajradaka: I was thinking particularly not even so much of them but of, you know, beyond having them wanting you to be back. You know what I mean? This is why I was kind of not sure, it's not actual physical things but more a kind of an emotional thing. If someone is in a sense emotionally hung up with you.

S: I think this could be quite difficult. Of course they'll want you back. You just have to accept that and go off notwithstanding. If you wait for them not to want you to go away, well, you'll be waiting for ever in some cases.

Vajradaka: I didn't think that, I was thinking of .. if you're going to go away, then to have a period of time so that, you know, there isn't the immediate sort of bubbling.

S: If you're going to practise Dhyana and it's going to be a pleasurable and enjoyable experience, you'll get over it very, very quickly.

Vajradaka: I don't know, I don't think you can just sort of get into Dhyana just like that.

S: Are you thinking about you worrying about them worrying about you?

Vajradaka: No I'm not thinking about that. I'm thinking about them worrying, at least radiating emotional desire in which, if you are close to them, you pick up.

S: I think if you are even a little into your Dhyana practice this wouldn't affect you, because your Dhyana practice would be something positive and that is really something quite negative. [168] It's good of course if people can understand why you are going, and send you off, as it were, with quite positive thoughts, but sometimes that may not be the case. People may just be upset that you're leaving, leaving them, even though you're going away for a perfectly positive purpose.

Ratnapani: It doesn't really mention physical health here. I should think it's reasonably important.

Voice: I think it says something about [this] under the ten heads, [the] first of which is external conditions, nine is cure of disease. The two go along together.

Sona: I think another thing that perhaps ought to be considered in the actual Dhyana process is the actual site of it. We talked last week about certain psychic influences.

S: Yes, right, and even physical influences, that it's not damp or, you know, anything of that sort, not draughty, that it feels right, that there's a good feeling to the place.

Vessantara: What kind of psychic impressions do you mean?

S: Well, if you felt very uneasy, that there was something wrong with the place. If you were so experienced in meditation it wouldn't matter, you know, your own more positive influences would resolve all that. It might be important for a relative beginner ..[unclear].. from any uncanny influence around or anything of that sort, an atmosphere of gloom. I mean different places do have their definite atmosphere and no doubt one should select one which is positive rather than negative if one has the possibility of choice. [169]

[Tape 7 Side B]

Chapter 2

Censorship over Desires Arising from the Senses pages 446-8

S: We must bear in mind that this is the path of regular steps, so the Grand Master is [unclear] step by step right from the beginning and this particular chapter relates to something which is usually called, especially in the Pali scriptures, Guarding the Gates of the Senses. So guarding the gates is probably better than censorship. Censorship probably doesn't have a very positive connotation. Guarding the gates of the senses. As the idiom suggests, the senses are like gates and sense impressions are constantly coming in at the gates. This particular teaching, guarding the gates of the senses, makes it clear that we shouldn't allow all sense impressions to come in without exercising any sort of selectivity. We should keep guard, as it were, at the gates of the senses and see what impressions are coming in.

It also suggests that we shouldn't be just passive and we shouldn't just react mechanically to impressions that come in through the five senses.

Padmapani: Sorry, could you say that again, Bhante? Did you say one should be passive?

S: Shouldn't be passive. You shouldn't be passive, merely receiving impressions and reacting to them in a purely mechanical, unmindful fashion. This ties up very much with the transition from the last of the nidanas of the effect process of the present life and the first of the nidanas of the cause process of the present life. In other words it's the transitional point between feeling and craving. Do you see the sort practice the Grand Master has in mind? He says, as it were, that most of the time our five senses are wide open, just like gates thrown wide open. Impressions are pouring in from all quarters and usually we just let them pour in without considering what effect they have on our minds. We let them pour in. We let all of them pour in, and then we react just mechanically, and in this way various unskilful mental states arise and may eventually [170] overpower us. So we should take up our stand, as it were, at the gates of the senses themselves and watch what is coming in, watch what impressions are arising and not allow them to get out of hand.

The language almost suggests that there's something wrong with the sense organs or with the experiences that are coming through them, but this is not really quite so. There's nothing wrong with sense impressions, it's the reaction to them which can be either skilful or unskilful, and we keep a watch at the gates of the senses not because sense impressions themselves may be bad, but that certain sense impressions may spark off an unskilful reaction on our part.

Vessantara: So it's not advocating a sort of very extreme censorship of sense impressions, a sort of walking along not looking to left or right?

S: It may even do that as a sort of preliminary exercise or if one's reactions are very strong and very unskilful, yes, it may mean even limiting the range of the senses for some time, certainly. For instance, if you find that you get rather inflamed by advertisements, well, don't look at them for a while. I mean don't pay attention, don't look - taking the sense of sight as an example - at those films which you know invariably give rise to unskilful mental states. This is a sensible sort of first step.

Obviously you can't go about the world with your eyes closed so the best thing in the long run is to keep a very careful guard over the doors of the senses and be very watchful and purely aware and not allow unskilful mental states to arise in dependence upon the sense impressions. And of course this section draws attention to the way in which our minds are being influenced through the senses all he time, certainly throughout our waking hours. The examples he gives are rather selective but you must be careful not to take that too literally. For instance, you could hear unpleasant sounds which give rise to unskilful thoughts of anger and hatred and aversion. It's not only pleasant sounds which give rise to feelings of craving. But you see the sort of general picture? Most of

the time on account of the senses we are completely passive. The facility and the mechanicalness of our response, which are negative factors here really, that we are just acted upon and react mechanically and don't really realize what is happening.

In other words if we are not careful we become completely Pavlovian. [171] That is to say like Pavlov's dogs who react quite automatically to particular sense stimuli.

Vajradaka: There seems to be quite a strong link between the breaking of this habitual habit and the twelve positive links or creativity. The link up between creativity and positive emotion especially in the sort of same ..[unclear].. faith and then all the others. But once that habitual pattern is broken then the positive emotion is felt and it's a creative process rather than a habitual one. It's a truly positive emotion.

S: As regards censorship over the desires arising from the use of the ears it seems to be implied that the kind of music mentioned here is of the very, as it were, sensuous type. Not anything very sublime or inspiring because obviously some kind of music could have a highly skilful effect. You could even have devotional chanting and so on. And it mentions smouldering perfumes or incense used in connection with puja [which] obviously could awaken very skilful feelings, devotional feelings.

So it's not so much a question of avoiding the experience of impressions coming through the senses but being very careful of what your reaction to them is, that you can't avoid altogether during your waking hours. The senses are registering impressions all the time. If you keep close watch over those impressions then you can control, as it were, your reactions to them which means that your reaction will not be just mechanical but will be more in the nature of a creative response. It will be skilful rather than unskilful, be objective rather than subjective.

Abhaya: You also have the choice to change your environment.

S: That's right, yes.

Abhaya: At least you can leave a room, or even go to a different part of a room.

S: Yes, yes. This particular stage seems to be transitional, as it were, between the external conditions and the internal conditions. So in the next chapter we are coming on to the inner hindrances to be abolished. [172] So here you are, as it were, half way between the external conditions and the inner ones. It's not a question of desires arising from the senses but any unskilful reaction, not just desire but even hatred, even bewilderment, confusion. So unless you are really aware of the sense impressions that are coming in you cannot exercise any control over your reaction to those impressions. This is what it really means. If you are in a sort of dull sleepy state and sense impressions are just coming in, or impressions are coming in through the senses, you don't know really what is happening, you don't know really how you are being influenced, how you are

being affected, how your mind is being changed, how your mental state is being determined. You are quite unaware of all this.

Nagabodhi: I find that a pretty regular feature of most retreats, certainly found it on my solitary retreat, is a reliving of all sorts of things, especially films I have seen, but also, say, newspaper stories or just incidents in streets. Usually violent situations but not just. A kind of reliving with awareness during meditation. It's as if the sensitivity I didn't have to what it was doing to me then, you know, I'm almost forced eventually to go through it again and see the full effect of what happened. And it's quite disturbing in a way because it seems that one is just constantly piling up this huge...

S: Subliminally one is registering so much all the time.

Nagabodhi: Yes.

S: But choked with impressions, as though the gates of the senses are completely jammed with people struggling to get into the city.

And then sometimes one may say that when there was an absolute battery or barrage of sense impressions you get so tired and over-stimulated then your power of censorship or watchfulness becomes considerably weakened and then anything can sort of smuggle itself in.

Vajradaka: You know, I think that is used quite a lot by film directors: a barraging of the impressions and then some. They start using more important symbolic kinds of images after your defences have been broken down. [173]

S: It's probably a very negative state to be completely passive in this sort of way.

Padmapani: I mean, I presume .. also ... you know ... if one's in quite a state of mindfulness, if a barrage of impressions are coming in so much, you wouldn't be mindful, you wouldn't be able to stop them, there would be just so many, you can't ... the brain can only function in a certain way.

S: Yes, hmm, this is why sometimes it may become important just to reduce the quantity of sense impressions, as it were, and again going away on retreat, going away into the country, is helpful. There are fewer impressions coming in there than if you were in the city, in the sense that your mind is not being constantly over-stimulated. I mean in the country, too, impressions are coming in all the time: visual impressions of greenness, distance, and blue sky. This has got quite a different effect from the visual impressions created by traffic rushing past and, you know, there is the odd bird call, there isn't the thunder of traffic or the sound of hundreds and thousands of voices or marching feet. There is definitely an aspect of avoidance, avoiding, so far as one can, certainly in the early stages of one's practice, those sense impressions which, you know, are practically certain to give rise to unskilful mental states.

Buddhadasa: Do you think the present ones are usually much more easy to be aware of? Various sets of craving ... are easy enough to spot. In my experience

the most difficult ones are the ones that lead to the confusion and the delusion type of mental states.

S: Or even depression perhaps.

Ratnapani: Yes, they can creep up without much warning.

S: So it's a question of even avoiding those objects which give rise to impressions which you know will in turn give rise to unskilful mental states, and also a question of exercising constant vigilance over impressions which you do allow yourself to be exposed to. So that you can have some say at least in the mental states which arise [174] in dependence upon those impressions.

Sagaramati: Why doesn't it mention thoughts? That seems...

S: Well, this comes really in the next section: inner hindrances to be abolished; the five hindrances. So these presumably all cover the sixth sense, which is to say the mind. These are purely mental impressions, impressions which come in not via the five senses, not in the present moment at least. But in this chapter we are dealing with the impressions coming via the five senses directly.

It is quite a useful exercise I think, sometimes, to experience a degree of sensory depravation. We did talk about this on a retreat quite a long time ago. Does anyone remember that? I spoke about some course, I think it was a teacher training course which I'd heard about, on which the teachers for one week were blindfolded. In other words to have the experience of being blind, deprived of the sense of sight because they were going to be working with handicapped children and it was felt that they should have some experience of what it was really like to be handicapped, some experience of it, not just reading about it in books. So they took it in turns in the course of this session - which I presume lasted some months - they took it in turns to have a week of blindness and be dependent on other people leading them about and helping them to get their food and so on. Anyone remember me talking about this?

Voice: Yes.

S: So if one was to do this then one would presumably realize the amount of impressions that comes into a particular sense. It might be quite a worthwhile experiment on a retreat sometimes. The sense of sight is probably the one which we use most, through which we are mostly exposed to impressions, in other words visual impressions. If you cut that off for a week then you probably have quite a distinctive experience. I can't say I've ever done this but I can imagine what it might be like up to a point. And then, say, with hearing, you stop your ears for a week, you're deaf. Of course it's much more difficult to muffle the sense of smell or the sense of taste, I don't know quite how you'd do that. [175]

Vessantara: You find even fasting makes a distinctive ...

S: Yes, yes.

Vessantara: I find if I fast...

S: That's deprivation of taste, certainly.

Vessantara: I find very often I'm going along quite happily fasting and I'm not aware that I'm hungry, and all of a sudden I'm feeling very hungry and I realize that my eye just lit on a piece of bread or something and started everything off. It's nothing to do with my actual requirements at all.

S: Then of course there's the sense of touch, presumably the one most difficult to get rid of. In a way it's the most basic. You can at times have a sensation of weightlessness, like floating in a tub of warm water or something that kind. But what is important in a way is to develop a sort of awareness in which you hear things, you see things, your senses are fully awake and fully alert but there aren't mechanical reactions. In other words it's a sort of practice of mindfulness in a way. That in the seen only the seen, in the heard only the heard, but you don't allow that instantaneous reaction to take place. You're so watchful that the reaction doesn't really have much of a chance to take place at all.

But even sometimes when we react positively it's still a reaction. Like when you wake up in the morning and it's a nice sunny day and at once there's the reaction of pleasure. But strictly speaking there shouldn't be even that in a way, there should just be the awareness that it's a nice sunny day, and you know you should .. in a way it's not a nice sunny day, the same awareness but not any feeling of disappointment or dullness or anything of that sort. It's just not a nice sunny day, it's just a dull day. That's that. But it suggests you feel very positive within yourself, not that you're just in a grey, neutral state all the time but in a state of extreme positivity, not indifference, in a negative sense.

Padmapani: When one's in that state, Bhante, wouldn't it be true to say, during [176] the sleeping stage one often experiences a carrying-on state from the waking state? One experiences almost like a cycle, one knows that in one's dream one is dreaming this dream.

S: Hmm, yes. Well some of the material which one encounters in dreams seems to have come via the senses originally, but other material seems to come from quite different sources and sometimes it all gets mixed up together.

But what mindfulness helps you to do create a sort of gap between the taking in of the impression, the acceptance of the impression and your response or reaction. If you can just delay that response, it's more likely to be skilful.

Lokamitra: So one felt happy after waking up on a nice sunny day but one was aware first of all, that would be the key. I mean one could respond in a happy way as it were.

S: Yes, yes, it wouldn't be that it was a nice sunny day so your former dullness and apathy vanished, but already you were in a positive and happy state so you're in a position to appreciate the fact that it's a fine day positively. You don't take the fine day as sort of supplying some deficiency in yourself. You're quite positive without the fine day and, being positive, you can appreciate it skilfully.

Lokamitra: So the criteria is a skilful mental state which is produced, right?

S: Yes, yes.

Lokamitra: So sadness can be a skilful mental state as well?

S: No, I don't see how sadness can be a skilful mental state.

Lokamitra: Well, if one was responding to something say like a close friend's death or something like that.

S: That wouldn't be skilful. You would see perhaps objectively that it would have been better if he had not died, but you wouldn't be sad. As it's said on the death of the Buddha, the arahants weren't moved but those who weren't arahants they shed tears. It seems from our point of view rather an extraordinary sort of mental state [177] that you shouldn't feel sad, but sadness is definitely unskilful, according to the Buddhist analysis. I mean, what is the sadness?

Voice: [Unclear].. something that you want.

S: In a way.

Lokamitra: But then the happiness is having something that you want too.

S: No, no! That is the sort of, as it were, unskilful happiness, but otherwise skilful happiness is just happiness.

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: So, just happiness that is, just happiness is skilful, but sadness that is just sadness is unskilful. Sadness that has a cause is unskilful. So the fact that your best friend passes away ideally shouldn't disturb your positive state of mind. You might feel compassion if he died suffering or something like that, but that wouldn't be sadness, you might feel compassion.

Lokamitra: I was trying to think of sadness as a positive state.

S: I think that is rather difficult in strictly Buddhist terms.

Lokamitra: Maybe I was meaning something more like compassion.

S: Hmm, yes. But supposing he had died a ripe old age and he had done everything he had to do, then there would be no room even for compassion.

Ratnapani: Were the tears of Avalokiteshvara from which Tara was born - I think that's what happened isn't it? - Were they sort of tears of compassion?

S: Well, we are led to assume so, yes. He didn't feel sad or sorry, but he felt compassion. It's rather difficult for us, I suppose, to imagine such a state.

Ratnapani: Yes, what you said goes against all conditioning.

S: We have to be very careful also that when we speak in terms of, you [178] know, what we mean [by] sadness, we don't go to the other extreme and seem to encourage a sort of hardness of heart or lack of sympathy, lack of positive

feeling. It's not a sort of indifference again. One is in a highly positive state. One just, as it were, notes that someone has passed on, but one doesn't feel sad. I mean, what should you feel sad for, if there isn't any attachment on your part? Supposing that there was something good and positive that he couldn't finish, good and positive suggesting that it would benefit other people: then you would just feel compassion on those people who had not been benefited in the way they might have been benefited had he remained alive. But you still wouldn't feel sad.

Vajradaka: This is quite an interesting sort of difference between seeing compassion as merging with the other person's pain in a kind of like Walt Whitman type of way and, you know, just sort of still keeping your positivity but wanting them to sort of feel that positivity.

S: It's establishing a connection whereby their negativeness can become your positiveness, not your positiveness their negativeness.

Vajradaka: Right.

S: If you're going to become negative by your contact you'd better stay away. You can't help them and you certainly don't help yourself.

Sagaramati: Wouldn't you say initially you would be, as it were, aware of the way you react? I feel like maybe there's some danger here that people might kind of stop reacting to sense impressions. But the important thing would be not to ...

S: To be aware. The first thing is to be aware, to watch the sense impressions coming in, to watch the effect certain objects had on your mind, to study the whole situation. This is what is meant here. And of course unskilful mental states are really incompatible with genuine awareness. So it wouldn't even be a question necessarily of forcibly excluding certain unskilful mental states, but the mere fact that you were aware, that you were watching, that you were guarding the gates of the senses, would reduce the possibility of unskilful mental states arising at all, because you would be in an alert, awake, and positive state. [179] It wouldn't be enough, you couldn't thereby prevent the arising of all unskilful mental states, certainly it's a good beginning. It enables you to do that consciously if you so wish.

Sagaramati: It'll stop you acting out the states of mind.

S: Yes, yes. But the first section on the external conditions of Dhyana have suggested, as it were, that you shouldn't sort of plunge yourself in the midst of objects which are almost certain to give rise through the senses to unskilful mental states. You should segregate and seclude yourself from that sort of situation from those objects, at least to some extent, at least at the beginning. If you're going to try and sit and meditate, you don't want, say, beautiful dancing girls all around you. There might be a time and a place for that, but certainly not when you're trying to get into your dhyana. You wouldn't want a film of any kind at that particular time. You wouldn't want loud noises. I think

what is important is the general principle; The general principle not exactly of censorship but of being aware what impressions are impinging upon us, what reaction is taking place to those impressions, because much of the time we just don't know. In other words that we should be more alert and outward going and even active as far as the senses are concerned, and much less inert and passive than we usually are, and not allow ourselves to be affected without our really knowing what is happening. I mean supposing you go into some dimly lighted room in the evening and there's a sort of pink glow from carefully shaded lamps, and there's very sort of soothing, slightly voluptuous music, and then there's the smell of maybe some roast chicken or something like that. Well at once your whole sort of mood changes, you're being got at, you're being affected. And if some beautiful serving girl comes in then, you know, with her scanty dress fluttering in the breeze or something of that sort, then again, you see, there's another sort of change in your mood. You very often don't know what is happening. You're quite unaware of this and of being affected and got at without your really knowing. So you're not watching the doors of the senses. You don't really realize what is happening. And in the same way if unmindfully you live in a place like Archway. You look out of the window, you see a row of dustbins, and then you look at the houses opposite and the paintwork is all chipped off and the brickwork is crumbling [180] and you see a haggard woman, you know, leaning out of the window and you can see that her dress is all greasy and stained, and then there's some broken cars, you know, at the end of the street, all rusty, you know, just fit for the scrap heap and, you know, there are a couple of famished dogs or two or three starving cats. [laughter] Well, you know, you're taking in all these impressions and it's all having an effect on your mind and very often you don't know it.

So all that the Grand Master is saying here, and all that Buddhism is saying with regard to this principle of guarding the doors of the senses, is really watch your senses and know what impressions are registering and know how they are affecting you. This is very important, otherwise you're just a blind passive subject of your environment. You're being affected and controlled all the time through the objects that you perceive through the senses. In that way no sort of spiritual progress is possible. I must say that the Grand Master's examples seem rather selective and perhaps suited to monks with certain tendencies, but we mustn't let that blind us to the sort of general principle involved. The examples make the whole thing seem a bit moralistic, but it's really much more psychological than moralistic. You see what I mean? Even this word censorship in the translation gives a slightly moralistic impression.

Padmapani: ..[unclear].. said that sense impressions could give rise to positive mental states?

S: It isn't actually, but as I pointed out in, say, the case of some sounds and some perfumes, incense used in connection with puja, certainly the impressions or the mental states that could be given rise to could be very positive.

Voice: Do you think the same is often true of things like thangkas?

S: Well, certainly, yes. Things like nature, looking out over the green fields and green hills, at least it has a soothing effect on the mind.

Vajradaka: Do you think that positive reactions can lead to creative positivity?

S: I think you still have to be careful because pleasant sense impressions can give rise to attachment. And you can become attached to beautiful pictures and so on to thangkas in a slightly obsessive way. [181] You can start collecting them. You can become a bit possessive about them. But certainly all that comes in through the senses doesn't give rise simply to craving, aversion, and delusion. That would be a very extreme and negative view. Though sometimes one is given that sort of impression. And as was pointed out earlier, there's not only the question of impressions but the more general question of overstimulation, especially when you live in the big cities. Your senses become very, as it were, wearied and it then becomes very difficult to exercise any sort of censorship, difficult to keep up the watchfulness.

But perhaps we can formulate sort of a few principles, that is to say, limit the impressions in the sense [of] don't allow yourself to be over-stimulated. [182]

[Tape 8 Side A] . . . and limit the sense impressions in the sense of limiting the total quantity, as it were, of sense impressions coming in. Don't allow yourself to be overstimulated. And two, selectivity with regard to the objects, which are producing the impressions. That is to say, if you find from experience that certain objects, or your contact with certain objects, give rise to sense impressions which invariably, or almost invariably, in turn give rise to unskilful mental states, then avoid those objects at least for the time being. And thirdly, increase your mindfulness and watchfulness with regard to the senses themselves. One could also say there is a positive counterpart of number one, if you find that there are certain objects which habitually give rise to skilful mental states, well then expose yourself more frequently, more constantly, to the experience of those objects. If for instance you find that green grass and blue skies have a very positive effect upon you and give rise to skilful mental states, then by all means expose yourself as much as you can to those green fields and blue skies.

Padmapani: You mean this in the sense, you know, [of] one's functioning in a healthy way already? Otherwise, you know, these sense impressions coming in could be misconstrued. What I mean to say is, like it could be healthy for you, you're already deciding that these things are good for you, and in actual fact they might not be.

S: Well, I'm assuming that you do in fact know. You are capable of a genuine judgement, in this respect.

Padmapani: Yes.

S: In other words that you have observed your own reactions and experiences so far and have actually found this to be so. There's also the point that you have to be careful not to, as it were, alienate yourself from the feelings produced by the sense objects themselves. I think there has been a bit of discussion about this

frequently in connection with taste and food. Weren't there one or two echoes of this in Shabda? Do you recall this discussion?

Lokamitra: Vajrabodhi. [183]

S: It was Vajrabodhi and who else was it Buddhadasa? Devamitra? So I believe if my memory doesn't mislead me that at one point it was suggested by one of these correspondents that as you became more and more mindful all food tasted the same to you.

Ratnapani: Vajrabodhi.

S: That was Vajrabodhi's point. Now what do you think about that?

Voice: Nonsense.

S: Nonsense. Who agrees with that? You agree with that? Everybody agrees with it?

Buddhadasa: Agrees with nonsense?

S: That it's nonsense. [Voices murmur agreement] Well you must be right because that's what I think. [laughter] All right, wherein does the nonsense consist?

Lokamitra: They would taste probably more different, but they would make much less difference to one's mental state.

S: One's reaction, yes, surely. So, you know, if you're really aware and mindful you experience the sweet as sweet and the bitter as bitter. You don't get into a sort of state, you know, where it all just tastes the same. Your sensitivity is not impaired by your heightened awareness; if anything your sensitivity is increased. But in as much as you are aware there's less and less of blind mechanical reaction. I didn't have an opportunity of discussing this with Vajrabodhi, but I did intend to. I wondered almost whether he was completely serious or whether he realized what he had in fact said.

Lokamitra: He only eats one thing, doesn't he?

S: Well he didn't when I was there. He didn't when I was there. [184]

Ratnapani: Because in the article he described his diet which was a rather dull sounding sort of porridge,..

S: That's right.

Ratnapani: ... which he said was all he ate.

S: He certainly does favour that porridge. I think he likes it. I think he enjoys it. It's certainly quite tasty; it's not flavourless by any means. It's made from rye. It's much nicer than this wheat or oaten porridge that we get in this country or even that we get in Scotland. It's dark brown, and as I say it's quite tasty, and they take it with milk and butter. I took it several times and it's quite good.

Ratnapani: I thought that the point he was making in that really was that the way to mental equanimity, or rather it seems he was confusing this mental equanimity with this sameness of food, and that he wasn't able to distinguish between one and the other. Cutting out the sense impressions makes you have mental equanimity, and that ...

S: Yes, the only point, supposing you found, say, in this particular instance that you were over-stimulated by different tastes and you were very greedy, then it might be a skilful thing to do to limit the range of tastes, to decease the variety of your diet, to restrict yourself to a few things that were not particularly tasty, but this would be simply to bring your greed under control, which would be quite a different thing from becoming quite insensitive to differences of taste.

Lokamitra: I think there's another point here and that is in cities where we have so many sense impressions, the reactive mind, instead of sort of seeing that the best thing is to cut down somehow just takes on more and more, so that if you are, well, the place where craving is likely to arise most is in the cities. You are likely to indulge...

S: And why is this, because there's no satisfaction. So many impressions come in. They change so constantly you don't have a chance even to enjoy anything. So there's constant experience and constant non-experience. Your desire to experience and be [185] satisfied is never fulfilled. So you also, in the end, if you're not careful, you go on changing and going from one scene to another, but you never get satisfied.

Vajradaka: I think there's another aspect of what you just said about cutting down your tastes...

S: In the sense of restricting the range?

Vajradaka: Right. It's as if you have a tendency just to like nice, sweet tasting, pleasant tasting things, to increase your range to include bitter things, and so that you're not so kind of choosy and in a way not so kind of desirous of just the pleasant sweet things, but just to have a more undiscriminating ... er ...

S: More impartial.

Vajradaka: Right, yes, that's the word. Impartial attitude.

S: And be able to eat anything.

Vajradaka: Right, yes.

S: And of course sweet is associated with craving perhaps more than the other tastes, neurotic craving.

Padmapani: What do you think happens in the case of a person who alienates himself, who gets into an alienated state, and he comes along to the centre and listens to taped lectures and things... I know you've got a lecture entitled Alienation and - is it - Inspiration?

S: From Alienated Awareness to Integrated Awareness, yes.

Padmapani: What happens when people become alienated when they're trying to get into controlling sense impressions? What's the process do you think?

S: Well I think they should try to experience what they experience; it's as simple as that. This is the basic fact of alienation: that you experience but you don't experience, you don't feel what you experience. You're sort of numb or you repress the experience. [186] You don't allow yourself to savour it fully, as it were, you're cut off from your own feelings.

Padmapani: Would you say that was something to do with one's sort of Christian, ethical moral background.

S: It's very difficult to say, it's very difficult to generalize. It might be a factor, I don't know. It depends on the nature of the feelings from which you are alienated and why you are alienated from them. You could be alienated from them because you've been told it's wrong to have those feelings and you shouldn't have them. Maybe you hate your father but you've been brought up to believe that you shouldn't hate your father. You don't allow yourself even to experience those feelings of hatred towards your father.

Alienation from one's feelings is not the same thing as the non-experience of sense impressions. I think the non-experience of sense impressions is due more - or the dullness of our experience of sense impressions - is due either to having too many impressions and being over-stimulated or just not being aware and mindful enough. Not sufficiently aware of our senses and the way in which they are operating and the sort of impressions that are coming in. And also of course if we are aware and mindful with regard to the senses and sense impressions, we are very much in the present, which itself is a good thing. Anyway, any general point arising out of all this?

Lokamitra: So it's not wrong to actually feel a feeling, it's wrong to, if you like, to just react blindly in . . .

S: It's the sense impression rather than the feeling itself.

Lokamitra:Right.

S: If you register a visual form, you simply register a visual form. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's the mental state - which may be either skilful or unskilful - the mental state that arises in dependence upon your perception of that visual form. The sense impression as such is absolutely neutral, there's nothing wrong with the senses, nothing wrong with sense impressions [187] in themselves. If you just stop with sense impressions then there'd be no trouble at all, but that isn't what happens, some sense impressions give rise to skilful mental states, some to unskilful mental states, and usually this happens automatically, and more often than not the mental states are unskilful. But if we start watching and seeing what's happening then there is a better chance of ensuring that the

skilful mental states that arise are more and also stronger than the unskilful mental states.

Sagaramati: In that case it's not so much that there are unskilful states in you, it's more like they arise due to certain conditions. So the idea is to keep these conditions away so that the states don't arise.

S: But they will arise when they are very strong and deep rooted even in the absence of the visual stimulus. I mean, sticking to the sense of sight, then of course they will arise internally even when you are trying to meditate in the form of a mental hindrance, and of course that is we are going to deal with in the next chapter. But certainly if you don't expose yourself unduly to those objects which give rise to unskilful mental states, though the hindrances will still be there, the basic hindrances, at least they're being not being added to, they're not being strengthened, and then you get a chance to deal with them in the course of your practice of Dhyana.

Padmapani: So at a practical level, taking Archway as a good example, one could say it's good to move away from Archway for a period of time and it's almost like a backlog of sense impressions get dealt with in retreat situations.

S: Yes, I think so, yes, yes, or even when you sit and meditate sometimes, or when you dream.

Voice: Like a digestion.

S: Hmm, right. And it's almost certain that living in the Archway area, and living there for some time, has affected the minds of those living there in a certain way, probably in a negative rather than positive. But many of them might, you know, have get so used to living there that they are no longer conscious of the way in which it's affecting them. And this is very often what [188] happens in any sort of set of circumstances to which we become very used and of which we don't remain very aware. It starts affecting us even quite seriously without our knowing what is happening. So all the more reason why we should sort of mount guard at the doors of the senses and see what impressions are coming in and how they are affecting us, and sometimes we only know this when we have changed the environment. As when again we come away on retreat and at once we find ourselves in a different mental state just because the environment has been changed.

Lokamitra: There's another aspect to Archway though. I notice this very much. In a way it's very shocking because there are so many communities there, and there are so many people there, on the fringes of or within the spiritual community, and I notice when I go into town sometimes, it's sometimes like coming out of retreat.

S: Yes, when I gave my illustration I was only referring to the visual impressions produced and no doubt there are other factors, not the total Archway situation.

Lokamitra: I think there are other factors which are negative besides the visual

one.

S: But suppose you had sort of associated with a certain area, negative visual impressions, or visual impressions giving rise to negative mental states, similar impressions coming in through all the other senses, and also similar mental associations, then you'd be in a sort of hell, wouldn't you? But fortunately there are very positive mental associations also in connection with Archway, just because we have been carrying on our activities there for several years and many very positive things have happened there and from there. But you begin to get some idea of what this particular stage is all about. Anyone like to venture any comment or summary or personal observation?

Voice: You could say that - to put it in a nutshell, it's preventing the sense impressions from using you and taking the initiative as appropriate. [189]

Pa: Is that what Vajrakumara said, that the significance by the sense offerings, the six sense offerings, kind of dedicating the senses to the higher ideal?

S: In a way it is, but I think is also means more than that: the senses being part of you and you're dedicating yourself, including the senses, which are usually regarded as your most lowly organs as it were. You're not leaving anything outside, anything undedicated, unconsecrated, unoffered. It also of course perhaps ties up - probably indirectly - with the fact that when your eight consciousnesses are transformed into the five wisdoms, the sense consciousnesses collectively, which are transmuted into the all-performing wisdom of Amoghasiddhi, so the senses also stand for your active existence in the world. But your active existence in the world, your life in the world, is dedicated to the cause of Enlightenment, because it's through the senses that you have contact with the so-called material world. So when you dedicate your five senses you're dedicating your life in the material world which you live by your five physical senses.

"The several ways for censoring our desires that have been given above are taken from the Mahavibhasa Sutra." This is the Great Commentary on the seven books of Sarvastivada Abhidharma. It's this Mahavibhasa which Vasubandhu summarized, as it were, in his great Abhidharmakosa, which the main Abhidharma work really.

Vessantara: The Great Commentary on the seven books of the?...

S: Mahavibhasa means Great Commentary. It's the commentary compiled by a number of great teachers on the seven books of the Sarvastivada Abhidharma Pitaka. And then Vasubandhu wrote his great work the Abhidharmakosa or Treasury of the Abhidharma, basing his work upon that commentary, sometimes agreeing with it, sometimes disagreeing. And it's this Abhidharmakosa which became the basis of Abhidharma studies in China, in Japan, and in Tibet. And it's the main text of the Kusa or Kosa school.

So "even in the sacred moments of Dhyana and Samadhi they close in about us." What does that mean? It means that even when we're meditating, even when we're in a somewhat higher state of [190] consciousness, the memory of a sense

impression will arise in the mind and then it may be that in association with that remembered sense impression there arises an unskilful thought, and this of course will be one of the hindrances, as it were. And sometimes, of course, the hindrances arise without any remembered sense impression. So if we think, or if we remember, how many sense impressions are coming in so much of the time, it's not surprising that when we try to meditate all sort of recollections of sense impressions arise and they disturb the meditation by virtue of just their being recollections of sense impressions. But if in turn those recollected sense impressions start giving rise to unskilful mental states, then our meditation is really disturbed.

Ratnapani: I've often found to the contrary, though, that recollecting something pleasant just seems to give a positive touch to my state of mind which seems to release a tremendous amount of energy in the practice. It wouldn't be anything particularly skilful, just something which I happened to like.

S: In a way one does [this] in the metta bhavana when, you know, you're trying to develop good will to your near and dear friend and you find it a bit difficult, you recollect some instant of the past, you conjure up a past impression, which will conjure up sense impressions, because you will have a recollection of how the friend looked, behaved, and so on. So one can use this positively too, but of course it keeps you on a relatively low level of concentration because then it's mental activity, so you wouldn't get further than the first Dhyana in this way at vest. But certainly it's a good beginning.

Ratnapani: Often it seems to be the initial sort of take off point as it were. Having been sitting in a desultory fashion, that seems to be the lift off, and then the sense impression is gone, but the energy has been made available.

S: Also it's a question of sometimes at first reducing your multiplicity of sense impressions, or recollected sense impressions, to just a few and then just to one, and then from just that one recollected sense impression, once it's died away, you can pass on to a better concentration. If you allow the mind to become absorbed in one particular thought or one particular recollected sense impression, or set of sense impressions, you are concentrated to [191] a degree, and that can give time for other sense impressions, the multiplicity of sense impressions and thoughts, to die away, and when they've died away you just drop the one. For instance, you may recollect a very beautiful flower and allow your mind to dwell upon that, you know, what a beautiful colour, what a beautiful scent, what a pleasant impression you got from it. So you let the mind dwell on this a bit, but that gives time for the other sense impressions and thoughts to die away. So in the end you're just left with the thought of that flower, then you just drop the thought of the flower, and then you can take up your regular practice, as it were, and obviously the thought of the flower has been something positive so there's a feeling of slight pleasure, as it were, and the energy is pleasantly aroused and you can get on with things.

Ratnapani: Particularly after a very hectic day. I found it, to be most efficacious

when to watch breathing would be just impossible.

S: Breathing is as it were neutral, it isn't pleasant enough, though it may be later on when you really get into it. But at first the breath is not just a pleasant object, not an inspiring object, where even a flower may be - the thought of a rose or a tulip - can be quite inspiring, at least it's very pleasant and that helps interest the mind, and if the mind is interested it becomes concentrated, so a start is made. You can do the same thing with a verse of poetry, or a few bars of music, or of course the mantra.

Vajradaka: Do you think you could kind of paraphrase the process of influence, the kind of taking in impressions or reactions through the gates ..[unclear].. literal and having a flow, an internal flow of positive ..[unclear].. from within, sort of paraphrasing it as a kind of a radiation of positivity of skilful mental states and a kind of an involution, almost a kind of invasion which one sort of takes in oneself, almost like a vortex?

S: I'm not getting a very clear picture I'm afraid.

Vajradaka: No. Rather like do you know, I can't remember the name of it, it happens in the sea sometimes, or in big rivers where...

Voice: A whirlpool?

Vajradaka: Yes, a whirlpool, where all the water goes in and just sort of [192] but it's not actually being pushed in; it's being sucked in. So it's like people are sort of sucking in impressions.

S: This is also true in as much as they actively reach out for them. That is to say they reach out for those objects which they know from experience or instinct give rise to pleasant rather than unpleasant feelings. This is the working of craving and the hedonist.

Buddhadasa: Bhante, I've often wondered that Buddhism has reached good heights in the visual arts and doesn't seem to have paid any very serious attention to music at all. There doesn't seem to be much music in the tradition of Buddhism.

S: Well, of course there was in the Indian Middle Ages, for want of a better term, but Indian music by its very nature was not a music that is written down, it's improvisation, so I imagine that when Buddhism died away, its tradition was lost. It's quite interesting though, I was listening to a record that Bodhishri had in Helsinki of gamelan music of Java, and I got the very distinct impression that this was influenced by Buddhism, and was perhaps - or there was an echo of - Buddhism in that tradition. And as we do know, the Buddhist tradition lasted there until quite late, until the Muslim invasions, and of course there is an indigenous Javanese music which is nothing to do with Islam. I felt it definitely conveyed something of the feeling of Buddhism, but just a private response. I think also perhaps the eastern music was very much associated with worldly life,

singing girls and dancing girls and so on, though there was the chanting in the monasteries and temples.

Lokamitra: It's still in Nepal and Ceylon ..[unclear]..

S: There is also the point that if you deeply into spiritual life, you do not need the arts as separate pursuits. The arts broke off and became independent in Europe only after the virtual disintegration of Christianity. I mean your aesthetic needs are satisfied by art completely integrated with your spiritual life and spiritual practices and spiritual traditions. It's only when you lose faith in that tradition, as it were, or that tradition weakens, that the arts develop separately and independently and you get secular arts.

Abhaya: But Buddhadasa was saying that you don't have any integrated Buddhist.. [line missing from bottom of page] [193]

S: Well, you have sufficient for practical spiritual purposes, but if your auditory arts break off and then someone is trying to get from the auditory arts whatever he got previously from the total spiritual tradition, of course it means a great development in most arts, that then becomes necessary so that they should satisfy all those needs and aspirations formerly satisfied by the total tradition. So you get people, say in the west, trying to get from, say, Beethoven, what they would formerly have got from their whole traditional and spiritual and religious way of life, which would have included, of course, a musical component but not developed to that extent. But in a way the development of the arts in the west has been something of a monstrosity you could say. Perhaps they all need to be reintegrated on a higher level, but perhaps we can say from the point of view of traditional spiritual life the separate development of the visual arts and music etc. though it means that they're all, as separate pursuits, more highly developed represent in itself a symptom of deterioration and the overall decline. I think you could well argue that. But again it may be part of some grand evolutionary process in which after being developed separately they all come together again, but we haven't yet seen that.

[Remainder of seems to be coffee break discussion including chat about: Buddhas of ten directions; Trades unions; Not enough creativity and production in the FWBO; Not enough creative thinking; Reluctance to be open to criticism; Laziness; Need to stimulate people to work; Work becomes production becomes creation; Lack of self-confidence; People trying to find medium; Wrong approach; General confusion in arts and culture; If you're creative you can do anything; People over-occupied with creation as expression of self; Think rather in terms of jobs to be done, needs to be fulfilled; Arts started with production for a purpose e.g cathedrals. [194]

[Tape 8 Side B]

Chapter 3

Inner Hindrances to be Abolished

Ratnapani: [reads from p.449-50] On the first two inner hindrances. "There are five kinds of inner hindrances that must be abolished. (1) The first kind are the hindrances of sensual desires that have their origin within the mind itself, because of memory or imagination. In the preceding chapter in discussing the external conditions, we referred to the sensual desires, also, but then we had in mind the bodily desires that had their origin in the physical contact of the senses with their objects. Now we are to consider the mental notion of these desires as they arise or linger in the mind itself. A follow of the Buddha may be practising Dhyana in a very solemn manner, but his mind may be filled with seductive notions of these craving sensual desires and their continual activity will effectually prevent good qualities from germinating. So when we become conscious of the presence of these sense-desire notions, we must get rid of them at once. For, as in the case of Jubhaga whose body was consumed by the inner fires of his concupiscence, so we must not be surprised if the flames of these inner desires consume all our good qualities. Those who cherish these inner desires will make little progress on the path that lead to enlightenment. Why is this so? It is because these inner desires are a stronghold of vexations that so engross the mind that they crowd out the very purpose to attain enlightenment. In the Sutra it is written:

"'You that seek enlightenment must be a man of humility and modesty. You that hold out the begging bowl that you might give blessings to sentient beings, how can you indulge in cheap desires for yourself and plunge into the sea of the five hindrances?

"How is it that you, who has gotten rid of the external desires, have forsaken all their pleasures and thrown them away without regret, now seek to return to the shadow? Are you a fool who returns to his own spittle?

"These notions of sensual desires that you are hankering for inevitably lead to suffering. If they are gratified there is no satisfaction, and if they are not satisfied there is annoyance. In either case there is no happiness at all.

"What power do you have to get rid of these pain producing desire notions? When you have deeply enjoyed the happiness that arises from the successful practice of Dhyana, then you will no longer be defrauded by these deluding notions.'

"(2) The second inner hindrance is the hindrance of hatred. This is a most fundamental factor in preventing one from attaining enlightenment. It is both the cause and condition for our fall into the evil existences. It is the enemy that keeps us from enjoying the Buddha's Dharma. It is the thief that steals away our thoughts of good will toward all sentient beings. It is the fountain of evil words that burst out unchecked. Therefore, in the practice of Dhyana we should treat the mood of hatred as though it was a personality that was annoying not only yourself, but your relatives and enemies; and not only in the present but because of memory in both the past and the future. This makes nine annoyances, which will keep alive this mood of hatred. Hatred gives rise to grievances and each

added grievance gives rise to more annoyances. Thus hatred goes on disturbing the mind, and that is why we speak of it as a fundamental hindrance. We should cut it away at the root and thus keep it from spreading.

"Suprapunna asked the Lord Buddha as follows: 'What shall we get rid of if we want peace and happiness? What shall we do to get rid of sorrow? What is the poison that devours all our good thoughts? Kill hatred and you will have peace and happiness. Kill hatred and you shall have no more sorrow. It is hatred that devours all thy goodness.'

"Having become fully convinced of the evil of hatred, if one wishes to get rid of it, he must practice both compassion and patience."

S: Maybe we should stop here and discuss these two which are obviously a pair, the hindrance of craving and the hindrance of hatred.

So the hindrances are those unskilful mental states which arise, especially at the time when we are trying to practise meditation within the mind itself either because of memory, memory of sense impressions or imagination. Imagination in the sense of fanciful combination of sense images, or sense impressions.

Buddhadasa: In both those cases there is an implication that there is an impression, a visual something, whereas quite often there's just the feeling.

S: Yes, it's the feeling which as it were calls up the sense impressions from the past. The feeling is just a sort of feeling or even you could say a sort of instinct. Supposing there is a sort of feeling or a sort of instinct of resentment. It starts off as a vague feeling but it is after all an energy. It wants to take shape and form so it, as it were, calls up from the past sense impressions of painful situations, images of unpleasant situations, so as to provide an outlet, an expression for itself. So you can see, in this way, even the so-called negative emotions have a positive aspect; they are creative in a way, they are energies, and the sense impressions left over from the past are the sort of raw material on which they work. It's not that usually, it's not so much that you - in the case of the hindrances - it's not so much that you for no particular reason have a recollection of a past sense impression and then the corresponding unskilful feeling arises. That may happen if you're accidentally reminded of a sense impression, but more often than not it's the hindrance itself that arises from very deep within you, because that potentiality is there and when you are meditating what are you doing? You're shutting off sense impressions, especially if your eyes are closed and [195] you're still, and it means that the inner mind becomes more active. It also means that the various forms of negative emotion therefore become more active. So hatred for instance may start stirring.

It's just a sort of movement at first, but in order to be able to express itself and take a concrete form and find access to consciousness it, as it were, incorporates sense impressions or recollections of sense impressions from the past and sort of plays with these, even imagines situations based on the past, to give a vent to itself, an expression to itself. And the same with craving.

Lokamitra: I can appreciate that but I've always ... I find it hard to see in my own experience anyway, that things aren't started at first by thoughts and then you get the feeling moving up and then it goes back to thoughts.

S: But why do you think of the thought? You see? You could say suppose for instance you're meditating and there's a sudden loud noise, so at once there's a very unpleasant impression of that sound, the sound of that noise; so this makes you a bit angry and then maybe you recollect instances from the past when there were unpleasant sounds, painful noises, and then from there you may even progress - if that's the word - to unpleasant situations in general and a lot of anger may come up. On the other hand it may be very sort of calm and peaceful and you may be getting on with your meditation, but anger comes up. And I think you will find that in those circumstances, where there is no objective stimuli, you don't get a thought first of an anger provoking situation. There's the feeling first, and then the thought, the thought being the grosser form, as it were, of the feeling. And then you may get a recollection of an old situation, and then the imagination starts functioning, and so on.

Lokamitra: I should have said sense impression rather than thought.

S: But I think if one watches, at least sometimes, you get the experience of just the bare feeling coming from deep within, and then, as it comes into the conscious mind, it takes the form of a thought or a recollection of sense impression, and then the imagination plays around with those.

Buddhadasa: It wants to definitely hook itself onto something.

S: It wants to hook itself onto something, yes, yes. [196]

Ratnapani: So the original cause of this negative feeling that starts welling up could be from way back in the past.

S: Well, according to traditional Buddhist teaching, it's from beginningless time.

Ratnapani: It just is.

S: Well, it's this which has been keeping you going through the whole round of births and deaths and so on. It's as deep and fundamental as that.

Buddhadasa: So at this level there is no cause at all?

S: In a sense, there is no cause, yes, yes.

Buddhadasa: In a sense, practice of metta is almost useless at this point, because once you've unhooked your emotion from your projection ...

S: Yes, you have to unhook, as you say. This is why it is said that unless you have got the five hindrances temporarily out of the way there is no access to the absorptions. So this is why this step comes next. So long as any one of the five hindrances is functioning in your mind you cannot rise from the conscious to the supra-conscious, you cannot enter upon even the first of the absorptions. But at this stage and until insight is developed they can only be abolished

temporarily, they can only be held in abeyance, and so this is why the holding off or keeping off of those situations in the present which are likely to stimulate it is so important. You give yourself a sort of respite from the hindrances, you just get them out of the way, just for half an hour, so that you can get into a state of absorption, have the experience of that, and eventually, with luck, even develop some insight, which will cut permanently at the root of the hindrances. This is, as it were, a standard method.

Nagabodhi: A little practice which I've developed, which I do when I have enough awareness to a remember to do it, is during meditation if I find I'm experiencing resentful thoughts towards somebody, or angry thoughts, I first of all, as it were, cocoon myself, [197] I sort of try and cut off thinking about the person and just experience the anger or the resentment and say well, it's here, it's in me, and I may open my eyes and look round the shrine room, and then after I'm fully sure that I'm no longer thinking of the other person and I'm aware that it's happening here, I'll take the label away, I'll stop calling it anger, and just try and experience it sort of neutrally, as energy, which I find is very beneficial, because in doing that it usually does become just very strong, gross, but just energy, which always raises the question in me of this whole labelling of positive and negative, and I can see experientially how it is valid and how one can point [to] a certain distinction positive and negative...

S: Or skilful and unskilful.

Nagabodhi: Yes, but in that this kind of feeling seems to be causeless in terms of one's immediate experience, can you say that in fact there is only one energy, at base, there isn't this distinction of the forces that are coming up?

S: Well, from the Buddhist point of view, traditional Buddhist teaching, these are the samskaras, the karma-forming factors.

Vessantara: What are samskaras? Is it feelings coming up?

S: Well, this sort of energy, as it were, in the broadest and deepest sense.

Sona: The unskilful ones?

S: Well, even the skilful because even the skilful are only more refined forms of the unskilful, or the unskilful are grosser forms of the skilful, and in the same sense that even in the - as regards the positive nidanas - these are just more refined and positive forms of the mundane, and they're certainly positive, but they're no more really than a sort of stepping-stone, or better perhaps a springboard, to the transcendental.

Buddhadasa: You don't label energy based on its cause, you label it based on its effect as skilful or unskilful?

S: You could say that. [198]

Vajradaka: Could you just elaborate what you meant a little bit more when you said unhooking?

S: Or hooking and unhooking.

Vajradaka: Hooking and unhooking. I didn't quite get that, though I felt that it was important. Unhooking much more from the actual experience of negativity?

S: No, it's not quite like that. It's that a feeling springs up within you and it's as it were general, it's vague, though it's very strong. It's not associated with any particular situation, but it wants to, as it were, associate itself with a particular situation. It wants to find an outlet because it is an energy, so it attaches itself, as it were, to some objective situation through which it can function, with which even it can identify itself.

Vajradaka: So where does the unhooking come in?

S: Unhooking comes when you see that that particular energy does not really belong to that particular situation, that it is simply an energy looking for a situation. Just as when people are in a really angry mood they go looking around for something to be angry about. Well, that's the hooking on. And this often happens. Or you feel really greedy and you know you're looking around for something to be really greedy about, you know, a nice luscious peach or something like that.

Buddhadasa: Yes, as long as something has arrived that is an existence in its own right, it must have something to latch on to. [first part of this sentence unclear] And you can play around with it, you can imagine yourself in different situations, and you see that there's no validity in any one of these situations.

S: You want, in a way, to indulge, in a sense, your anger, so you go sort of searching back in memory for situations which were very negative and unpleasant and you remember them and dwell on them so that your anger finds an outlet within them.

Buddhadasa: And there's a very close link up between craving and hatred here; a link of frustration. [199]

Padmapani: I'm not trying to be devious here, Bhante, but is it not possible if one knows the theory, and one acquaints oneself with that, that during meditation you could let that hatred take these impressions and let them play it out, so to speak? Or does it go from one thing to another or what?

S: You can sometimes let it play itself out. You can let it spread itself over a number of situations and then just watch it and say, well, that's just what it is. You let it, in a way, you know, very mindfully, not exactly exhaust itself but express itself as fully as it wants and then when it's done that you just let it fall back, you let it unhook itself and subside. You can do this, though obviously the line of division between doing this sort of thing and just indulging is quite fine. But this can be done.

Sona: A bit like blowing it up, sort of projecting it on a big screen. You see it very clearly.

S: You see it then more clearly. Yes. Or maybe you might say to yourself quite deliberately, all right, I'll let this feeling have free range, let's see where it goes, what is the nature of this feeling, because you also see its nature more clearly. So you just let this feeling unfold, you call up pictures from the past, incidents, and before long you may find yourself going through some very sadistic scenes, doing all sorts of very strange things, even murdering people, cutting people's throats, bathing your hands in their blood, and ... oh, that's the sort of feeling, that's what I'm really feeling, that's what I'd like to do in a sense. All right, well that is the feeling. OK, we'll just take a good look at it now, and now we'll let it subside and go back. There is, for instance, one person, one writer, John Cooper Powys, who describes himself as doing this regularly, indulging in the most elaborate sadistic fantasies, because he was conscious within himself of a sort of almost bottomless fund of negative emotions and sadistic feelings, and he apparently used to allow himself quite deliberately to engage in these sort of sadistic fantasies for hours on end so that he could study it and in a way prevent it from doing any harm externally because it was so strong within him.

Lokamitra: So it comes back to really, I suppose, being aware of one's feelings, [200] being aware of these, and then they can't do any harm if you are sort of aware and then sort of slightly detached from them.

S: Ah, well, they're doing harm in as much as they are present in your mind and they are unskilful states.

Lokamitra: But they can't go any further, as it were, if you are aware of them and know what's going on.

S: Well, they are less likely to. If they are very strong they might break through none the less, but they are less likely to if you are aware of them.

Vajradaka: So even letting them come up in your imagination will have karmic consequence?

S: That again depends on your motivation for doing it. If it is to exhaust, to keep under control, to eventually eliminate, well then that is a positive motivation. But meanwhile of course you not able to enter upon a dhyana state, a state of absorption. But I think what is important also is to see that these different negative emotions, these hindrances, are all form of energy and one can be transformed into another quite easily, as craving into hatred and hatred into craving. They can be refined, they can be, as it were, sublimated, and simply to sit upon your energies is not good.

Abhaya: And a positive one can also be transformed into a negative.

S: Yes. Yes, if it is sat upon.

Abhaya: I noticed in the meditation the other evening, it was a metta that sort of generated what I felt was a positive emotion connecting me with a particular figure and, I didn't realize this at the time, but talking about hooked and unhooked, this is a good image, because the feeling suddenly became unhooked

from the particular image and was I suppose floating for a split second and then an erotic image popped up and immediately this like floating energy just sort of went into the...

S: Well this is exactly what happens within the context of the [Tibetan] Book of the Dead, isn't it? It's this which causes you to be reborn. You lose your original ... you can't sort of hook [201] on to the Buddha or the Bodhisattva. You unhook and that energy is floating, then up pops some other image and you hook on to that. Because this is also why the meditation state is compared with the bardo state, the meditation state also is an intermediate state, just like the bardo, the inter-death state, the state in between death and rebirth.

Abhaya: But this ... all the images come from your mind, don't they?

S: Yes, comes from your mind, yes ... mm. So this is in a way quite a good figure of speech, you know, the hooking and the unhooking.

Of course, it is possible that an erotic image, say, arises, you know, out of the bottomless depths of your mind, but you are so mindful that you could just observe it, and then that hooking on doesn't take place, and then it, you know, fades away perhaps and then you could rehook onto the original object whether within the context of the metta or, you know, within the context of the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Vajradaka: So for the most part, the process of hooking should be consciously done onto a positive object such as the metta or the Buddha or something like that, but occasionally could be done very mindfully onto fantasies or imagination?

S: No, it isn't really quite the same thing. It's more like allowing the negative emotions, say the aversion or the hatred, just to grow, to emerge into consciousness and take on any form it likes, express itself in any form it likes imaginatively, to open up, to expand, it's more like that.

Sona: So if you're hooked onto something positive then, you become unhooked and then get hooked onto something negative, then you can sort of blow it up and allow it to expand.

S: If you feel that that is the positive thing to do at that moment in those circumstances. It is just a possibility something that you may do occasionally in order to study the nature of that particular emotion or unskilful mental state or instinct, so that you know what it is like, what it is that you really feel, what it is that you would really like to do, and then you know yourself better on that level. [202]

Vessantara: I'm trying to clarify all this. Would I be right in thinking in a way that there are three things, three ..[unclear].. you've mentioned that you can do? One would be to, as this feeling comes up, to simply experience it as an energy in the way that Nagabodhi was talking about before it's got hooked onto anything, and just be aware of it in that state?

S: And then let it subside.

Vessantara: Secondly to give it free rein and allow it to hook itself onto whatever it wished and . . .

S: And see what it hooks itself onto, because that would give you a better clue to the nature of the feeling. You might not even be sure sometimes at first, it might be very mixed. It might be just be a very dull, depressed feeling and you might wonder, well what is it really all about, but it might develop into a feeling of resentment and then you'd know what it really was.

Vessantara: Or thirdly one could take this energy and hook it onto something positive.

S: You can do that sometimes. Yes, you can do that.

Nagabodhi: In actual fact though, in assuming that that feeling had a reason and it was also a very negative one, the chances are that in practice you'd find it quite difficult to just make the change, sort of like flicking a switch, you'd probably get a real. . .

Buddhadasa: If you did hook onto something positive, you'd probably change from something positive to something quite negative. In fact it does do.

Voice: No, not always.

S: For instance there are some teachers who do maintain that if, say, at the time of meditation a sexual feeling arises, you should immediately direct it towards the particular Buddha or Bodhisattva you are intending to meditate upon. And the important thing is to get concentrated on that particular Buddha [203] or Bodhisattva figure, and once you're concentrated, the sexuality in the feeling - or the element of sexuality in the feeling - will be absorbed and die away and you'll be just left sort of concentrated on that sort of figure. This is what some say, not all, but this is one particular tradition at least.

Voice: Do you think it's. . .

S: I think it sometimes works. It also depends upon the nature of the figure itself. You know, some figures may lend themselves more to this, and also it may make a difference whether the Buddha or Bodhisattva figure is a male or a female one. For instance if you yourself were a male and you're meditating habitually on the Tara figure, well you might find it quite easy to switch your sexual feeling onto that Tara figure, then the sexual feeling becomes absorbed in that, the sexuality as it were disappears, the sexual component, and you're just left with a very strong warm feeling for that particular image. On the other hand if you're regularly meditating upon the figure of Sakyamuni, for which you had a strong devotion, you might think that well, it's quite inappropriate and quite disrespectful to direct your sexual feeling towards that particular figure and you might just not be able to do it. [204]

[Tape 9 Side A]

Padmapani: Couldn't one possibly then, when one has a particular image,

say like Sakyamuni or - no, maybe Sakyamuni is not a good example - say Amoghasiddhi,. . .

S: Yes?

Padmapani: Could [you] meditate or transmute that energy into, say, the consort, his consort, Green Tara.

S: You could do that. This is of course sometimes what happens when you visualize a double figure, a yab-yum figure. In as much as it is a yab-yum figure there will be some little element of sexuality in your sort of attitude towards it or feeling about it, but in as much as it is a Buddha figure or two Buddha figures, one male and one female, with all the associations that Buddha figures have, well, the sexuality or the element of sexuality in your approach, your attitude, can be absorbed, as it were, especially if all this takes place within the very strong and very positive spiritual tradition. But it isn't just a mental idea, not just a sort of intellectual idea.

Abhaya: Do you think feelings like this should always, or as a general rule, try to, be redirected or . . . [lot of aircraft noise]

S: I think in the long run, yes, in the long run, but within the context of Dhyana practice then you simply have to get the hindrances out of the way by one method or another so that you can get into the state of absorption. Another method is, of course cultivating the opposite. That is to say if you are overwhelmed by feelings of hatred you'll consciously try to develop feelings of metta, as it were force yourself to think of someone you really like and in this way replace the hatred by metta. This is one of the four ways of dealing with unskilful mental states, the cultivation of the opposite. Or even firmly, as it were, press down the unskilful thought. This is sometimes justified, it can sometimes be done if it hasn't got too much out of control, if it isn't too strong. You can as it were press it down: no, this is not the time. Sometimes this does work. But by whatsoever means you've got to get yourself into a state where none of the five hindrances is arising, otherwise there's no possibility of access into even the first of the absorptions and probably at [205] this stage there's no question of directing to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You know, first we're in the context of sort of standard Hinayana practice anyway, and at the beginning in any case you'd be in no position to visualize Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or even to think about them very deeply.

Buddhadasa: There seems to be a sort of conflict in meditation when one is trying to deliberately think that there's a meditative state where one doesn't want to think, and it's as though one way to go is to go off and just sit there enjoying the meditation or else the other method is to sort of make the supreme effort and not enjoy the meditation, and in a sense probably not meditate at all, but try and summon up the mental energy to think of metta, say, or to think of your own particular practice.

S: Also it must be borne in mind that sometimes there is a delayed action

or delayed reaction from meditation, that you may not experience any of the fruits on the spot, you may feel as though you've wasted your time and had an unsuccessful session, but a little later on you may sort of suddenly feel in a quite positive mood, and this is the after effects, the delayed action, as it were. It's very difficult naturally to lay down any hard and fast rules as to what you should do, you know, with practice and experience you just develop your own methods of dealing with your own mind, you know, on the basis of general principles and, you know, the different hints you've been given by different people or read about in books from time to time. And your mind is unique, your problems are unique, at least the forms that they take, and therefore the ways in which you deal with them have to be unique and worked out by yourself just on the basis of general principles and general rules, but, you know, keeping clearly in mind all the time the meaning and purpose of it all.

But here the main point is that before you can successfully concentrate the hindrances must be suppressed, they must have at least sunk down for a little while and not be actively troubling you, otherwise you can't enter upon even the first of the absorptions.

Nagabodhi: There's a really good passage in the Mahasudasana Sutra, where the king entered his shrine room and at the door said, 'Thus far hate. Thus far craving,' and then metaphorically slams the door in their face. [laughter] [206]

S: This is supposed to be the metaphorical significance, also, of leaving your shoes at the door, you know, covered with dust, the dust of passion, etc, etc. Right, any further query on those first two hindrances?

You do notice, incidentally, that with regard to the second inner hindrance, that of hatred, the Grand Master says "this is a most fundamental factor in preventing one from attaining enlightenment". It seems to go a bit more to town about this one than even about the preceding one, craving. "It is both the cause and condition for our fall into the evil existences. It is the enemy that keeps us from enjoying the Buddha's Dharma.' So once you experience hatred, you can't enjoy anything, have you noticed that? So this why I sometimes think that hatred is in a way more unskilful even than craving in a sense.

Nagabodhi: I think I read in 'The Door of Liberation' that you shouldn't even read Dharma or listen to Dharma if you're in any kind of mood of aversion, conditioned even,...

S: Because you could even start disliking the Dharma, you dislike anything in that mental state. "It is the thief that steals away our thoughts of good-will toward all sentient beings. It is the fountain of evil words that burst out unchecked."

Lokamitra: You said before that it's the chief poison of the Mahayana.

S: Yes, because it goes directly against karuna, and directly against the Bodhisattva's vow to deliver all beings, and some sutras as quoted by Santideva in the Siksa-samuccaya goes so far as to say that the hindrance of craving is not so bad, speaking a good word or two for it. At least it indicates some affinity for

beings, some attraction towards them, whereas hatred is completely negative as it were from the point of view of the Bodhisattva Ideal. If you're susceptible to craving at least you like people to some extent, but if you're a Bodhisattva and you're setting out to save and help all beings but you hate them, well there's no sort of hope at all. [207]

Lokamitra: On the other hand, if there's no craving presumably - I'm not sure about this - there'd be no hatred.

S: They do hang together, yes. In fact, they all hang together really, all five. All right, let's go on to 3, the third hindrance.

John: [reads from p.450-1] "(3) The third hindrance is the hindrance of laziness and sleepiness. Laziness means that our mind gets dull and inert, while sleepiness means that our five senses become relaxed, our body becomes immobile, and then we fall asleep. To attain enlightenment we need an alert mind and all such causes and conditions are hindrances that prevent us from experiencing the highest happiness both in our present life and in future lives, and the joy of the Pure Land, and the inconceivable peace of Nirvana. This hindrance is perhaps the most serious of all. Why? Because other hindrances come when we are awake mentally and we can at least make an effort to overcome them, but the hindrance of laziness and sleepiness makes effort impossible. In sleepiness, we are like a dead corpse with no perception and no consciousness.

"Even our Lord Buddha and the Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas have had to combat sleepiness, as it is written in the following verses:

"'Get up! Do not lie there clasping a decaying corpse to your bosom. Even though it passes under the name of man, it is only an aggregation of rubbish. It is as if you had been poisoned by an arrow; in your pain would you lazily lie down to sleep? It is as if you were tightly bound because you had murdered someone; in your calamity and fear would you lie down to sleep?

"This thief and kidnapper might well be our death if you do not repel him forcefully. It is like lying down with a poisonous snake, or it is like lying down in the midst of battle; under such desperate conditions how could you think of indulging in sleep?

"You should realize that laziness and sleepiness leaves you in perfect darkness; it robs you of your intelligence, it dulls wits, it is a drag on your will, it obscures your heart's true purpose. How can you lie down to sleep when suffering such losses?'

"It is because of these very serious causes and conditions that the mind is given its faculty for noticing and appreciating their danger, and for guarding against and warding off laziness and sleepiness. If laziness and sleepiness are the great foe of the practice of Dhyana, strange to say, the earnest practice of Dhyana is our best weapon against laziness and sleepiness."

S: Perhaps we ought to discuss this fetter separately. It's rather interesting

that the Grand Master thinks that it might be the most serious of all. Why? "Because other hindrances come when we are awake mentally and we can at least make an effort to overcome them, but the hindrance of laziness and sleepiness makes effort impossible." And what is this? Why do people get into this state? How do they get into it? Is it lack of energy, or is it something else? There seems to be plenty of energy for hatred and craving but ...

Nagabodhi: I see what we've been talking about with regard to hatred and craving in a way as expressions of this, because when we've been talking about hooking on to the outside world, these feelings, it's very much like the dream process and, you know, in a way one is asleep most of the time and these other two fetters are expressions of sleeping.

S: In a way, yes, but not as we actually experience them because we can feel very awake and alive and full of energy, you know, when we experience any intense anger or hatred or intense craving, but that doesn't happen when we are in this dull, torpid, slothful, lazy state, we don't feel so alive.

Lokamitra: It seems to come when the conscious mind wants to do something but it comes up against the unconscious desires which are very much stronger so it just sort of puts a damper on it all.

Voice: Positive and negative energy cancel one another, yes. It's conflict, very often, that causes this sort of state. [208]

Abhaya: Or when the subconscious mind wants to do something and the conscious mind refuses to do anything about it.

S: Hmm, yes.

Nagabodhi: It's not just doing things either, it's seeing things or becoming aware of things. [a sentence lost here]

Padmapani: This doesn't actually have a - you know - it's from the very beginning, this is one of the main hindrances, so it obviously has its - you know - that has a beginningless beginning.

S: No, in a way not. Anger and craving are energies which have a beginningless beginning, but sloth and torpor would seem to be the opposite. Perhaps you could say that what has the beginningless beginning is something even more basic and fundamental than either of them, which according to Buddhism is the sort of darkness of ignorance, not ignorance in the sense of just absence of knowledge but something even more basic than that, a primordial darkness, neither active nor passive, which can be active in craving and hatred and be passive in sloth and torpor. It's more like that perhaps.

Vessantara: I like to see that more so as presumably being a sort of drain of energy in craving and hatred could increase one's laziness. [first part of this sentence not very clear]

Buddhadasa: In connection with ignorance could you clear up the distinction between moha and avidya, the two sorts of ignorance?

S: Ah, yes. It's very difficult to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between them but certainly the connotations are different. Moha in a way is a more sort of metaphorical term. It means bewilderment, confusion. There's a suggestion of turbulence, even of infatuation, drunkenness, delusion. Avidya is ignorance, just not knowing. It's just privation of wisdom, as it were. But they are the two things, or the two terms represent different aspects of the same thing. But certainly they have their own connotations.

Lokamitra: Would you say that moha, then, is one of the trio of craving [209]

S: Yes, it's always moha which is mentioned, and it's always avidya which comes as the first of the twelve cyclic nidanas; moha never comes there. And when craving and aversion are mentioned it's always moha which is mentioned along with them.

Abhaya: Isn't avidya more like blindness?

S: More like blindness and blankness.

Vajradaka: I think that sloth and laziness come from a deep down concept that was subconsciously accepted once that really we can't do anything to change our situation, and it's a kind of a filtering up of that accepted concept.

S: I'd say that it's the other way round. I'd say that you get the basic inertia, and to the extent that this does rationalize itself, when it develops even enough energy to rationalize itself, which often it doesn't, it rationalizes in those sort of terms. You feel that you can't do anything, and then you say, well, you can't do anything because you never can, you know. But you start off with the feeling and, you know, the rationalization in the form of that sort of philosophy just reinforces or crystallizes or gives expression to the feeling, but you start off with this completely reasonless feeling.

Padmapani: Couldn't ignorance be looked upon in the wrong word sometimes as some people in actual fact ... sorry not ignorance .. umm laziness or sleepiness from conceit, people who are very conceited about themselves...

S: Hmm it is connected sometimes with that, yes, they almost resent the fact that they have to make an effort. They don't see why they should have to make an effort.

Padmapani: Yes.

Padmaraja: You're talking about this reasonless feeling, that something which is almost inherited by everybody.

S: Sure ... well from a traditional Buddhist point of view it's why you're here at all. You've latched on - or that feeling in a very basic sense has latched on - to this particular kind of existence. In this way you come to be born or reborn. [210]

Lokamitra: This particular feeling is supposed to be in sloth and torpor?

S: No, I'm speaking about, you know, the sort of feeling or urge which is typified by the five hindrances in general. The basic urge towards continued conditioned existence.

Lokamitra: It seems very much that sloth and torpor and perhaps the next one too come out of situations whereas the previous two are, as you were saying, basic beginnings.(? not sure of this last word]

Voice: Oh, yes.

Lokamitra: It seems very much that sloth and torpor, and perhaps the next one too, come out of situations where the previous two are, as you were saying, basic [?]beginnings.

S: But sometimes craving is mentioned as the basic one. You could then say that what was most basic was a beginningless sort of craving, and when frustrated this gave rise to anger and hatred, and when there was a sort of collision between the two then you got a situation of stasis, which of course was the inertia, the sloth and torpor. You could look at it like that. And very often of course trsna, craving, is regarded as basic or at least singled out, as in the Four Noble Truths.

Lokamitra: I've never been able to really appreciate that. It's always seemed that craving comes from ignorance, then...

S: Well, perhaps we shouldn't think too much in terms of lateral succession. There is craving; there is ignorance. The ignorance is the sort of cognitive or non-cognitive aspect of the craving, and the craving is the more dynamic aspect of the ignorance. Craving in this sort of sense very much becomes like the sort of original life force, which is very blind apparently.

Buddhadasa: That's the simile of craving with the colours, because it implies certain [text too faint to read] in the colours themselves.

S: Yes, it becomes rather attractive. You can also look on sloth and torpor as inertia, in the sense of the inertia of the conditioned. One's natural resistance to the whole evolutionary process or idea and ideal of evolution. It's the pull, or rather the weight of your actual existence resisting any further advance and development.

Vajradaka: Can you go into that a bit more? [211]

S: Well it's as simple as to say that you don't want to evolve.

Vajradaka: Or these pulls don't want you to, are pulling against your evolving.

S: Well it's not the pull outside you, it's you. You as you are now don't want to go further. You want as it were just to rest and stay where you are. That's inertia. And that within this context is sloth and torpor.

Lokamitra: And of part of us is trying to evolve, we're going to come up against this all the time, in a way.

S: Right, and, after all, when you say that you have decided to evolve it means your conscious mind, that's the only part that is capable even of thinking about [it] but only part of your energy is with your conscious mind, partly because you are unevolved. When you are much more evolved, all your energy will be with your conscious mind and integrated with it, but in our present state of evolution we can dream up and we can think high ideals, but only part of our energy is with them because those ideals are the ideals of our conscious mind and only part of our energy is with the conscious mind. So the start has to be made there but there is a lot of energy which is not with that aspiration, which remains behind on, as it were, lower levels, the levels where we are, or the greater part of us is, and therefore as we or part of us tries to move ahead there is resistance to all the rest of us. The part that is moving ahead experiences that resistance on the part of the rest of us as a sort of terrible inertia. So in this sense, as Lokamitra said, there's always inertia so long as evolution continues. There's always something pulling, something holding you back. So from this point of view inertia is always something that is with you until you are completely enlightened, but it does get less and less, it does get lighter and lighter until in the end you may hardly notice it or it's very easy to overcome. But here of course it's sloth and torpor, inertia within the context of meditation. A sort of dullness, and sloth and laziness and torpor that overcomes you, you know, when you should be making a positive effort to ascend to higher levels of consciousness with the help of concentration and meditation.

Padmapani: It reminds me of a rocket when it leaves the earth, how much more [212] fuel it needs in the lower atmosphere until it gets to the higher atmosphere.

S: Yes. The conscious mind might make a commitment which the unconscious mind and the unconscious energies are not just willing to honour, and then there's resistance, and that resistance is experienced as sloth and torpor, it may be an inactive resistance.

Buddhadasa: That seems to be a thing which catches up with you later after the initial enthusiasm [. . . confused sentence here. . .]

S: Of course it has sometimes been said that the best way perhaps of rousing energy when you feel sort of slothful and torpid is sort of forcing yourself to do things and putting yourself into situations where you have to be active and have to do something, then you find that you can and the energy's there and the energy starts flowing. But if you sort of wait for the energy to come before you start doing anything, that's fatal, it won't come. But if you start doing something the energy will come.

Abhaya: Do you think the greater commitment like taking refuge is this kind activity? Because one is always aware that, well maybe not, there is this inertia, there is this subconscious weight pulling you against. . .

S: It also depends on how integrated a person you are. With some people there's a much higher degree of integration between conscious and unconscious, as it were, or subconscious than there is with others, and they are therefore more

capable of committing themselves totally. But if your conscious mind and its intentions, aspirations, and ideals is very much split off from the rest of you, so the rest of you doesn't take very much notice of what your conscious mind decides, then you may experience a terrible force of inertia, with most of your energy pulling and working against you. So it's the only relatively integrated person who can make a meaningful commitment, otherwise it may be just a sort of daydream and no more than that, or a gesture. So for someone to be able to commit themselves in a really important and serious way, whether it's to [213] spiritual development or even to a particular job or responsibility, he has to be a relatively integrated person.

Vajradaka: On a horizontal level?

S: On the horizontal and also even on the vertical. If it's on the vertical, you know, your subconscious exists as it were and that may pull in another direction. So this is why I think in connection with the whole question of ordination, which involves commitment, we have to insist on a relative degree of, as it were, psychic health, that the person is relatively integrated and balanced. Otherwise how can he or she commit himself or herself?

Lokamitra: This is what I've got so much from working ..[unclear].. I find it a tremendous testing ground just drawing me on and on and on and all the time coming up against this sort of thing.

S: In oneself and also in others. Up to a point the more energy you expend, the more energy you have. The more you work the more you can work. Assuming it is not as it were neurotically motivated and you go about it in a sensible way. You know, you allow your body sufficient rest in between.

Padmapani: Is there any way for people who are in a very bad state of inertia and sleepiness, that one somehow has acquaintances with these people in a sort of, one comes up to them ..[unclear].. how long can one deal with them to get them out of that state?

S: It depends upon where the source of the inertia lies. Some people are inert because of resentment that they've not been able to find an outlet for...

Padmapani: I see, one really has to go into it in depth for it uncover itself and come up.

S: Some may be afraid of making any effort. They may have been very much discouraged in the past, or again they may just not be physically very well in some cases. One can also say that a lot of inertia is due to conflict of energies and that conflict also can be either on the horizontal, a conflict between different energies and interests of which you are actually conscious, and a conflict as it were on the vertical [214] when your subconscious is pulling in another direction from that of the conscious mind and undermining its decisions and commitments.

Abhaya: I've heard you say, Bhante, some time that most people are only working with ten percent or fifteen percent of their energy.

S: I still say that.

Abhaya: Would you say that it's true of most of us here? Or most of us here most of the time?

S: I think a few of us use up to twenty-five or thirty percent.

Abhaya: Right...

S: Yes, a few of us up to twenty-five or thirty percent.

Abhaya: But this suggests, like, there's a maximum seventy percent energy...

S: I don't mean to suggest that, no.

Abhaya: ... which one is not aware of how these energies are working. You know, I'm relating it to what you said about commitment because, you know, like, the forces that may be working against one's conscious commitment is perhaps something that one isn't aware of and this sometimes worries me.

S: Ah, but there's also the other side to it. There are the positive energies untapped, so that the possibilities of commitment are unlimited and you will exhaust the negative more quickly than you will exhaust the positive. You will exhaust the negative more quickly than you exhaust the positive. The positive wins out in the long run.

Lokamitra: Sorry, I must have lost it somewhere. I'm not sure how that relates to the seventy or eighty percent.

Abhaya: Well, this seventy percent that one isn't aware of, some of it will come out as positive, not necessarily negative ...

S: Yes, yes, or even beyond that, even supposing all of that remaining [215] seventy is negative, beyond that on other levels, you know, there are incalculable possibilities of, you know, positive energy.

Lokamitra: But surely, all of that seventy percent, it may all be negative but eventually it should come out as positive?

S: As positive, yes. But when I give this sort of rough estimate of fifteen and ten percent, or this twenty-five or thirty, I'm speaking in terms of what might be ordinarily expected from the ordinary, healthy, human being, not going much beyond that, and therefore I say that most people are not functioning at more than ten percent or fifteen percent of quite ordinary human capacity, leaving aside sort of Bodhisattva-like potentiality, [laughter] you know, which can't ..[unclear].. more.

You know, there are quite a few Order members who are not even as decently active as the average, moderately competent, travelling salesman. [laughter] I mean, leaving aside the actual sort of value of the work that he's doing, and not interpreting activity in too narrow terms. You can be quite active when you're just sort of sitting still and looking at a flower or a tree. Meditation is also activity.

Lokamitra: I've been quite surprised some of the people I've met, for example in connection with Bethnal Green, about how much energy and admittedly it's, you know, one can say a lot about it but some people have so much energy ..[unclear].. you know, we're not really meeting ourselves very much. And it's these sort of people who will never be attracted to our movement because they look at us and say, well look what are you doing?

S: Sitting on their bottoms all the time without even meditating.

Lokamitra: And yet it's a lot of these sort of people who are interested in something else, in something which goes beyond...

S: At least you've got to be an improvement on what they already are, in terms of energy and activity at least.

Lokamitra: I felt this very much with the chairman of Labour Bethnal Green Council, a tremendous fellow, but he works so much harder than most of us, and Bethnal Green's going to have to be so good to attract people [216] like him.

S: Ah, ah, good. It'll be quite a challenge then. Anyway in case anyone's been thinking that we've rather gone to the extreme, perhaps we'd better pass on to the next hindrance which is of course recklessness or even restlessness. You can be overactive in other words, or active in the wrong way, you mustn't forget that.

Padmapani: [reads from p.451-3] "(4) The fourth inner hindrance is recklessness and remorse. Recklessness is of three kinds. There is body haste, walking or rambling about with no especial purpose in mind, sports and make-believe and dancing about. Then there is haste and recklessness of lips. The lips seem to find enjoyment in just reciting and singing and disputing and boasting and discussing worldly affairs, all to no purpose, just for the thrill one gets out of it. The third is mind recklessness. This means careless thinking, idle day dreams, the perversion of the minds powers to selfish and acquisitive ends when they should be used for the attainment of enlightenment. Then there is the waste of the mind upon the unnecessary discrimination of external differences and the diversion of it into the enjoyment of worldly writings and artistic pursuits, or the frittering away of it in concentration upon sentimentality and emotionalism, and the absorption of it in contemplation of beautiful sights music, delicacies, fragrance, softness, and the seductive rhythm and cadence of beautiful thoughts. It is as if a person, who had made up his mind to strictly control his mind, deliberately forgets his purpose and lets his mind run along the easiest channel. What does it mean to be a reckless person? He is no better then an intoxicated elephant free of its chains, or a wild camel held by the nose.

"Concerning this hindrance, it is written in the sutra:

"'Oh you, who have become a monk, who have shaved your head and gone begging from door to door, why do you indulge in light and reckless manners, when you know that by such careless conduct and indulgence you will imperil all the benefits of the Dharma that might be yours?'

"As soon as we become aware of what we are risking by such reckless acts and habits we should give them up at once for all time. Because as soon as we become aware of our guiltiness and do not give them up then remorse will spring up and that will intensify the hindrance, where recklessness without remorse would not be so serious. Why is this? The reason is this: we may have reckless habits without thinking much about it and then remorse will not spring up to disturb the mind. It is in the quiet of Dhyana practice that remorse with its burden of sadness and regret and vexation rises to disturb the mind and prevent its concentration. That is why recklessness and remorse are so great a hindrance to the practice of Dhyana. There are two kinds of remorse, namely, one kind comes after recklessness, as stated above, and the other kind precedes further recklessness. It is the fear that always shadows the life of a criminal. It is like an arrow that has penetrated so deep that it cannot be removed. As the sutra says:

"'Because you do what you ought not to do, and do not what you ought to do, your life is replete with remorse and vexation, whereby you will fall at your death into an evil existence.

"If you have commuted an offence and felt remorse for it, and afterwards are able to keep your mind from its grievance, your heart will be happy and peaceful, but you should be careful not to reawaken the mind either to the offence or to the remorse.

"There are two kinds of remorse in which the foolish man is accustomed to indulge. The first is for things done which ought not to have done; the second is for things, which he ought to have done, but which he did not do.

"The reason why both these kinds of remorse are foolish is because they do not express the true state of the mind, and because the offence, having occurred, it is too late for you to undo it."'

S: The Grand Master here goes into this whole question of restlessnes etc., the fourth fetter, much more thoroughly than it is gone into in the Pali literature.

Buddhadasa: ?Is this when one sometimes feels anxiety? [?speech is not clear]

S: Yes. Sometimes the original Pali, which is uddhacca kukkucca, translated as hurry and flurry or restlessness and anxiety. The two terms seeming to refer to the external and the internal aspects of the same thing, as with sloth and torpor. Sloth is of body and torpor is of mind, or vice versa according to some, it depends what exact shade of meaning you give the English terms.

Ratnapani: ..a new departure here with remorse that hasn't ..[unclear].. following on from that...

S: Yes, yes.

Vessantara: It does seem mainly concerned with recklessness in so far as it's going to cause remorse rather than just as something which is going to speed up the mind and generally lead one to hurry and flurry, to sit in any kind of quiet meditative state.

S: Perhaps because recklessness and restlessness behaviour is so obviously contrary to the whole meditative way of life that you're going to quite quickly become aware that you've not been living or behaving in a way that is conducive to Dhyana. [217] Therefore you are much more likely to feel remorse in connection with this particular hindrance than in connection with the preceding one. Presumably this is why the topic of remorse is introduced here in this way.

Lokamitra: If you do unmindful things and you feel remorse for it, it makes the point here when he's going on - remorse and vexation - you swing from me to the other very much, so it's like two sides of a pendulum.

S: Yes. But look at the particular kinds of describing restlessness. "Body haste, walking or rambling about with no especial purpose in mind, sports and make believe and dancing about." You can see the sort of thing he has in mind, and don't forget he's speaking particularly or giving advice particularly in connection with people who have embarked upon a life, or at least a very lengthy session of meditation, of Dhyana practice. So this almost aimless, almost spasmodic, movement is just not in keeping with a meditative life and the practice of Dhyana. It is also a suggestion of neurotic restlessness, whenever we can't settle down, can't be still. You could say there are two forms of this, one is just a superabundance of healthy, animal energy which has not yet been integrated into the meditative life, and then a neurotic restlessness which is based upon essentially anxiety, unsatisfied craving, or even upon a sort of latent irritation.

Buddhadasa: The external aspect would be the animal energy?

S: Yes, well this is relatively healthy and if you're just a healthy young monk whose just got lots of energy and you can't very easily settle down to the quiet routine of the meditation ... [218] [Tape 9 Side B] ... monastery. Well, that in a way is understandable but you must be careful that you do try to integrate that relatively coarse energy into your meditative life and your meditative practice rather than let it find a very sort of wandering expression in a way that would detract from your meditative life, or haphazard expression perhaps would be better than wandering expression.

But the other is definitely neurotic restlessness because you're looking for something, you don't know what, or you maybe feel a certain amount of resentment and annoyance. You sort of go around almost looking for some object to vent that on. This makes you restless and discontented. And sort of neurotic talk, gossip, which is often neurotic, is all included under this heading. Recklessness of the lips. You know that sometimes you have a long discussion and you think you're sort of enjoying it at the time but at the end you feel quite exhausted, you feel drained. So this is an indication that it has been a sort of expression of restlessness or it has been even a bit neurotic. But you don't feel refreshed or energized, although you've had a good communication, or in a positive peaceful state, satisfied and happy; you just feel drained and empty.

And then mental recklessness, careless thinking, idle daydreamings and so on. And it's rather interesting that the Grand Master also includes here, the

enjoyment of worldly literature, worldly artistic pursuits, as ends in themselves apparently. As though to occupy oneself with the arts in an idle sort of way, not really knowing what you're doing, not with any deep or serious purpose is just an expression of restlessness.

Vajradaka: It's relatively easy for a people in a culture to do that kind of thing.

S: Yes. And he also speaks of frittering away the mind's concentration, or rather frittering away of it. What does refer to here? Of the mind itself, frittering the mind away "in concentration upon sentimentality and emotionalism". What do you think is meant by that? [219]

Vajradaka: You can sort of get into whole other worlds of sort of ... which isn't really very realistic, having views about that world and sort of eulogizing it and being sort of caught up in this sort of subjective world, but not being at all realistic.

S: Sentimentality, emotionalism. It's rather playing with the emotions without really relating them to an object. I don't think that here, the words of the original text are being very literally translated so perhaps there's no need for us to take the English words of the translation too seriously as it were, but certainly it's quite an important area.

Padmaraja: What was that definition again?

S: Oh dear.

Vessantara: Playing with one's emotions without relating them to an object.

S: Hmm ... mmm. Do you know what I mean by this, what I'm trying to convey?

Voice: No I don't.

S: Or can you give an example? Well, for instance you say that you like someone, so what does your liking mean, that you like that particular person. It means that your positive feeling is directed towards that person. You'd like to communicate with that person, help that person. But if you just sort of say to yourself, really do I like that person, but you're just playing around in your own mind with the thought as it were of enjoying it: oh look at me, I'm sort of liking that person very much and what a lovely sort of feeling it is and isn't it nice to like someone and, you know, and you don't really have anything to with that person, well, that is really sentimentalism. And if you're actually in contact with the person but you're expressing more than you actually feel, then that's emotionalism. So if you're always sort of patting them on the back and saying, oh I do like you very much and hugging them, well actually you don't feel very much at all, it's just making a big to do about it, that's emotionalism. Or, at least this is a possible definition of it, and certainly it's something that often happens. [220]

Buddhadasa: And taking cognisance of something and blowing it up out of context.

S: Yes, right.

Buddhadasa: Like a sunset or a mother wheeling a baby ... a flower.

S: So it's almost adopting a sort of attitude, not seeing things as they really are.

Buddhadasa: Also [the] direct opposite of being cynical.

S: Yes, this is why it's sometimes said that, you know, that the cynic is often a disguised sentimentalist and vice versa. [laughter] I mean sometimes sentimentalism overlaps with emotionalism and this is why it's sometimes said that the sentimentalist feels more than is actually justified by the occasion and the cynic feels less.

Lokamitra: It seems to be connected with what you were saying about sensitivity.

S: Yes. To take up, you know, this example that was mentioned, that is, the mother with the baby. So someone says, oh look at that mother with the baby, what a pleasant sight. Well, that's just quite normal as it were, yes, what a pleasant sight, it's quite delightful. And someone starts drooling over ... oh, there's nothing like it in the world, you couldn't see anything more beautiful [laughter], isn't it lovely ... well this is sentimentalism. But if for instance you say, look at the mother and child isn't it a pleasant sight and then someone says, it's not a pleasant sight at all, too many babies in the world, well that's just the cynical approach, he's not feeling enough, he's feeling less than normal. So this is where sentimentalism and cynicism are opposite extremes. The normal person is in between those two extremes. He's quite prepared to recognize, you know, that a mother with a baby is quite a pretty sight but he's not going to, you know, think of it as the greatest thing in the world, but at the same time he is going to feel something, he's not going to be a cynic about it and deny that there is anything beautiful in it at all. I think that's quite a good example because you do get a lot of sentimentalism around babies and maybe quite a bit of cynicism too. [laughter] Only more sentimentalism than cynicism. [221]

Lokamitra: So some sort of interest, some sort of sentimental or emotional expression, can be a reflection of some neurotic, some restlessness ...

S: Yes, restlessness.

Lokamitra: So undue emphasis on that - on pseudo art, creativity and so on - could be very neurotic.

S: Yes, or a bit neurotic at least. I mean why do you sentimentalize over babies, you know, to take that concrete example? Well, I don't mean you personally but, you know, when people do sentimentalize over babies, what is happening?

Buddhadasa: They want themselves to be sentimentalized over.

S: Do you think so? Well, maybe,, I hadn't thought of that.

Voice: Want to be babies.

Buddhadasa: Yes, want to be babies.

S: Do you think so? Hmm, maybe.

Abhaya: Or want babies themselves. [laughter]

Ratnapani: I often feel that the person isn't being very much at all but saying in fact what they think they should feel.

S: Sometimes you overdo it because you're afraid of under-doing it.

Lokamitra: It's a sort of compensation thing, where you feel you're not getting enough feeling yourself and you sort of...

Padmapani: Well, yes, maybe it's just this thing when somebody says, well isn't this a nice baby, and you feel so awful by not saying it, some people feel awful not saying it, like I mean it would be very awkward for somebody, you know, if he feels cynical to show their cynicism, so they...

S: They cover it up. [222]

Padmapani: They might just sort of, well, that's it, OK... [laughter]

S: What about the cases of sort of genuine sentimentalism? I mean someone who is actually being really sentimental and is not covering up cynicism. What do you think is happening there, say in the case of being sentimental over the baby?

Abhaya: It's a sort of desire to have a real feeling, to really be emotionally involved, this is the best you can do sometimes.

S: Yes, mmm, yes.

Vajradaka: Again it's almost vicarious in a way.

Buddhadasa: I see a middle-aged man down our street who has a small, little chihuahua. He goes around calling it baby, and keeps it to himself all the day, just talks to it as a baby.

S: Of course people are sentimental over animals, about doggies, and so on, and sometimes about their parents, about their mothers. I was reading a book the other day which says if you meet a girl who calls her mother, or refers to her mother, as mumsie have nothing to do with her. If she says, my mumsie, well, steer clear of her. [laughter]

Padmapani: What does that mean though?

S: It means she's sentimental over her mother.

Padmapani: Ah. [laughter]

S: I'm sure some healthy people here have never even heard of the word.

Buddhadasa: An intelligent person ..[unclear].. the word mumsie.

S: What? Well, the less said about them the better. [laughter] I'm being cynical of course. If I met a young man who referred to his mother as mumsie, I think I'd take him aside and give him a bit of a talking to. [laughter]

So “sentimentality and emotionalism, and the absorption of it in [223] contemplation of beautiful sights music, delicacies, fragrance, softness, and the seductive rhythm and cadence of beautiful thoughts.” You know, I’m sure the Grand Master must have been having in mind the Chinese monks and literary people in general who maybe were into the arts and a bit of calligraphy and a bit of painting in the same sort of superficial, sentimental way that we find many people are today. You know, this was probably quite common in ancient China, you know, the dabbler and the dilettante.

Lokamitra: It’s putting too much weight on these rather than they’re just a means to an end.

S: Not even any genuine weight.

Lokamitra: Mmm, yes, mmm.

S: But pretending to put more weight almost.

Padmaraja: So the Grand Master’s being ironical here.

S: Possibly.

Lokamitra: But, I wonder, some people I think definitely do think that experiencing sensually pleasing things is spiritually positive, is always going to be spiritually positive. I’ve come up against this several times.

S: Can you elaborate on that with examples? [laughter]

Lokamitra: Do you mean persons?

S: No, I don’t mean instances of . . . [but] the sort of sensual things that they thought of as spiritually positive.

Lokamitra: From very crude things to much more refined things. It was just a general. I can’t really think of anything specific but. . .

Ratnapani: ..[unclear]..[224] If - I mean the same as you - it’s a confusion of the aesthetic with the spiritual, so that something is seen to be beautiful and the person will immediately assume that that means that it is sort of spiritual and what you pick up from it is spiritual feeling. Is that right?

Lokamitra: Partly, but that will do for the time being.

S: But it is positive, in a way, because there is such a thing as just an ordinary human positivity which may even be bound up with sense objects and things, but if it’s non-neurotic then up to a point that’s quite all right and that sort of healthy person can make quite a good start on meditation.

Ratnapani: I think it’s usually combined with sentimentality though, sort of the feeling towards this beauty is sort of being squeezed out and labelled spiritually positive.

S: They’re making too much of it, yes.

Lokamitra: It's the identification of this with the spiritual.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: It becomes a micchaditthi.

S: Yes, a bit like the confusion of the psychological and the spiritual.

Buddhadasa: I think it's complicated by fashions based on fashions of the past, like a sort of ..[unclear].. coming back in at the moment and things like this, over indulgence in the past.

S: So finding the past [laughter] is romantic [laughter] and sort of indulging in a sentimental sort of way.

Voice: I think the aesthetic is genuinely one step up and one step down, and it has sort of spiritual overtones as it were, whereas the psychological doesn't have any of that at all ..[unclear].. [one whole sentence unclear, too softly spoken]

Lokamitra: [inaudible sentence; aircraft noise] [225]

S: Well, this is mistaking the heaven of Indra with the five hundred pink footed nymphs from Nirvana. I mean the heaven of Indra is the heaven of Indra, it's a very delightful place and it's and it's a little bit higher up than we are in this world, but it's certainly not Nirvana.

Voice: It's also a very safe abode isn't it?... [aircraft noise]

Voice: [inaudible sentence]

Buddhadasa: Well this is it. You could ..[unclear].. all day

P. You end up talking about art and that's something else.

Voice: [inaudible sentence] [laughter]

S: I think also the dangerous point here is that there is some actually positive feeling, the person feels a bit happy and is a bit artistic, as it were, so they're irrefutable in the sense that can say, well look, I'm happy and I'm blissful, and this is it.

Padmaraja: But that's not art.

Buddhadasa: What is art?

S: Well, it may be called art or it may be called anything, but the thing itself does represent a sort of as it were lowering of the ideal. Some people may call it art, others may not. It's the sort of thing that you do get in some as it were pseudo spiritual circles. The whole thing is, as it were, watered down, very diluted, very thin. Where you get people going round and saying, well, in a very sort of sentimental way, you know, if everybody loved one another, grew flowers in their garden, everything would be all right, that would be heaven on earth, that would be nirvana. But it's all sort of sentimentalized. So the high spiritual ideal is in a sense brought down to a comparatively low level. You could say

it's the over idealization of something which is in itself or can be in itself quite positive. It's like mistaking the pretty for the beautiful or the agreeable for the good.

Anyway, there's something more here. "It is as if a person, who had [226] made up his mind to strictly control his mind, deliberately forgets his purpose and lets his mind run along the easiest channel." In other words it's just, instead of directing your energy it's just letting them, you know, find their own way along the easiest channel as the Grand Master says. You just let them trickle along wherever there is an opening, wherever there is an outlet, rather than redirecting them in a constructive and positive and creative way. So "he is no better than an intoxicated elephant free of its chains or a wild camel held by the nose."

Then the Grand Master says, "As soon as we become aware of what we are risking by such reckless acts and habits we should give them up once for all. Because as soon as we become aware of our guiltiness and do not give them up then remorse will spring up and that will intensify the hindrance, where recklessness without remorse would not be so serious." In a way if it's a sort of light hearted recklessness and you don't really know what you're doing, you're just wasting a bit of time or just squandering a bit of energy. That doesn't matter so much, it's not so serious, he says, but if you realize what you are doing, if you become mindful of it and it is restlessness and recklessness and you ought to give it up but you don't, you, as it were, almost deliberately continue, that is very much worse because you will continue to feel remorse and the remorse will intensify the hindrance and there will be an additional hindrance of its own, and then you will be in a much worse state than you were just as a reckless and heedless person.

It's drawing attention, perhaps, in a way, to a very serious negative state in which you, as it were, deliberately waste time, you deliberately squander your energy, even though you know that you are in fact wasting time, you are in fact squandering your energy. I mean the unmindful recklessness is more like that of a child, it's more like a sign of immaturity, but the deliberate recklessness is more like that of the, well, the confirmed criminal, practically. It suggests a sort of obstinacy.

Padmapani: So this might refer to the energy split up between the conscious and the subconscious wind. Sort of consciously you want to evolve and you want to deal with it in this context in the order, and there's a part of you that wants to do something else which is really nothing to do with order affairs or to do with one's spiritual practice. [227]

So because of the practice of mindfulness then one has a sort of rudimentary consciousness which becomes aware of these things, and maybe the actions that one does which is against one's true practice, remorse sets in.

S: Before, at least, you didn't know, at least, that it was against ...

Padmapani: Yes, right.

S: So it didn't bother you all that much but once you've realized that it is against, and yet you go on doing it, then that can breed very serious remorse indeed and that remorse can hold you back.

Padmapani: Yes, it's almost as though you're stretching things out on a rubber band.

Lokamitra: This is quite common in some ways to the previous one, just sort of a shade different. Sometimes people say they want to do things but they haven't got the strength there to do it, or they haven't got the desire to do it, and so then there'll be remorse and then their whole pattern will be repeated.

S: Yes, this is why it's usually said in Buddhism traditionally that if you make a vow to do something and then don't do it, it's worse psychologically and spiritually than not making the vow and not doing it. If you promise to do something and then you don't do it, you not only don't do it but you also break your vow which can be very discouraging for you and you can feel very bad about it and blame yourself, whereas if you hadn't even promised to do that particular thing you probably wouldn't have bothered any more about the matter.

I think there's quite a lot of this around, in a way, people promising to do things which in fact they're not able to do, and then feeling bad that they haven't been able to do them, and then maybe blaming other people or finding excuses, rationalizing, and so on. And sometimes people of course make promises because perhaps they feel they ought to be doing something, or maybe they overestimate their capacities, or maybe they just feel guilty about not doing, so they promised to do without being able to do or even willing to do, and then they don't do, and they feel worse than they did before and it becomes quite a vicious sort of circle. [228]

Lokamitra: Something else occurred to me [is] that people when they, certainly within the movement, they want to jump in at the deep end, they want to come in almost at the top, if I can use that term, and then find that they haven't got the basic groundwork prepared, and they just flop and then it's blamed on, well, I've felt this personally anyway, and it isn't a sort of, there's no - I don't know - seriousness of approach or understanding of what needs to be done.

Padmapani: I mean this must be changing now, mustn't it, because of the, you know, since the kalyana mitra system's come in, kalyana mitras have been given or are doing work which a few years ago Order members were doing.

S: That's true. I got a letter the other day from a mitra in New Zealand who said 'we mitras' - and there are of course now twelve of them - we're beginning to take a bit of initiative and do things ourselves. And he and another Order member or an older member, have started getting together a little community, but he made this point. He'd only been a mitra for three months and he said, you know, we are now doing things on our own initiative, having our own programmes and our own activities. So this is true what you say, some mitras now are doing more than even Order members were in the past, the fairly remote past admittedly,

but still in the past.

L There's some mitras doing much more than some Order members. [laughter]

S: Well until I went out to New Zealand and gave the ordinations, I mean apart from Akshobhya, everything was being run by people who weren't even mitras, just Friends with a capital F, and some of them were leading pujas and taking classes quite competently. Right, more about recklessness and restlessness?

Lokamitra: There's just one point about ..[unclear].. that seems to me very important: we have to be very careful when people say they want to do things because I've experienced this so many times in an organizational way, people say they want to do something and they don't really mean it, and they let you down, and it's much more of a drag that way.

S: Then you have to quickly find somebody else to do it at the last minute or do it yourself. [229]

Lokamitra: And you just have to be sure.

S: It means that they really make the offer knowing their own strength and their own capacity, the time that they've got at their disposal, their own ability, their own willingness. Knowing this, not just wanting to make a gesture at a meeting and then sort of virtually forget all about it.

Lokamitra: And if people do make that offer and you do take it up, then you have to keep them up to it.

S: Yes. I suppose ideally you shouldn't have to, shouldn't be any need. At the most just a few words of encouragement or reminder, but really no more than that. Sometimes of course people may offer to do things or say that they are going to do things out of a feeling of guilt. This is quite unhealthy.

Right, on to the fifth and last hindrance then, which is doubt. Blake says, for instance, 'If the sun and moon should doubt/ They'd immediately go out!' [laughter] That comes in quite appropriately here: that doubt is seen as something negative not something positive.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.453-5] "(5) The fifth inner hindrance is the hindrance of doubt. If the mind is clouded with doubt, how can it have any faith in the teaching? And if it has no faith in the teaching, how can it profit by it? It is as if one were going up a mountain for treasure but had no hands with which to bring back any of the treasure. There are some 'honest doubts' which do not entirely hinder the practice of Dhyana, but there are three kinds of doubt that most effectively hinder the attainment of Samadhi. The first kind of doubt that hinders successful Dhyana is doubt of oneself. We may question whether we are the right one to attempt the Noble Path inasmuch as we are temperamentally gloomy and dull and our faults and offences are many and serious. If in the very beginning we cherish such doubts as that, we will never attain any development of Samadhi. So, if we are to practise Dhyana, we should not be contemptuous of our self. We should remind ourselves that it is impossible for anyone to

fathom the depth that some root of goodness lies buried in our past lives. The second kind of doubt is doubt in our master. We may have been displeased in his manner or appearance and doubted whether he had attained any degree of enlightenment and would be able to guide us along the path. If we cherish such doubt or contempt for our Master (Teacher), it will certainly hinder our attainment of Samadhi. If we wish to get rid of this hindrance, we should recall the words of the 'Mahavibhasa Sutra' in its parable of the miser who kept his gold in a bag of rubbish. If we love the gold of enlightenment we too must keep it in our rubbish bag. Although our master is not perfect as we think he ought to be, we should honour and trust him because he stands for us in the Buddhas place.

"The third kind of doubt is doubt in the Dharma. Nearly everyone of us no doubt retains some measure of confidence in his own mental judgement, and therefore it will be hard for us at first to have faith in the teachings of the Master when they differ from what we think they ought to be, and it will be hard at first to put his teachings into practice humbly and faithfully. So long as we cherish doubts of our Master, we cannot be much influenced by his teachings. This is clearly explained in the following stanzas:

"'Just as a man standing where the roads cross and questioning which way he ought to go so are we facing the true nature of things. If we cherish doubts as to our ability to know and to choose the right way, it is not likely that we will put much earnestness or zeal into our search.

"If, in our ignorance as we face the true nature of things, seeing bad and good, mortality and Nirvana, we doubt our Master, we resign ourselves to the bondage of life and death. We will be like a deer chased by a lion with no hope of escape.

"In your ignorance, facing the true nature of things obscured by the world's appearances and changes, you had better have faith in the good Dharma and follow its teachings with zeal and confidence. Standing where the ways of life cross, have faith and courage to choose the right.'

"Faith is the only entrance to Buddhism. Without faith all earnest study and constant effort will be to no avail. Just as soon as you are convinced that error always follows doubt, give up all doubt and enter the gateway of faith. Someone may ask: 'There are as many different kinds of error as there are grains of dust, why do you speak of giving up only five doubts? That is true, but these five doubts cover the whole field of greed, hatred and foolishness. Doubt, greed, hatred and foolishness are the bad ways that are fundamental. Beyond the gateway of doubt open all the paths, said to be eighty-four thousand in number, that lead to worldly suffering: if we close the gate of doubt we block the way to all evil.

"For these reasons the followers of Buddha should get rid of the five inner hindrances of greed, anger, hatred, laziness and sleepiness, recklessness and remorse, and doubt. Getting rid of these five hindrances is like having a debt remitted, it is like recovering from a painful sickness, it is passing from a famine

stricken country into a land of prosperity; it is like living in peace and safety in the midst of violence and enmity with no apparent reason for it. If we have given up all these hindrances our minds will be fresh and happy and our spirits and tranquil and peaceful.

"Just as the brightness of the sun may be obscured by smoke, or dust, or clouds, or mist, or Rahula, or the Asuras may hide its brightness behind their palms, so the pure brightness of our minds may be obscured by these five hindrances."

S: So it's quite interesting that the first kind of doubt that is mentioned is doubt regarding oneself, in other words lack of self-confidence. You find this in quite a few people that they don't really have the confidence that they can achieve anything or make anything of themselves, or attain a higher state or evolve further. They may need a lot of encouragement, a quite positive atmosphere around them.

Lokamitra: It's very catching, doubt, it's quite insidious and horrible in the way it spreads.

S: It can be collective as well as individual. [230]

Lokamitra: It's one thing...

S: We can't do this or we can't do that, we haven't got the energy, we haven't got the capacity, we haven't got the knowledge, we haven't got the resources.

Lokamitra: We have to be very careful of this. I find I have to be careful of this in, you know, I get criticism from people at times but, you know, to keep that as questioning of myself rather than let it undermine myself totally.

S: It's more questioning as the how rather than doubting the actual thing that you're trying to do.

Lokamitra: I find this with Subhuti and Dhammadinna too, that sometimes certain things are said and you have to be so careful not to let it just cut away from under us and so take away all our energy from what we are doing.

S: Hmm, yes.

Lokamitra: It's quite horrible sometimes, the way if sort of creeps in.

S: Sometimes it's a sort of tactic with people who try to stop you doing something, whatever the reasons for that may be, by just undermining your self-confidence. [231]

[Tape 10 Side A]

Padmapani: In a way I suppose it's a bit sort of - it's the opposite spirit to the Mahayana as well, the Bodhisattva ideal.

S: Right.

Padmapani: Certainly a hero in it. [People talking over one another]

S: Yes, well the Bodhisattva possesses tremendous self-confidence. Like the squirrel in the Jataka story that someone found trying to empty out the whole ocean, and he was trying to empty it by dipping his tail into the ocean and then shaking it out over the dry land, and when he was asked what he was doing he said, 'I'm emptying out the ocean.' The person who asked him what he was doing said, 'Well you can't possibly do that.' And he said, 'Oh, yes I can if I keep on long enough.' [laughter] This is an example of confidence, you know, or self-confidence.

Nagabodhi: [inaudible comment about Frank Sinatra's 1959 hit song, 'High Hopes']

S: Yes, one has to be very careful about people who try to undermine your confidence, because they see you doing things that perhaps they can't do, and they feel rather resentful or even envious about it.

Padmapani: You mean in the sense that they try to drive you down to the state that they're in?

S: Right, yes, I think that this is. . .

Padmapani: It compensates for them to feel happier in your misfortune so to speak.

S: In a way yes, at least they won't be made to feel uncomfortable by your greater energy, greater activity, and greater achievements.

Padmapani: A greater sense of ..[unclear]..

S: Yes, right and this is to be counteracted by the rejoicing in merit, [232] that if somebody is doing something that you can't do well, rejoice in that. You're not able to do it, well, how lucky that somebody else is able to do it. Have this sort of attitude. How good it is that somebody is able to do it even if you're not. Be happy and pleased and glad and congratulate them, and back them up at least with your moral support if you aren't able to do it yourself. You approve, you know, shout your threefold sadhus, say 'I couldn't do that but he can, that's jolly good, achievement.' But not try to denigrate or undermine or indulge in carping criticism and so on. Just have a very positive attitude towards somebody else's achievements, or somebody else's effort.

Ratnapani: I feel discussions in order meetings - in discussions - when gradually negativity and resentment begin to build up on both sides, or all sides, that if there was self-confidence and there wasn't self doubt in the situation there just wouldn't be the negativity, just pure and simple as that, very often.

S: Whose self-doubts are you referring to?

Ratnapani: All the individuals concerned, on both sides of the argument.

S: No, I don't think that's correct. I think somebody can be feeling genuinely self-confident and somebody else, not being too happy with their self-confidence tries to undermine it, and sometimes this can be undermined even though it was

originally quite genuine. Because, after all, it's a human self-confidence, not a transcendental attainment, so it can be undermined, it can be lost.

Ratnapani: Usually someone comes in with a good degree of self-confidence, and they feel that they have points that they want to make, and they try to make them and they're blocked, not necessarily undermined, and gradually that will weigh down their self-confidence and they become negative when it's begun to go .. [not sure of the last 3 words]

S: Yes, hmm, so one should, you know, always be careful if one offers any criticism or is raising any question, ontdoes it in a positive way and not in such a way as to undermine that person's original confidence, remembering that they are only human after all and their self-confidence even though genuine can in fact be undermined, if even only temporarily and make [233] it clear, well, if I voice this criticism it isn't because I just want to be negative, but I fully appreciate what you're trying to do but I would just like to raise such and such a point that you might have overlooked. Just put it in that way, and in a positive and cheerful and friendly way.

Nagabodhi: If a person is feeling threatened by what the other person is achieving, there's an element of destructiveness, you just want to destroy that other person, deliberately destroying that self-confidence, because you're destroying a threat.

S: You feel so threatened.

Nagabodhi: Annihilate it. In a way, when that happens I think the other person - it's almost an argument for being obstinate and sticking by your guns even if you're beginning to question yourself, and just hope the direct encounter that might result, the truth will come out of it. I remember giving in myself once in this situation. It really affected my effectiveness in something I was doing for a long time, until I hit back.

S: Yes, well if you are genuinely convinced that you are right, and in fact if you are right, then you are fully justified in sticking up for yourself, you know, to the limit. If someone else's negativity is affecting your positivity then you let them have it. That is actually much better rather than both of you be dragged down to a negative state. It's best you defend your positivity and remain positive. If somebody else has attacked your positivity on account of their negativity, well, that's their look out. They're responsible for their own attitude. You at all costs must maintain your positivity and your self-confidence. In the long run that is going to be for the benefit of everybody including the person who has tried to attack you.

Nagabodhi: Even of you're wrong? [laughter]

S: You may be wrong technically, but your self-confidence to the extent that it is self-confidence is a positive state.

Nagabodhi: Even if you're wrong and you still fight back when the truth emerges, it's objectively personalities battering each other down.

S: Someone once said to me, he said, you know, the trouble with you is even when [234] you're mistaken you're right. [laughter]

Nagabodhi: My headmaster used to say, you've won the argument but I still haven't changed my mind.

S: Well as Butler says, 'A man convinced against, his will remains of the same opinion still.' [laughter] Any more quotations?

Vessantara: ..[unclear].. used to have people coming and putting pressure on him to do various things ..[unclear].. and they'd convince him and he'd say, OK now you've convinced me, now go out there and put pressure on me. [laughter]

S: I think the point should be made that the faith that is meant here is not belief. Confidence is much more of a positive emotional attitude with a strong element of trust and devotion, it's not just belief, it need not have a sort of very definite conceptual or doctrinal content, especially say faith in the Dharma. It's a positive attitude towards the Dharma, not blindly accepting traditional Buddhist doctrines, but a positive receptive attitude to the teaching as a whole, a trust in it, and a feeling for it and a happiness with it.

Abhaya: In fact one of the spiritual faculties.

S: Yes, right. You could even say that faith in the Dharma is quite compatible with the suspension of belief with regard to certain teachings. You can have faith in the Dharma without believing everything that Buddhism teaches. Not that you reject anything, but you may not have a positive belief in certain teachings but that not incompatible with a general attitude of faith in the Dharma. For instance, some people find it difficult to accept rebirth or karma, or rebirth in the traditional sense, but they can still experience faith in the Dharma, still feel committed to the Dharma.

Vajradaka: Does he make a distinction between the teaching of Buddhism and faith in the Dharma?

S: Dharma is much more the reality and the principle behind all the [235] formulated teachings. So there have been after all different formulations at different times; some of them contradict or appear to contradict one another. So the faith is directed towards the reality behind the principle, and the principle behind the specific formulations of the Dharma in the form of particular teachings. So the specific faith teachings may be the bearers, as it were, of the principles concerned, and those principles maybe the bearer of the reality concerned. And you may see that, in which case you accept the teachings too. But sometimes you may not be able to see that, in certain cases.

Vajradaka: I think that's a really useful distinction between the Dharma and Buddhism, especially in terms of teachings.

S: Provided one doesn't make it too hard and fast so that, you know, people think well, whatever it means ..[unclear].. that's the Dharma, and whatever it comes down to in tradition, that's just Buddhism. What they think is Dharma;

what you tell them is Buddhism! We must be aware of that. Anyway any general questions or comment on any of that? Either on that particular fetter of doubt or on the five hindrances in general?

The practical consequences of doubt are, of course, lack of commitment, such as where there is faith there is commitment. If we go back to the original Pali, doubt is vicikiccha, which is not just doubt, not honest doubt as in fact this text reminds us, but it's almost an eagerness to doubt or perhaps l should say a readiness to doubt, so that you can avoid commit, a sort of culpable doubt, an excuse for indecision.

Sagaramati: It's almost an emotional state, a feeling.

S: Yes, I won't believe because if, I believe then, I'll have to do this or do that. It's almost a stifling of your own faith sometimes.

L It's in degree it approximates to the - or maybe not in degree but to the second fetter, and it's based on therefore wrong personality views or on personality ...

S: Well, it's certainly connected with it. But doubt as one of the [236] fetters is something much more radical than doubt as one of the hindrances. Doubt as one of the hindrances is more the doubt that you feel with regard, say, to the possibility of getting into a dhyana state. And your own capacity to do that and even doubt with regard the master's capacity to help you to get into it or even the existence of that dhyana state at all, in this way you've got doubt in the Dharma. Because the Dharma tells you that there is such a higher state but you start doubting and questioning that. So if you are embarking on the practice of dhyana and you don't believe in your own capacity to achieve the dhyana states, nor do you believe in the capacity of the teacher to show you the way, nor do you in fact really believe the Dharma when it tells you there is such a state, you're not going to be very likely to be able to practise dhyana. [laughter] So here the context is more specific. But you could say that it is limited just to the possibility of dhyana experience as far as you are concerned; that is, doubt as one of the hindrances. But doubt as one of the fetters relates to the possibility of definitely transcendental attainment, to the possibility of enlightenment itself. It's the same kind of thing but in much more radical and thoroughgoing form, much more deep rooted. Here it's sort of unwillingness to commit oneself to attaining the dhyana states, but in the context of the ten fetters it's the unwillingness to commit oneself to enlightenmment itself.

Lokamitra: So there wouldn't be a difference in kind, it would just be in degree?

S: It's almost a difference of kind in as much as the object, if you restrict the two contexts quite strictly, the objects are different. In one case it's dhyana which is a conditioned object, a mundane object, and in the other it's nirvana or Enlightenment, which is a transcendental, unconditioned object. But perhaps one shouldn't, you know, take all that too literally, that is, the doubt that you experience in connection with the practice of dhyana, the doubt that you experience in connection with one of the five hindrances, is directly related to

doubt that you experience as one of the ten fetters. I don't recollect that this topic has ever been discussed anywhere in Buddhist literature, not that I've met with any such discussion anyway, but to me it seems that the doubt that is one of the ten fetters is much more radical than the doubt which is one of the five hindrances. [237]

It's almost your reluctance, even your unwillingness, to believe in further possibilities of experience, higher dimensions of experience, which again is connected with, as you said, ditthis, which is the unwillingness to accept the possibility of radical change in yourself. Perhaps we'd better end there because we've had a longish session so far, nearly half past, so I think high time for lunch. [238]

S: Page 455, Regulating and Readjusting. All right, let's start reading and read the introduction and section one which pertains to eating. According to Luk the full title is regulating food, sleep, body, breath, and mind. So let's read first about regulating food and then stop and discuss it.

Vessantara: [reads from p.455] "When we, the followers of the Buddha, began to learn the practice of Dhyana, we do so because we wish to put into practice all of the teachings of all the Buddhas of the ten quarters, past present and future. We should, at the very beginning, besides desiring to attain supreme enlightenment, make an earnest vow to emancipate all sentient beings. Our purpose to do this should be as firm and unchangeable as is gold or steel; we should be energetic and courageous even to the sacrifice of our lives; we should never be turned aside or backwards even after we have attained all the Buddha Dharmas. Having made this vow in ass sincerity, we may sit up with right thoughts, contemplating the true nature of all things, merit and demerit, memory and forgetfulness, the false consciousness that arises from the sense perception of objects, and from the process of the mind, all kinds of impure out flowings of the mind and evil passions, all the laws in the triple world of cause and effect, of birth and death, and doing and not doing, are not within the grasp of the mind. This is written in 'The Dasa-bhumika Sutra' which says:

"'There is nothing in the triple world but the operation of our own minds. When you realize that there is no personality in your mind then you will recognize that there is no reality in things as well.'

"If our thoughts do not become attached or influenced by things then action, deeds, birth and death, all cease and never have been. After recalling all these things, then began the real practice of Dhyana in accordance with the orderly stages given here."

S: I think we'd better stop there and consider that part of the section. It's as though the Grand Master is saying that we're about now to start on the real meditation. Whatever we've done so far has been of a preliminary nature. Let's just recapitulate. First of all we've ensured good external conditions, we've made sure that we're observing the precepts, for instance, and then we've ensured a sufficiency of clothing and of food and some shelter in which to practise dhyana. One has given up all worldly entanglements and one has cultivated

association with the right kind of people, with kalyana mitras, one has done all that, and then again one has stood guard over the gates of the senses, one's practised mindfulness with regard to sense impressions and, going even further than that, one has at least temporarily suspended the operation of the five inner hindrances. So now one begins to approach meditation in the real sense, begins to approach higher states and stages of consciousness. At this point, before we start getting really into meditation, the Grand Master gives us a sort of reminder with regard to our practice of meditation, what we are really trying to do, why we are meditating, and he says, "When we, the followers of Buddha, begin to learn the practice of Dhyana, we do so because we wish to put into practice all the teachings of all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, past, present and future." In other words we practise Dhyana as a means to Enlightenment in the fullest possible sense, and of course he goes on to mention in this connection this whole practice and teaching being within the Mahayana tradition. He goes on to mention the taking of the Bodhisattva vow. For most people at this stage this would be no more than just a recitation of verses embodying or expressing the vow. It wouldn't be a genuine [239] experience of the Bodhicitta. But in the most ordinary and simple terms it means that when one embarks upon the theory and practice of Dhyana, one reflects that one does this, one is practising the Dhyana for one's own benefit and also for the benefit of all other beings. This doesn't amount to the arising of the Bodhicitta, obviously, but it is a step in that direction, and having done that we remind ourselves that through the meditation everything becomes possible. "Having made this vow in all sincerity we may sit up with right thoughts contemplating the true nature of all things, for all things, merit and demerit, memory and forgetfulness, the false consciousness that arises from the sense perceptions of objects and from the process of the mind, all kinds of impure outflowings of the mind and evil passions, all the laws in the triple world of cause and effect, of birth and death, and doing and not doing, all are now within the grasp of the mind." That is to say, the meditating mind. Once you start upon meditation then everything becomes possible, every kind of realization and insight into truth becomes possible.

Vajradaka: Isn't that sometimes confused with - what people sometimes say is, oh, we can do anything, we can become anything, we can do anything, you know, whereas perhaps what they really mean is you can experience any kind of insight or vision?

S: I'm not quite sure what you're asking.

Vajradaka: It's like mixing up mental freedom with physical freedom. People think that they can - listening to the tape of the last seminar where Devaraja was talking about being able to do anything, and I was thinking about that in relationship to this where the Grand Master says you can do anything or you can experience any realization if you meditate. I thought that maybe there was a confusion between the mental kind of freedom that the Grand Master is talking about and the kind of physical freedom that Devaraja was talking about.

S: I don't quite remember the context of the discussion. My feeling is that the

context of the discussion was more in terms of energy: that is your energy was liberated you could turn it in any direction you thought it proper to turn it in. That's as far as I remember. So that wouldn't be, then, all that different from [240] what it says here. I don't think that the context of the discussion suggested that one would be able to do, could do, anything that one wanted in just an ordinary worldly way. Certainly at the time I didn't get that impression.

I'm just wondering why the Grand Master introduces this particular point here. In a sense it seems almost premature, but there must certainly be a reason for it.

Voice: Inspirational?

S: Inspirational? It's understandable that before embarking upon the serious practice of Dhyana, if you are a follower of the Mahayana you should increase or renew your vow, or at least your aspiration to gain Enlightenment for the benefit of all. This is a quite customary procedure before any Mahayana spiritual practice or exercise. But then the Grand Master goes on to say, "having made this vow in all sincerity, we may sit up with right thoughts contemplating the true nature of all things" which suggests a sort of, well, vipassana almost, but here you haven't yet even embarked on meditation proper. It's as if perhaps you're reminding yourself of what does lie ahead, and perhaps you could say in the context of our own experience and practice, you're reminding yourself it is a transcendental attainment that you're after, not just a sort of freeing of your energies in the mundane sense, not just peace of mind in the psychological sense, but something very much more than that. You're reminding yourself that meditation is the way of seeing things as they are. That, through meditation, transforms your mind, and by transforming your mind you just see everything in the world differently.

Let me just look at Mr Luk's translation [this transcript is taken from the text and not the recording, which is unclear] "While sitting in dhyana he should give rise to the right thought about the true reality underlying all dharmas, that is, all about good, evil, and neutral things; about the internal sense organs, external sense data, and false consciousnesses; about all earthly troubles and afflictions; and all causes and effects of births and deaths in the three realms of existence which are created by the mind." It sounds as though this is a sort of preliminary meditation or, as it were, a preliminary vipassana, but as such seems in a way rather out of place. Perhaps we should remember that these were originally given [241] as lectures and perhaps at this point the Grand Master went on, you know, a little bit more than he intended to, as it were.

And what about this verse? This verse is really important. So important that one can hardly see how it comes in here strictly speaking if we are following, as it seems we are, the path of regular steps; the verse from the Dasa-bhumika: "There is nothing in the triple world but the operation of our own minds. When you realize that there is no personality in your mind then you will recognize that there is no reality in things as well." This is quite straightforward Buddhist teaching, especially Yogachara teaching. Whereas Luk translates: "the three

worlds are not elsewhere, they're created by One Mind. If the mind is known as being without nature, the unreality of all things is exposed." This is in fact saying that subject and object are not only interconnected, they're complementary. You don't have subject without object, you don't have object without subject, but in meditation, when you practise meditation, especially when you practise and experience vipassana in its more, as it were, Yogachara form, then you are dissolving the subject, that is your point of attack, you're dissolving the subject, and because you dissolve the subject, the object also is dissolved.

What do you mean by dissolving the subject? You see, as it were, that there is experience without someone who experiences. Just as we saw some time ago that your body comes into contact with his stick and the result is that pain arises, yes? So that's all you need to say, just leave it there, don't think in terms of my pain, or I am suffering, or he is making me suffer. In dependence upon the collision between my body and his stick, suffering arises. This is all that actually happens. So you apply this to your entire mental life for instance when you're guarding the gates of the senses, you're watching the sense objects impinge on the senses, you watch sense impressions arise, you watch mental states arising in dependence upon those sense impressions, but there's no need to bring in an "I", as it were.

Vessantara: ..[unclear].. trying to do this in practice and ending up in an entirely alienated state.

S: Hmm, yes. This is why it seems to me in a way as though this is a little out of place, as though it comes in rather too quickly, [242] rather too soon. It seems here to be more like a sort of reflection because the Grand Master does say, "after recalling all these things then begin the real practice of Dhyana in accordance with the orderly stages given here." But the way it's expressed it does suggest that one is expected to have some degree of actual insight.

Padmapani: But surely, Bhante, if one has gone through all these, you know, traversed all these conditions which he said, you know, one should have done, one would be in a very very positive and light and meditative state. Maybe it wouldn't be so premature in a sense if one has traversed these and the inner hindrances. . .

S: One still isn't absorbed, one is still not into the ..[unclear].. dhyanas. One is just in a sort of purified, ordinary state of consciousness. Whereas this verse suggests there is a very high degree of insight as it were. But perhaps this isn't to be taken too seriously. For instance, "having made this vow in all sincerity, we may sit up with right thoughts contemplating the true nature of all things." Well, if one takes this word contemplating at all literally then what is referred to is the practice of vipassana. The other translation says it would give rise to the right thought about the true reality underlying all dharmas.

Ratnapani: ..[unclear].. the word, 'contemplating' is merely having a think about and took it to mean that its slightly inspirational, and also getting guidelines

just so you keep your mind wide when you're doing this practice, from the very beginning.

S: Hmm .. yes, perhaps it is to be taken as being more of the nature of an inspirational reminder. Perhaps in that case we'd better just go on and not spend any more time with it.

Lokamitra: What is the Dasa-bhumika?

S: This is one of the Mahayana sutras which describes the ten bhumis, dasa-bhumika means pertaining to the ten bhumis or ten stages of the Bodhisattva's progress. [243] All right, let's take it then that this [is] meant as a sort of inspirational recollection, or reminding of oneself as to why one is embarking on the practice of meditation at all. If we take it any more seriously than that it seems to interrupt the progression by way of the path of regular steps. All right, let's go on then to the fourth heading.

S: [reads from pp.455-6] "Now let us consider the fourth heading - what is meant by regulating and readjusting? It may be likened to the work of a potter. Before he can begin to form a bowl or anything else he must first prepare the clay - it must be neither be too soft nor to hard. Just as a Violinist regulates the tension of the different strings - they must be in perfect tune - before he can produce harmonious music. So it is just the same in our case. Before we can control our mind for the attainment of enlightenment, we must first regulate and adjust the inner conditions.

"To be able to secure the right regulation and readjustment of conditions for our practice of Dhyana there are five lessons to be learned. If these lessons are learned and applied, then Samadhi can be easily attained, otherwise a great deal of difficulty will be experienced and our tender root of goodness can hardly sprout."

... 'The first lesson relates to ... (page 456 paragraph 3 and 4) ... These are the teachings of all the Buddhas.'

S: In the previous chapter, when food was mentioned - or rather the one before the last chapter, when food was mentioned, it was with reference to the actual obtaining of a supply of food in a way that was easy and in accordance with right livelihood and that did not disturb one's practice of meditation, but this particular section refers to the actual eating itself and the actual kind of food that you should eat.

So the first principle is not too much and not too little: the middle way. This particular translation goes on to speak of repulsive food, Luk's translation speaks of impure food. I'm not quite sure what he by that: "impure food causes confusion of the mind and its cognition." And then he goes on to speak of unsuitable food. Unsuitable food presumably means food that is not suited to our particular constitution or the digestion and so on. Well, that's quite understandable but it's not quite clear what is meant by the food that is impure or repulsive. [244] [Tape 10 Side B]

Voice: Could that be bad food which would make you ill?

S: That would be unsuitable food, I suppose. If we eat repulsive food, our minds will be disturbed and our understanding confused. If we eat improper foods, we invite sickness in our sense of purpose. So impure food or repulsive food seems to be food which could upset the mind, but it's not quite clear what is meant by that. It might have some reference to indigenous Chinese beliefs about different kinds of foods and their effects, that is quite possible.

Vajradaka: Referring to yin and yang. If you take a food which is too yin or yang it affects the mind.

S: Hmm, yes, it could be a reference to that kind of thing.

Lokamitra: I thought improper foods would invite sickness, by inviting sickness you're sort of opening yourself up to ... you're not actually going to be ill I suppose ...

S: But you may well be.

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: Or you run the risk of...

Lokamitra: So, sort of, improper foods would seem to be things which had no goodness in them exactly and rather negative elements.

Voice: Unbalanced diet.

S: Yes, well, what I'm getting at is that one sentence seems to refer to food which physically upsets you, the other to food which mentally upsets you. I'm just wondering how that is possible that food should upset you mentally? What is in fact being referred to?

Padmaraja: It could be overstimulating.

S: It could be overstimulating, yes. [245]

Buddhadasa: Garbage. It might be quite good food, say, scraps off a rich man's table, but it might generate resentment, having to do it.

S: It could be that except that the other translation is impure foods. It could be repulsive.

Voice: I wonder if food also includes drink.

S: I rather think it does include drink. I think it is food and drink.

Voice: Maybe it just means food that has gone off.

S: But then that would upset you physically and that is provided for by a separate sentence.

Voice: Meat would upset the mind?

S: I think it is taken for granted that you will be a vegetarian anyway, and alcohol, I think, will not be regarded as food or drink in that sense. But it could refer either to repulsive food in the quite literal sense, the food that you got by begging that was so repulsive that you became mentally disturbed or mentally upset, or it could refer to things like tea or coffee which overstimulated you and excited the mind, bearing in mind that the Chinese were great tea drinkers. But the important principle is of course that we should regulate and adjust food in accordance with the requirements of meditation, that is to say with regard to the kind of food that we eat and how we eat it, that we shouldn't be too full, shouldn't be empty, shouldn't eat food that upsets us either mentally or physically. This is the regulating and adjusting with reference to eating.

Padmapani: It might also mean the preparation of food.

S: It could also apply to that, yes. This is really an important point, that it has been found in many traditions and in fact is emphasized in many traditions, that if you are leading a somewhat refined spiritual life and are in a condition perhaps of some mental and spiritual sensitivity, you should be very careful from whom you take food or who cooks your food. Have you heard anything about this before? [246] I've spoken about it once or twice, yes? And therefore in some traditions it's said that if you're practising meditation intensively or any kind of spiritual practice intensively, rather than run any risk, it's best that you prepare your own food. Then your food is, as it were, impregnated with your own aura as it were, without putting too fine a point upon it. It is as though the mental attitude of the person preparing the food affects the food.

This might sound a bit far fetched but there does seem to be something in it quite definitely, and food that is prepared with care and with some affection does you more good than food that is prepared unwillingly or even with resentment. I sometimes refer to some stories of Strindberg in this connection, I don't know whether you've heard of them, but Strindberg apparently had this sort of thing rather on his mind, and in several of his stories there's the theme of the housekeeper or cook who is employed by the family but resents it and really hates them, and the food that she cooks for them doesn't ever do them any good. It's apparently quite nutritious but owing to her terrible hatred and the hatred that she, as it were, puts into the cooking and into the food, they just all waste away while she gets fatter and fatter. It's rather strange that he should have picked up this idea as it were quite intuitively.

Padmapani: Sometimes it's said that a person who for a particular purpose is preparing food, may feel quite negative, should have a mantra, should repeat the mantra while preparing food. If a person's feeling good then I suppose they don't have to.

S: Hmm, but it' no use repeating a mantra mechanically, but you have to put yourself in a good mental state. This is why it's sometimes said that in Zen monasteries in Japan that the cook was one of the most important people and usually a very old, experienced monk who was very good at meditation was

given the post of cook, presumably for that sort of reason.

There's also the quite important point at in most primitive cultures and in all the traditional civilizations there are restrictions about women preparing food at the time of the monthly period. Did you know about that? This is quite universal and this is presumably because at that time they're very often in a disturbed mental state and therefore they're not permitted to prepare food at that time. So these sort of things are not observed at all in modern civilizations. But the general principle [247] quite clearly is that food should be prepared by somebody in a positive mental state. This applies all the more definitely if one is practising meditation.

Too much food will clog the system and too little will only weaken us, so we follow a middle path as regards quantity, we eat food which is pleasing to us within reason, which has the right kind of mental and physical effect.

Anybody got any actual experience with regard to this matter, the effect of food on the mind in connection with meditation etc?

Ratnapani: On retreat once, I was in a pretty peculiar state of mind, I never have worked out what it was or where it fits in but I felt, after a meditation anyway, very high and very good, very happy, and food was brought round and there was a bit of a conflict and a large part of me didn't want the food, didn't want to eat anything at all. It wasn't just the quality, it just didn't seem appropriate to have food. But did eat it, it was put in front of me and I wasn't quick enough to say no and just ate it and felt all the clarity just drop away with the imbibing of the food at that moment ..[unclear].. almost a physical feeling as the clarity left.

S: This is how you very often feel when you're on a fast. When you stop taking food for a while, food becomes almost repulsive. It seems very gross and coarse and when you start eating again after a fast it seems very odd and strange that you should be taking this gross coarse stuff and sort of putting it into your system. It seems a very artificial sort of procedure and you have to get used to doing it again. It's almost like sort of putting dirt into your mouth. It may taste quite nice, but there's a certain loss of refinement as you start eating it.

There is this old myth or legend that we get in the Buddhist scriptures and other sources about the early beings who were mind made, no gross physical bodies, who had - well you could say even subtle material bodies, who could move about freely in space, I think the legend goes on to say that as the centuries rolled by and as the earth started developing, a sort of savoury scum appeared on the surface of the earth and it let off a sort of fragrance, and these [248] spirits, or as it were spiritual beings or at least fine material beings, they sensed this, and they smelled it, and they hovered over it, and they started inhaling it and drawing in the nutriment, and then their bodies started becoming more and more gross and solid until they ended up with gross physical bodies, gross material bodies, and they were the ancestors of the present race of men. So one can understand how this might have been from these sort of experiences with food. Taking in

food definitely makes you feel - I mean taking it after a fast or after meditation - definitely makes you feel sort of grosser and heavier and more physical, more material, more solid, and you lose something of your refinement.

Vessantara: I find especially in London an awful lot of unmindfulness with regard to food in general because everybody is doing such a lot [very unclear recording, something about rushing off to the centre before it's digested] [laughter] I became quite ill three or four months ago.

S: I have I think mentioned this already, that as and when we get started at Bethnal Green all that should change. There should be proper meals, properly served with enough time to eat and digest and then take their class. If necessary the whole sort of timetable should be changed. Do as they do in New Zealand: a sort of wonderful late afternoon tea, a sort of supper about five or half past five, you know, have that, a sort of leisurely sit down, eat the meal quietly, you know, then have a friendly chat with the other Order members there and a cup of tea afterwards and then, having rested a little and digested a little, go downstairs and take your class. But certainly hastily swallowed snacks and rushing off to take a class, this is quite inappropriate.

Vessantara: I found two things when I had this trouble: one thing is I stopped eating sweet things and it seemed as if sweet things did make my strength of purpose fail rather and I became stronger I cut them out. The other thing was how I eat. Yesterday we were talking about people in cities experiencing but not experiencing. It was very much like that: you kind of eat but you eat so fast, you've taken it in, the process has happened, but you don't necessarily know that it's happened and somehow don't derive any benefit from it. Like when I started eating more slowly and kind of chewing over my food, I started chewing over the rest of my experience and became more aware of it. [249]

S: I think one should also try to avoid some kinds of restaurants and cafes that are all very crude and noisy and bustling, the slamming down of crockery and the smell of cooking. It's really quite awful. Without being too precious try to avoid that to a great extent.

Padmapani: I suppose the ideal situation would be to grow our own food.

S: This is what I've been urging upon some people, yes. And cook our own food, have our own restaurant, at least our own canteen. I hope that the new centre, whether at Bethnal Green or elsewhere, will be a model in this respect, and when I come down from Norfolk I shall expect to be able to walk into the dining room at about five o'clock in the afternoon and find a very beautiful meal laid on, with everybody sitting quietly eating prior to going downstairs to their class or, you know, doing something else of that sort. There will have to be someone in charge of all that, a proper housekeeper, a proper cook, or at least, you know, a cooking rota just like we have here, so that it's all done in a quiet and orderly fashion, otherwise it's ridiculous, you know, [unclear ... something about hasty snacks] and then going off and taking a meditation class. So if we can, the whole daily programme must be reorganized to make this sort of living possible. Even

change the times of classes if necessary so that we do everything in the right way. Right. So that's regulating and adjusting or readjusting food. Let's carry on to the next one now.

Vajradaka: [reads from p.456-7] "The second lesson relates to the regulation of laziness and sleep. Sloth is one of the besetting hindrances and no indulgence should be allowed it. If we give to sleep we shall be wasting time that might be given to our practice or that might better be employed in industry. Too much sleep brings dullness of mind, and drowns our good qualities in deep seas of gloominess. We should recollect our impermanence and make good use of the time by restraining our laziness and sleepiness. By so doing the brain is refreshed and the thoughts purified, and as we realize Samadhi the heart will be at rest as in a holy sepulchre. In the sutra it is written:

" 'In the evening and after midnight you will not forget the practice of Dhyana' Just because it natural to be slothful and sleepy we ought not to spend our lives in idle comfort - such a life is vain and fruitless. We should remember that that conflagration of impermanence is sweeping over the world and we should not yield to sloth and sleepiness in seeking deliverance." [laughter]

S: Hmm, I think that's pretty obvious isn't it? So what is he in fact saying? He says too much time is spent in sleep, but the Grand Master doesn't mention any precise number of hours. Anybody got any ideas on this?

Ratnapani: Too much is more than the minimum with which you can possibly [250] maintain your health. Too much is more than that minimum.

Buddhadasa:I think it depends on whether you have a routine or not. If you have a routine you need less sleep, if you don't have a routine. you need more sleep.

S: Why do you think that is? Or do you think that really is so?

Buddhadasa: I think it is so because if you have a routine not too much energy is taken up in worrying about how you organize your life. You just go along smoothly in a smooth way so you don't use up too much energy. If you have no routine you use up a tremendous amount of energy.

S: You would use up a tremendous amount worrying, but you wouldn't use up a tremendous amount just if you thought about organizing your time.

Ratnapani: Perhaps if you used the word organized and disorganized life, you do waste a lot of energy, and that's what's tiring is wasting energy not using it. I think a routine will help if one has a tendency to be bit disorganized.

S: It's not the actual working that tires you. It's just, in a way, not being able to work, frittering away time, you feel more tired in that way, therefore you need more sleep, and to have an organized routine enables you to work more, and in that way you need less sleep.

Lokamitra: The routine is the structure.

Padmapani: I would have thought that how much sleep you need depends on the individual because every person has their own sort of metabolism and some people need more sleep than other people.

S: Well, this is why Ratnapani says that for many monks you needed to maintain your inner state of healthy functioning.

Padmapani: Well, I'm taking [it] from this thing about after midnight, I don't know quite what he means by this. [251]

S: That's a little ambiguous. "In the evening and after midnight you will not forget the practice of Dhyana." I think this refers to the tradition, the practice, in the Chinese monasteries, that they had an evening meditation and then there was a sort of intermission, and then they had a very late night one before they finally retired to sleep. That was held after midnight I think.

Padmapani: This is basically to do with the system as it was then?

S: Mmm, I think so. Luk's translation isn't at all clear.

Lokamitra: It wouldn't just mean that those were the times when one naturally was very tired and even then one's got to watch it?

S: Some people are of the opinion that you should meditate when you are tired. You will be able to break through it and get your second wind as it were, but obviously this isn't for beginners.

Abhaya: Do you think that a particular time of day would be conducive to good meditation than another?

S: Well, traditionally it's dawn, dusk, and midnight. And certainly at dawn and dusk there seems to be a sort of freshness - well certainly at dawn - a sort of freshness and stillness in the air. It has something to do with - well, one can only call it the metabolism of the earth itself. I don't know in quite what technical terms to put it, but there are, as it were, certain influences, certain vibrations, given off by the earth very early in the morning which have a very sort of freshening effect upon the mind. There's a sort of still atmosphere. And at dusk there's certainly something rather soothing and calm which you certainly don't get during the day. And at midnight of course everything is very very quiet. So perhaps these times are good, without being too rigid about it, but maybe also people find for them individually that certain times are better than others, and if they do they should stick to those times.

Padmapani: Is that's what's meant in the ..[unclear].. the Pali Canon, the different watches of the night, or is it just regulated clock time? [252]

S: That's just regulated clock time. This is the tradition of those days. As far as I remember it was three watches during the night and three watches during the day, six in all I think, four hours each.

Vessantara: One has to sleep. I don't quite know how to put it. I find I have very powerful dreams which have a strong effect, but some dreams, as it were,

I'm more conscious of than others. I wonder if there's some way in which I can turn that into a practice or if there's something I could do which would facilitate my awareness.

S: There is of course the whole question of dreams because you sleep not only in order to rest your body but also in order to be able to dream. So if you deprive yourself of sleep, you're not only depriving yourself of rest but also depriving yourself of the possibility of dreaming. And it seems - we aren't quite sure about this, we don't really know - but it seems that one of the functions of dreaming is to sort out the impressions that have come in during the day.

So if you have had rather a lot of impressions coming in and have had a rather sort of interesting and adventurous day with many changes, you need to be able to dream to sort of sort it all out. But presumably if you've been leading a quiet, meditative sort of life, restricting the impressions coming in, you have less need to dream. It certainly is known, if you need less sleep, presumably partly because you don't need so much to dream, and also you don't need to rest very much because, you know, you're getting energy from the meditation itself.

Ratnapani: I think the worst part of sleep that is the most counter-productive part for ..[unclear].. is the early morning, lying when you're not getting up.

S: Hmm.. because usually you wake up when you've had enough sleep. If you sort of close your eyes and go back to sleep, as it were, that usually doesn't do you very much good, and you get up after that feeling less fresh than you did when you originally woke up. But that is sort of self-indulgent sleep, it doesn't do you any good, it even does you harm perhaps.

Ratnapani: Yes, a tremendous amount of harm. [253]

Sona: [Something almost inaudible about getting up at half past four and it affecting the digestion during the rest of the day].. Mind you that's because it's broken a routine.

S: It might adjust itself if you had a little sleep in the afternoon, and after a while perhaps you wouldn't need that.

Ratnapani: I found that gradually happened. I've been getting up an hour or a bit more than an hour earlier than I used to and it took quite a time to get used to it. Often I'd feel very very tired an hour or two after getting up, and sort of crawl back into bed again but it didn't take very long to readjust and I had a doze in mid afternoon. That's stopped now ..[unclear]..

Lokamitra: The most important thing I find is going to bed at a certain time, at a regular time. If I go to bed later than that but still get the normal amount of sleep I'm so tired the next day, so it's very important. . .

S: Well, that is probably because the sleep before twelve o'clock, according to the old beliefs, does you more good than the sleep after twelve. So going to bed at the right time usually means going to bed early. If you go to bed at a

different time from usual it's usually not going to bed earlier than you usually do but later than you usually do, so you miss out on that kind of sleep.

This is why it is quite good in a retreat centre or a semi-monastic centre to have a regular programme or a regular routine. Otherwise it is very difficult or practically impossible, to get seriously into meditation. One can do a bit, but to get into it properly you probably do need to have the support of a definite routine.

So onto breathing, three, four, and five in fact.

Voice: [reads from pp.457-8] "The third, fourth, and fifth lessons relate to the right control of the body, its physical state, its breathing, and its mental state. They are to be considered as the beginning, the middle, and the ending of one regulation.

"In order to concentrate the mind in Dhyana, we must first regulate the condition and position of the body, then of its breathing, and finally of its mental states. This means that before we begin Dhyana we must keep close watch over our physical activities and states, such as walking, working, standing, sitting, etc. lest we become over tired or exited and our breathing become rapid and forced. The mind then will be in no good condition to begin practice. It will be disturbed, vexed, clouded, and far from tranquil. We ought to take precautions against such a state at all times whether we are expecting to practise Dhyana soon or not, so that our mind will always be fresh and transparent and in good condition. But especially before beginning Dhyana, we should take careful thought as to the condition of the body. We should also take careful thought as to the place where we are to carry on the practice. We should find a place that will be free from disturbance and that would not offer any unnecessary difficulties to the practice.

"Next we should consider the position of the body. We should cross the feet with the left foot on the right draw the legs close to the body so that the toes are in line with the outside of the thighs. This is the half position. If you wish to take the full position, simply place the left foot on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh at right angles to each other. Next we should loosen the girdle and arrange the garments so that they will not become disarranged during practice. Next we place our left palm upon the right hand, and we place the hands on the left foot, which we draw close to the body. Next we straighten up the body, swaying it several times to find its centre, the backbone neither too bent nor too straight. Next we straighten our neck so that the nose is in a perpendicular line with the navel. Next, open the mouth and breath out all bad air from the lungs slowly and carefully so as not to quicken the circulation. Then close the mouth and breath in fresh air through the nose. If the body is well regulated, once is enough, otherwise, do it two or three times.

"Next close the lips with tongue resting against the upper palate. Close the eyes easily simply to shut out unnecessary light. In this position, sit firmly as if you were a foundation stone. Do not let your body, head hands or feet, move about.

This is the best way for regulating the body for the practice of Dhyana. Do not be hurried about it nor unduly sluggish."

S: I think this is quite straightforward. I think everybody ..[unclear].. this, in fact. Any query on that so far? [254]

Vessantara: ..[unclear]..put much emphasis on the actual physical posture ..[unclear]..

S: It seems to be much more Japanese than Chinese. In fact probably the Chinese attached a bit more importance to it than even the Indians did. The Indian tradition seems not very much concerned with the details. Perhaps the Indians found it easier to meditate. The Grand Master here seems to follow a sort of middle way. He's not insisting upon too many things to be remembered but he's certainly insisting upon a reasonable attention to things like posture and breathing.

Lokamitra: The ..[unclear].. insists on putting one leg on the other. I can't remember which it was but not the other way round, and one hand upon the other.

S: It's mainly which feels comfortable and right for you and some people have very definite feelings about this. One feels definitely wrong; the other feels definitely right. I don't know whether it's got something to do with whether you're left handed or right handed. It could even have something to do with that.

Padmapani: I feel that when one gets into a Dhyana state, one can feel the ..[unclear].. and somehow the ..[unclear].. seems to sort itself out, because something is moving...

S: Also you see with old Buddha images sometimes the legs are one way round and sometimes the other way round. There doesn't seem to be a hard and fast rule. The Indians always emphasize whichever is comfortable and easy and feels right. That seems to be their quite firm criterion.

Vessantara: [Something about the half lotus ... unclear]

S; And one is going to sit a very long time without moving if one can manage the lotus, the full lotus posture. If one can, and one wants to sit for a long time, then that's best obviously, but if you can't it's best to adopt some other posture rather than have your practice ..[unclear].. and so on. I do feel that some at least of the Zen people make it an end in itself. [255]

That seems quite unnecessary. I remember Ann Parks telling me that when she was in the States she was quite horrified by the way in which some Zen teachers made their students sit, and according to her from a physiological point of view it was all wrong and they were doing great damage to themselves. She said that some had even deformed their spines with deliberate wrong sitting. Not that they deliberately sat in the wrong way. They thought they were sitting in the right way, and the teacher thought she was getting them to sit in the right way,

but according to Ann Parks they were only deforming their spines and she was quite alarmed and concerned about it.

Lokamitra: As far as I can see, in many cases it doesn't help most people's backs. And you can see some people suffering and ..[unclear].. and some people will always be healthy and have a good back.

S: She examined apparently some people's backs and found they definitely had deformed their spines and were suffering pain but they firmly believed that is was doing them good, and they were doing the right thing, and this was a Zen tradition and they wouldn't change or correct that. So she just had to leave it.

Voice: I think she was referring to that Zen practice of pushing in the small of the back with a great deal of pressure, which weakens the vertebrae considerably.

S: I think actually she did mention that.

Lokamitra: I'm talking about much more generally, you know, ..[unclear]..

Voice: There doesn't seem to be much that can be done about it really, except being as careful as one can.

Lokamitra: A certain amount of awareness on the back would help a great deal, because then you would be able to feel when it's getting rigid or when it's getting ..[unclear].. and so on ..[unclear]..

Voice: You could always take up yoga.

Voice: [something about Enlightenment; several unclear remarks]

Lokamitra: It's a bit like restlessness and anxiety. Until you actually become aware of it, until you actually start practising things, you don't [256] become aware of it.

S: All right, on to number four.

Voice: Let sleeping dogs lie. [laughter]

Padmaraja: [reads from p.p.458] "The fourth lesson relates to the regulation of breathing. Breathing may be divided into four kinds - blowing, panting, audible and silent, only the last of which can be said to be in a regulated adjusted state. By blowing is meant that we feel our breath being forcibly sent through the nose. By panting is meant that our breathing is too hurried and hard. By audible is meant that when sitting we can hear a faint sound of the breath as it passes through the nose. If we were standing or working we would not notice it, but in our practice it is enough to distract the mind. By silent breathing is meant that there is no sound, no compression, no force, simply the slightest feeling of the tranquillity of our breathing, which does not disturb the mind but gives to the mind a pleasant feeling of security and peace. Blowing disturbs concentration panting gives it heaviness audible breathing wearies it. We can attain Samadhi only with silent breathing.

"This then is the lesson concerning breathing that we are to learn at the beginning of our practice of Dhyana. Wear loose cloths, let the wind blow over and refresh the body; imagine that every pore of the body is participating in the breathing. Let the breathing be neither forceful nor hasty, let it be gentle, natural and deliberate. By doing so the mind will be clear, sickness will be avoided, and there will be enjoyment in the practice and a successful issue from it." [257]

[Tape 11 side A]

S: This seems quite clear.

Vajradaka: It's interesting he says imagine you're breathing in through all the pores of the body. That's I think a very basic healing technique, that you imagine the breath coming in from all directions, in through the skin bringing awareness to the body.

S: Or bringing energy.

Vajradaka: Yes, right.

S: There seems to be perhaps a touch of Taoistic traditional and ..[unclear].. Chinese yoga here. As far as I recollect this is never mentioned in the Indian sources.

Buddhadasa: Is there any one cause for very severe laboured breathing?

S: Well one can say in a general way that the type of breathing is very definitely connected with the mental state, leaving aside some purely physiological obstruction, and that breathing is definitely a key to mental states.

Buddhadasa: In one case in Brighton a person's breathing was so laboured that it disturbed other people in the class. I haven't done anything about it yet.

S: Would you say from your knowledge of that person that they were at all mentally disturbed?

Buddhadasa: In some respects, yes. There's a sort of section, a compartment, that's sort of very disturbed.

S: You could get them to practise by themselves deep breathing, deep and mindful breathing.

Buddhadasa: As a sort of physical exercise?

S: Hmm, yes, because it has its effect on the mind, the breathing in and then out sort of very slowly and deeply and mindfully. [258]

Buddhadasa: Maybe yoga might not be a bad thing for this person.

S: Very likely.

Buddhadasa: Do you do breathing exercises in yoga?

Sona: Deep breathing?

Lokamitra: Not so much with beginners, but one becomes much more aware of one's breathing process.

Sona: But deep breathing?

Voice: Yes.

Lokamitra: It certainly helps.

Ratnapani: ..[unclear]..

Buddhadasa: There's more to it than that.

Ratnapani: I find that I still can't let go of my breath during the mindfulness of breathing. I still tend to control it. I've been trying not to control it for four or five years or something, and there's still a tendency to hang on to it. Have you got a technique for letting go of it?

S: In that case, if you find it difficult, it's best when you're doing the mindfulness of breathing not to do the fourth stage, to go from the third stage to a mantra recitation so that concentration is on the mantra and you forget about the breath, and then the breath will become, you know, quite refined of its own accord and you won't be aware of it at all.

Ratnapani: What I usually do is just more of the third stage than anything else, just the third stage really.

S: Well, you can always, as I said, go on to the mantra practice. This applies to the mantra practice generally, it's quite good to go on to it from the third stage of the mindfulness of breathing, cutting out the fourth stage of the mindfulness.

Ratnapani: Doing just the third and the mantra would be OK? [259]

S: Well provided you could get straight into the third, you know, which mostly people can't. They need a little, you know, sort of warming up exercise by way of the first two stages.

Sagaramati: So .. going to the mantra from the second?

S: Third, sorry.

Sagaramati: Oh, third.

S: That is following the ..[unclear].. Do stage one briefly, then stage two briefly, more time on stage three, and then go straight into the mantra practice. This is a quite good sequence.

Lokamitra: Could someone who hasn't received any tuition do this or. . .

S: I wouldn't suggest it. This is within, you know, the context of the Order. I think for those who are either mitras or friends, it's not good to suggest any variation or departure from the standard procedure because, you know, the main thing with beginners is to get them regularly practising in a particular way, and

some may be just, you know, only too ready to take advantage of doing things in a different way.

Lokamitra: I'm just asking about mantras in general because sometimes, you know, people think it's all right to suggest to people that they chant a mantra, and - I think Easter retreat - they did the Shakyamuni chanting in the walking and so on, and I just wondered ...

S: I heard about that and I was quite surprised, and I suggested not to have any such experiments; that in the walking and chanting it's the 'namo tassa', and I see no reason at all for sort of changing that. One certainly shouldn't just sort of experiment, there's no need for that.

Lokamitra: We shouldn't encourage mantras at all then among Order members?

S: No, because it's very much the path of irregular steps then and we're trying to encourage more the path of regular steps.

Sona: [unclear. something about chanting a mantra at the end of the puja] Is that mainly limited to Order members? [260]

S: Well this again raises the whole question of the puja itself, whether the Sevenfold Puja itself shouldn't be confined to the Order or to special occasions. This is something we'll be discussing at the Convention. All right, that seems to be fairly clear. Let's go on to number five.

Abhaya: [reads from pp.458-9] "The fifth lesson relates to the regulation and adjustment of the mind. There are three stages of this regulation, in entering Dhyana, in practising it, and in retiring from it. In entering Dhyana the mind is to be brought into an empty and tranquil state. The uncontrolled and half-unconscious current of confused and vagrant thinking must be brought to a stop. Second, these vagrant thoughts must be prevented from again arising and all bad states of mind, such as discouragement or aimlessness, or lack of control, or too great tension, are to be avoided. Let us speak more at length about these bad mental states that are to be regulated and adjusted. When we are sitting erect and perfectly still the mind very easily falls into drowsiness and becomes inattentive and the head nods. At such moments it is advisable to focus the minds attention on the tip of the nose but still keeping the mind empty and tranquil. This will prevent the mind from sinking into discouragement or aimlessness. Again, when we are sitting erect and perfectly still the mind very easily passes out of control and drifts about. The body becomes lax and all sort of vagrant thoughts and pass away. At such times it is advisable to focus attention on the navel, which tends to unify the mind and prevent confusion. So long as the restless activities of the mind are brought to a standstill there will naturally be tranquillity. That is, if our minds are regulated and adjusted there will be neither sinking nor drifting about."

S: Now this isn't to be taken too literally, in a sense. There are these two, as it were, opposite states. These are sometimes considered the two main obstacles to concentration, that is to say, the state of dullness and drowsiness and the

state of wandering thoughts, drifting and distraction. So the Grand Master here suggests that if the mind is dull and we're tending to nod off, then we should focus the attention at the tip of the nose. Now what do you think he means by this? Do you think this is to be taken literally?

Abhaya: Why not?

S: Hmm, yes. Do you think he means the exact tip of the nose just in that sense?

Padmaraja: He means probably in the sense that we do it.

S: Hmm, yes, in the sense that we do it, as the fourth stage of the mindfulness of breathing, because if you're doing, you know, it's quite hard to concentrate on that sensation, so if you're making an effort to do that, to fix the mind on that sensation, then this counteracts the tendency to drowse.

Abhaya: So that's good to do, whatever practice you're involved in?

S: If you find that you're becoming drowsy. But there are alternative methods which I sometimes mention, that is, that you should keep the eyes open and focus on the flame of the lamp, say, on the altar, or the glowing tip of a stick of incense. Light is supposed to be stimulating. Or even meditate in a light rather than in a [261] darkened room.

You notice, no as it were concentration exercises mentioned at this stage. Perhaps the practice of the mindfulness of breathing would include this, as it were, focusing on the tip of the nose, which would preclude the drowsing. Then what about the focusing or concentrating on the navel? What do you think that means?

Ratnapani: You feel the breath at its lowest point which also brings attention to how centred the body is physically, which l think tends to help to centre one mentally.

S: Hmm. This is connected with the practice of concentrating on the hara, not so much the navel itself, but the space four fingers breadth below: that whole area. Once again navel is not to be taken literally here. So what does this mean? First of all one has to understand why there are all these wandering thoughts. Why do vagrant thoughts arise and pass away? What is happening?

Padmapani: You're up in your head.

S: Yes, but some people are sort of overactive mentally. They can't stop thinking. Do you know what I mean?

Several voices: Yes. [laughter]

S: So, you know, as Padmaraja put it, they are too much in their heads. So how do you get out of your head? Or, at least, how do you come a little way down? Well, there is this definite exercise in the Far Eastern tradition, as far as I know it's not part of the Indian tradition, but it's certainly quite helpful, that is, you usually feel your consciousness as up in your head, don't you? You usually feel as though you are looking out through your eyes and down at yourself, so you

are up here, your consciousness is up here. But in this particular exercise or method you try to pull your consciousness down and feel that you are here in that space below the navel, and as it were looking up as well as down In other words you pull your consciousness down, you try to feel that you are here, not here, in that space below the navel. You're centred there, not centred up here in your brain. So if you can do this, and it's not difficult to do this, it's quite easy. [262] Then, of course, those wandering thoughts will tend to subside and you'll feel very sort of centred, and not only poised but stable, and you'll even feel a sensation of sort of warmth. You can feel it either in the hara itself or even in the whole body, a slight sensation of warmth and a certain sort of comfort and repose. It's quite a pleasant sensation and this will counteract the wandering thoughts, if you're hyperactive mentally.

Ratnapani: Could one recommend this to ordinary friends in the centres?

S: I think one can. I think I have done so sometimes, yes.

Sagaramati: Mr Chen mentions this in his little book on ...

S: Hmm, ah, does he? I'm sure I must have discussed it with him. We had lengthy discussions on all these sorts of things. He's very well versed in that.

Padmaraja: Is there any connection between that and big-bellied Buddhism?

S: I don't know. Suzuki gives a much more sort of profound metaphysical interpretation. According to him the Chinese believe that the belly is the seat of wisdom, so a big belly means much wisdom. But I don't know, I think this is rather fanciful.

Ratnapani: I thought of it as a combination of rather a god of plenty who had been Buddhafied. That's the story I heard.

S: Well, there are several stories, probably all of them wrong and all of them right. [laughter]

But probably most people find, at some time or other, either that they're sinking or they're drifting; either that they're nodding off to sleep or becoming quite distracted. These are the two great enemies of concentration and meditation. So in the one case either intensify your practice of the fourth stage of the mindfulness of breathing, or gaze at a light, or in the other case pull down your consciousness quite deliberately from your head to your belly.

Vessantara: Do you think that this pulling down of consciousness can be [263] useful at other times apart from this?

S: Use it whenever you feel you're getting much too much into your head. And you can imagine yourself as it were grasping your consciousness, even your brain if you like, and just pulling it down, and you have to sort of feel it coming down like that until you've got it here, and you feel that 'I am here now, I'm not up there, and I'm looking up there and looking up at my head.' [laughter]

Padmapani: Sometimes I get this experience of having had some experience of this practice, when I do this, when I come out of my head, I become quite sort of cow-like, quite sort of domesticated and docile and [laughter] you know, put up with a lot of abuse because I'm not really sort of not very alert. Sometimes it has the opposite effect: I come out of my head and usually I'm not so angry or haven't got such a lot of hatred, and I'm not so on the ball intellectually. But then I become quite happy but not very sharp, perhaps sort of dull, sort of dull witted.

S: Well, you shouldn't overdo it obviously. [laughter] It's just a sort of antidote for a certain condition, not to be made sort of one's regular daily practice or anything like that. But one would just have to see the effect on a number of different people. Some might indeed become docile and cow-like but others might just have their natural sort of fieryness slightly tempered.

Padmapani: I don't want anybody to get the wrong impression.

S: All right, let's go no then.

Buddhadasa: [reads from p.459] "As to the aspect of over strain, by this is meant that, because of our earnest effort to practise concentration we overdo the matter and use wrong means and the brain becomes tired and possibly there are fatigue pains in the head and chest. At such times we should relax our effort slightly and give up trying to forcibly eject the vagrant thoughts, letting them pass away more naturally, which they will do if for a moment we focus the mind on the navel."

S: He says, "For a moment we focus the mind on the navel." Well, it isn't quite so easy as that even though it isn't particularly difficult. You may have to spend about five to ten minutes drawing down the consciousness from the head to that space below the navel. It's not just a question of thinking of the navel.

Nagabodhi: And during that time one gives up any thought of carrying on with the practice. [264]

S: Yes, right. Then you go back afterwards, you know, when you've refreshed yourself a bit.

Buddhadasa: [reads from pp.459-60] "As to the aspect of too great looseness of mind control there is likely to be dullness and dispersion of attention, the body will lose its erectness, the mouth will open and the saliva drivel and sleepiness will overcome it. On such occasions we should renew attention and effort toward mind control by which the mind and body will be mutually helpful in attaining success. To attain this success there must be a progressive advance from a state of physical activity to a state of mental tranquillity. Just as the breathing is to become gentle and inaudible, so the current of the mind's activity is to become gentle and unnoticed. Just as we regulate the activities of the body, so are we to regulate and adjust the activities of mind until there is tranquillity and peacefulness.

"In the second teaching of the fifth lesson - regulating the mind as it abides in Dhyana - we are to employ three kinds of regulation. We are to use our brain to concentrate our mind at every moment of our sitting, and we are to use skilful means for extending the sittings from one hour to two hours, to four hours, to even six hours out of the twenty-four. To be able to do this we must have perfect control over the condition of our bodies, our breathing, and our minds, and must be able to regulate and adjust these conditions so that they will be in the best condition during the whole progress of the sitting. If, during the progress of the sitting, we become conscious that the body has relaxed into a loose or strained state, or a slouching attitude, we should immediately regulate and restore it to its former erect and attentive state. We have to do this again and again. Then, our body may be erect but our breathing may be wrong, constrained, panting, or audible. We must correct this at once, until it is gentle, continuous and silent."

S: Hmm, this isn't all, of course, so difficult and complicated as it sounds. If one is having recourse to the mindfulness of breathing practice and does it correctly, all this will happen quite automatically.

Nagabodhi: Interesting: it's six hours out of twenty-four. It doesn't really seem such a lot.

S: It's quite modest. The Grand Master seem quite moderate in all his demands. He seems very much to follow a middle way, and don't forget the T'ien-tai school was a sort of portmanteau school, it was an ecumenical school. It recognized all sorts of practices. It didn't emphasize simply one. It was very interested in dhyana and through that had its connections with the Ch'an school later on. It also was quite sympathetic to the recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha. It was also very much into study of the scriptures and expositions of the scriptures. So presumably the Grand Master has in mind the case of a monk devoting quite a bit of time to meditation but not excluding other practices. This has probably a representative Tien-tai monk who spends a certain amount of time each day in a monastery meditating, a certain amount of time reciting the name Amitabha, a certain amount of time attending to the works of the monastery. Again a certain amount of time studying, listening to lectures and so on. So probably it's within that sort of framework. I rather suspect that the sort of idea or tradition of full-time meditation came only later with the Ch'an school. The more balanced practice seems to be some meditation, some devotional practices, some study and so on, some physical activity even, not just meditation all the time.

Ratnapani: Yet the preparation, as we saw yesterday, a lot of preparation was appropriate for full time dhyana.

S: Yes, yes.

Ratnapani: I suppose they're doing no harm even if they're only doing six [265] hours a day.

S: Hmm, right, and presumably the conditions which are ideal for meditation

are also ideal for study.

Ratnapani: Except for not studying.

S: Well not studying in the more sort of academic way. If you just very mindfully go through a sutra, it can be encouragement or even provide a basis for the practice of vipassana. And don't forget many monks in those days learned the texts by heart which they could call to mind at that particular stage in their practice when they were trying to develop vipassana. All right, let's go on.

Sona: [reads from p.460] "Next, though both body and breathing may be regulated, the mind may be drifting, or sinking, or it may be too lax, or too constrained. As soon as we become conscious of it, we should again bring it in to adjustment as before. For the regulating of these three, body, breathing and mind, there is no fixed order, we should simply regulate and adjust whichever and whenever we notice anyone of them to be in an improper state."

S: These suggestions apply to any particular method you may happen to be practising whether it's the mindfulness of breathing or the metta or whether it's the mantra recitation. If you find that your posture has slackened or that your breathing has become disturbed you should adjust that whatever practice you are doing.

Vessantara: I used to find that my back, as soon as I got concentrated, my back kind of dropped, and so I had a decision to make whether to sit slouched and concentrated or more concentrated or upright, working at being upright and not really being fully concentrated.

S: If you were really concentrated you would sooner or later spontaneously be upright.

Sona: [reads from p.460-1] "As long as we sit in practice we should keep body, breathing and mind in perfect control and harmonious adjustment. If this is done there will be no relapses and no hindrance to the certain attainment of enlightenment.

"In the third teaching of the fifth lesson - how to withdraw from Dhyana - there are three things to be attended to. First, we should gently relax the mind, open the mouth and exhale the air as though to empty it from every part of the body and arteries and veins. Then we should move our body little by little; next our shoulders, hands and neck; next our feet until they become flexible; then gently rub the body; next rub the hands until the blood circulates warmly; and not until then should we open our eyes and rub them with our warm hands."

S: This suggests you've been sitting for a long time and really have become stiff and perhaps your circulation has stopped. But even if that hasn't happened the principle holds good that you emerge from the meditation gently, by easy stages, not abruptly. [266]

Sona: [reads from p.461] "Finally, sit quietly for a moment or two and then get up quietly and go away. If we proceed otherwise, if we break in suddenly upon

our meditation and hurry away, the conditions of the body in Dhyana being different from the conditions of active life there will be a disharmony, perhaps a feeling of headache or of paralysis in the joints, which will linger in the mind as a feeling of annoyance and uneasiness that will prejudice the mind against a following sitting. Therefore, we should be attentive and careful in retiring from the practice. As we retire from a state of minimum activity of mind back to maximum activity of the body we should do it gradually and thoughtfully, carrying over into our ordinary life the practice of concentration of mind. There is a stanza that refers to this:

"'You shall not only make rules for sitting, but you shall make rules for the retirement from sitting so that there will be no jolt between the minimum activity of the mind and the maximum activity of the body. You should be like a good horseman who has perfect control over his horse.' It is also written in the 'Lotus of The Wonderful Law Sutra:'

" 'For the sake of the enlightenment of all the Buddhas, the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas assembled here have devoted their lives with zeal and perseverance. They have experienced the hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of Samadhis as they have entered Dhyana, abided in Dhyana and retired from Dhyana. They have attained transcendental powers, have practised the practice of Brahma for long periods, have studied all the scriptures, for innumerable numbers of thousands of myriads of kotis of aeons.' "

S: Now this all seems quite clear and straightforward and more or less a matter of common sense one might say, this regulating and adjusting, and it seems to apply to the practice of any particular kind of concentration method. '

Sagaramati: This bit about the disharmony, I've noticed a couple of times here, especially after a good sitting, you come down to practice time and you feel a sort of annoyance going on, like an irritation, and it's happened after having a good, pleasant sitting.

S: I think it is because the energies that are around aren't very as it were unified. I don't mean as far as oneself is concerned personally, but the sort of total energies in the house. Yes? So that when you come down from the meditation then you become more exposed to those. I think this is what happens.

Lokamitra: I've experienced for instance, not here but often, especially after metta, a very good metta practice and then coming down and hating everybody. [laughter]

S: Ah, no, that's rather different.

Lokamitra: No, but being...

S: Well that's a change in your state of mind.

Lokamitra: But in a way this is true, isn't it?

S: No, but from what I understood from what Sagaramati said, he comes down and presumably, owing to external factors, a change takes place in his mind.

Sagaramati: Yes, probably if I went outside and walked around it wouldn't happen. [267]

S: I take it this is what happens when other people's energies are quite scattered and are therefore not in harmony with yours which are not scattered. I think it is mainly that.

Sagaramati: I was perhaps a bit extreme on that. [laughter]

S: No, the parallel would be that if you had had a successful metta bhavana and came downstairs and found people all in a very sort of quarrelsome and resentful frame of mind, and that jarred with your experience.

Lokamitra: This is the sort of thing I'm meaning, but I find it ... that won't affect me if I'm really careful about coming out of the meditation. When I first read this it helped me quite a bit. It made me much more aware of how I came out of the meditation, and so even things like this wouldn't jar so much.

Ratnapani: A way of coming out which I found extremely painful - and it's happened a few times - is one gets to when the hour's up and then it's breakfast time or lunch time so that in fact you leave the meditation you're motivated by greed or by some other want rather than that the process has ended and now you're leaving and that I find very painful.

Voice: It seems once again that the place where scattered energies express themselves most is in the kitchen, particularly around times like cocoa and things like that and I think perhaps we do have to be careful.

S: And of course it isn't only actions, it's also thoughts, it's also mental states. If anything the thoughts are mote important and can be even more disturbing when the energy is scattered. I find hat there's a lot of sort of loose scattered energy - I don't know whether anybody's noticed this - when there are children around. Have you ever noticed this? Yes. It's almost as though they give off quanta of energy which is then sort of floating around almost in the atmosphere. It's quite odd. As a lesson to some extent that anyone who is scattered does it and this disturbs the harmony of the atmosphere and these lumps, as it were, of energy that have broken loose and are not integrated but just floating around. They do sometimes have a very disturbing effect, and it was occurring to me that probably lumps of energy of this sort, of a rather heavy nature, is responsible for poltergeist phenomena, because we know that poltergeist [268] phenomena usually occur with disturbed adolescents.

Abhaya: What do you mean? Poltergeists are the ghosts of disturbed adolescents? [laughter]

S: No, oh no. But, you know, poltergeist phenomena I mean, you see [laughter] there's a bit of scattered energy now, you see, yes? Well first of all what does poltergeist mean, poltergeist means a playful spirit. The original idea was that

a playful spirit was responsible for these manifestations, but now we know that that isn't so. But supposing objects start moving about, supposing a chair sort of jumps up and down or a book flies across the table. This is a poltergeist phenomenon. It has been found that these sort of phenomena only take place in the immediate vicinage of adolescents, or almost always adolescents, who are mentally disturbed in some way. It's very often repressed resentment and so on. And so therefore it occurs to me that these just scattered floating lumps of dissociated energy, you know, that I was talking about, as it were become more powerful, more condensed, and could be the same sort of energy that produce these sort of poltergeist effects. It's the same ..[sentence obscured by aircraft noise].. and sometimes, even though nothing happens physically when people are a bit disturbed or energy is not integrated, you feel these sort of currents in the atmosphere as it were, you feel the loose energy and you know that things aren't harmonious, and it's this scattered, loose, unintegrated energy which sometimes almost literally seems to dissociate itself from the person, you know, who originated it. It gets sort of out of control. I've experienced this for instance many times on retreat.

Lokamitra: I hadn't heard what you were saying about openness, but there one or two bits I gather come in here, that is, if you are open but if you've come out of a good meditation and there are these influences, not very strongly, but just there, you can cope with them because the openness is an outward turning thing, but if you're not careful it becomes an inward turning thing, and then you become sensitive to them and carried away by them almost.

S: But if your positivity is a strong outward going force, then you can almost incorporate these fits of energy and make use of them yourself as it were, but if for any reason that isn't [269] possible, then you feel it as something disturbing.

Lokamitra: one's had a good meditation and does come into a situation like this and it sort of happens, myself, I find, as I said, it's carelessly coming out, it's sort of...

S: Yes, too abruptly.

Lokamitra: Yes and just not being aware of what's going on.

Sona: I can give you a case in point. I've got a brother-in-law. He's not a Buddhist but he's practising meditation and his mother called him down to eat and he immediately came out of what he was doing and fell down the stairs and struck his head. But I think that's quite possible if the telephone went or something, a knock at the door and you suddenly got up to go and see to it, you could he unbalanced.

S: Well, you have to take reasonable precautions beforehand to make sure you're not disturbed by interruptions of this sort. All right, that's the end of the main section. Let's stop for our coffee.

[end of volume 1]