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

[271] [Tape 1 Side B]

S: Alright then, let's go on to Chapter Five, 'Expedient Activities of Mind.'

Nagabodhi: [reads from pp.461-3] "In practising Dhyana the mind should be possessed by five expedient activities or states. The first of these is an activity of wishfulness or purpose. It is wilfulness in the sense of paramount desire, or preference of directive control. If we are to attain the object of Dhyana, we should wish and purpose to avoid all false and worldly thoughts and hindering states of mind and all confused and shifting attention, and should take the attainment of the object of Dhyana, namely the attainment of tranquillity, of transcendental knowledge and wisdom, the mind's paramount desire and purpose. The Lord Buddha said: 'Of all your good qualities, a wishful purpose is the principle cause.'

"The second expedient activity of the mind is characterized by an earnest and zestful spirit. It means to keep the Precepts with a persevering earnestness of spirit: it means to give up the five hindrances, and to persevere in our practice with wholehearted zeal both in the evening and in the early morning. If you were trying to get fire from a twirling stick you would not expect to be successful if you did it intermittently; you must persist with increasing effort until the fire comes. So you must seek enlightenment with the same earnest zeal.

"The third expedient activity of the mind is mindfulness and recollection. It means that we should always keep in mind the emptiness and deceptive aspect of the world with all its fraud and suffering, and should always cherish thoughts of the nobility and value of the enlightenment that comes from the practice of Dhyana. It is noble because it leads to the highest attainment of realization, and wisdom and compassion. It opens up the capacity of the mind for the enjoyment of the highest powers of cognition; it gives one an intuition of the blessedness that follows the extinction of the intoxicants, it enables one to realize the highest joy when perfect wisdom is devoted to the deliverance of all sentient beings. This is what is meant by recollective mindfulness.

"The fourth expedient activity of the mind is keenness of insight. We should ponder over a comparison of the enjoyments of the world with those that come with the practice of Dhyana. We should think with penetrating insight as to whether there is a loss or gain, as to whether the gain from the practice of Dhyana is inconsiderable or of the highest importance. The delights of the world are elusive and delusive; one needs keenness of insight to judge them rightly. The world's fascinations often obscures it suffering and unreality. If we consider it carefully and truly we are bound to see that desire for the world and its illusions is a loss and not a gain. On the contrary, the same keenness of insight will convince one that the practice of Dhyana brings one inestimable gain of intuitive realization and transcendental intelligence that are free from all intoxicants and are unconditioned. To live in a quiet and secluded place, to feel free from the bondage of life and death, its unhappiness and suffering, to sit quietly in Dhyana, is of highest importance and value. Keenness of insight will keep these differences

clear before the mind and will aid one in the earnest practice of Dhyana.

"The fifth expedient activity of the mind is clearness and singleness. It means that we should understand clearly the true nature of the world as being pain producing and abominable and at the same time, we should know well that the tranquillity and intelligence of the mind brought about by the practice of Dhyana is very precious and honourable. With this clearness and singleness of mind we should determine unreservedly to practise Dhyana with our mind as resistant as gold or diamond, so that we will be able to resist and cast off all evil influences of Devas, Maras, and Thirthakas, which might tend to discourage us. Even though we are unconscious of any marked success in our practice, clearness and singleness of mind will keep us from neglecting the practice or from turning back. A man before he begins a journey will have a clear idea as to where and why he is going and then after that, will not be easily turned aside, so a man in his practice of Dhyana should have a clear and single mind, if he is to hope for success."

S: So it seems that even though here we are concerned with the Path of Regular Steps and the practice of dhyana by regular steps. The Grand Master is not in fact giving a step by step account of actual practice. He goes back a little bit it seems, and he approaches the subject from a slightly different angle, and this is what it seems is happening here.

So this is, as it were, quite general. "In practising Dhyana the mind should be possessed by five expedient activities or states." This isn't, as it were, an actual step. "The first of these is an activity of wishfulness or purpose. It is wilfulness in the sense of paramount desire, or preference of directive control, if we are to attain the object of dhyana, we should wish and purpose to avoid all false and worldly thoughts and hindering states of mind and all confused and shifting attention, and should make the attainment of the object of Dhyana, namely the attainment of tranquillity, of transcendental knowledge aid wisdom, the mind's paramount desire and purpose. The Lord Buddha said: 'Of all thy good qualities, a wishful purpose is the principal cause.' "

The Sanskrit word here seems to be pranidhana, or rather the Chinese word in the original seems to correspond to the Sanskrit pranidhana or vow, because according to Luk's translation "vow" is referred to here - "a vow to keep from all worldly wrong thinking," and as the Buddha said, "A vow is essential to all excellent Dharma." In other words, it's as though it's not enough to want to practise dhyana, and probably this applies to the whole spiritual life: it's not enough just to want to, one must, as it were, will to, one must have a very definite, firm, decided resolution and even commitment, the sort of resolution and commitment that is [272] expressed by the word pranidhana, which is literally vow. We must vow to do it, as it were, not just want to do it. So unless you're really determined to practise dhyana, really determined to develop tranquillity and insight, you won't be able to succeed very well. If you just want to, that isn't enough, or if you just like to, that isn't enough; you must really determine to and decide to, which doesn't just mean a sort of forcible effort on the part of the

conscious mind but really an aligning of all one's energies behind that particular activity when you are actually engaged in it. So this is quite important. And obviously it does relate to this general question of mobilization of energy and, you know, very often we don't succeed in doing something, we don't succeed in some undertaking, because we merely want to do it or merely would like to do it or merely would like to have it done but there's no actual determination or resolution to do it. But it should be done and that's very often why we don't succeed. So "Of all thy good qualities, wishful purpose is the principal cause."

There's probably quite a bit that could be said about this particular expedient activity not only from the standpoint of dhyana but even quite generally.

Lokamitra: How much can we expect that people taking refuge? Is this a part of going for refuge, or is this an essential aspect of going for refuge, in our context?

S: Going for Refuge should be an expression of this, yes, really. It's not just a question of repeating certain words. In other words the Going for Refuge should be the expression of a real determination not of a pious wish because you say, 'For refuge I go' and going means going, or getting up and going, if you like, but certainly going, moving.

Lokamitra: This again brings up the question of people on the fringes of the Order who don't feel this and how to cope, how to help them by ..[unclear]..

S: I've been thinking about this from time to time obviously. I think in the case of those who for quite a long time have not given much evidence of their commitment, after a few sort of initial gentle friendly attempts at encouragement and getting them involved [273] they should be more or less directly, you know, in a friendly way but still firmly, certainly very directly, be confronted with their shortcomings and, as it were, not allowed to get away with it. I'm feeling this more and more.

Vajradaka: It does seem to work, and if they agree to that and agree to do something about it then you have to in a sense commit yourself to working with them. And sort of keeping that push in a way.

S. Also of course if you adopt this attitude it does show concern for them and that is very often felt and experienced, that at least someone is concerned about you and somebody cares, you know, whether I'm involved or not. But obviously you have to be a bit careful some times that the person concerned doesn't feel that he or she is simply being got at and retreats, you know, even more firmly into his or her shell. Sometimes, perhaps, you have to risk cracking the shell. But I think what cannot be tolerated is a state of indefinite stagnation, with people simply offering weaker and weaker excuses at longer and longer intervals. [274] [Tape 12 Side A]

Padmapani: This heroic quality, sometimes it's lost in the culture outside. You know, the sort of, what you see in literature now is almost the anti-hero quality and I think people have become conditioned to that and they've lost their hero imagery, and sometimes it's very hard to get back into that and maybe the

Friends don't, sort of, except for maybe one or two people have a very strong hero imagery for people to get into that which is lost.

S: Well, what do you mean by hero imagery?

Padmapani: Well, a sort of a princely quality, a person that's, you know, intelligent and strong and at the same time is receptive.

S: Do you mean that there aren't enough of these people around?

Padmapani: Yes, I think...

S: Well, that's exactly what we're complaining about. But obviously,..

Padmapani: I'm talking about the Order.

S: Well, so am I. This is just exactly what we're trying to sort of encourage: that those who are at the present conducting themselves in an extremely unheroic manner, to say the least of it, should be encouraged to conduct themselves in, as it were, a more heroic manner and take a more active part and live up to their commitment more and give it a much more adequate expression. It's this that we're talking about.

Padmapani: Do you sort of see that the people who we attract to the Order are basically a reflection of the Order?

S: Not necessarily a reflection, but could be even complementary some times, but certainly connected.

Buddhadasa: Have you got any suggestions, Dave, how you might attract somebody in this heroic ideal? [Padmapani (Dave) had not been ordained at this point, he was ordained three weeks later. tr.]

Padmapani: Well I would say, well, personally my interests only came up just a few months ago [275] when I was listening to Bhante's taped lectures on the Bodhisattva ideal. I thought that really sort of brought in the heroic aspect, and I think sort of that getting in touch with that stirred something in myself and made me commit myself to becoming an Order member or asking for ordination.

S: You don't have to be so careful. [laughter]

Padmapani: Nice to know I'm among friends. [laughter]

S: I hope you haven't ever had any doubts.

Padmapani: Well, I did at one time.

S: We'll let you off that. So do you mean then that, quite apart from the actual behaviour of Order members whether heroic or otherwise, that in the teaching side, as it were, we should hold up, say, the Bodhisattva ideal prominently or emphasize it more? You don't think we do that sufficiently?

Padmapani: I feel in a way there are so many different paths in Buddhism because it's such a big culture in a way, you know, in the full sense of the word,

that maybe, I think, the Friends [i.e. FWBO] ought to concentrate on one or two areas or maybe even just one area for a particular space of time and see how that works.

Vajradaka: I think if they do, depending on the person, the main personality in any particular centre, or personalities in the case of... because I think that personalities do have a big influence and their particular approach to the Dharma has an influence on that particular centre as well.

S: I think you have to be careful not to be so bodhisattva-like and so heroic that others feel that they can't possibly follow in your footsteps. I remember sort of being given a slight shock in this connection many years ago when I was relatively at the beginning of my career, as it were, when I was in Kalimpong, when I started up activities there, that some [276] of my students one day said they might have thought of becoming monks if they hadn't met me. So I said, well, what do you mean by that? And they said, oh, you're so capable, you can write articles and you can write books and you can give lectures and you can organize meetings, we couldn't do anything like that so we feel quite discouraged. So I think that one has to look at that side too. So that although it's good to present the Bodhisattva ideal as an ideal, a sort of archetypal ideal, not make people feel that so much is going to be demanded of them that they couldn't possibly live up to the demand and therefore feel quite discouraged, as if it's not for them but only for the very, very, exceptional and heroic people. Perhaps it's more a question of a general inspiring and encouraging and positive atmosphere.

Padmapani: Yes, I meant it in the sense of saying it as an ideal and then hoping it sort of permeates the Order so that it brings out these qualities in certain individuals which haven't come out before.

S: Yes, right, I think that as regards actually studying the Bodhisattva ideal in the more traditional form, probably this has to be confined to the Order where it may be properly understood. But if you start telling the ordinary person, well this is the ideal that we uphold, that you should be a Bodhisattva, what does that mean? For hundreds and thousands of lives, you know, you're going to devote yourself to Enlightenment and you're ready even to go to hell for other people. It's going to take you three kalpas, you know, to fulfil this career, maybe tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of lives, and you'll never be weary the whole time. Well, obviously this is really going to stagger and shake some people. It might inspire a few, but the majority might be put off. So I think the more traditional formulation of the Bodhisattva ideal should and could be studied within the Order itself where, as I said, it may be properly understood, and I think outside the Order and in the context of the Friends and the Movement and so far as the general public is concerned we just have to present this very affirmative and positive and inspiring sort of attitude and approach, which may well of course in our own case be derived from our study of the Bodhisattva ideal in the traditional form. But certainly we need something very positive and affirmative to attract people of that sort. But also we have to be careful that we don't show so much strength that we start attracting weak people who just

want to [277] hang on to us and not themselves become strong, who just want to be sort of, well, parasites practically. Maybe they can come along but they must be encouraged to stand on their own feet as soon as possible. If they come along with the intention of being parasites and remaining parasites then they must be discouraged.

I think it's just the more positive, affirmative atmosphere and spirit that is abroad in the movement that's the most important, with or without explicit reference to the Bodhisattva ideal. I mean, more of the Bodhisattva spirit around.

Lokamitra: You know, I won't talk in terms of the Bodhisattva but this thing about seeing strength around... I think that's really attracting people in London at the moment. You know, they're seeing that we're really...

S. Well I include strength when I say affirmative and positive. I am thinking of things like strength also and positive energy, creative energy.

Lokamitra: But at the same time people do... You'll always get this I think, people almost condemn you for doing so much because they don't know their own mind enough to know what they should be doing, so they think perhaps they should be doing what you're doing and won't be able to and can't.

Abhaya: This seems to trouble you a lot though. I mean what you say...

Lokamitra: I just come into contact with a lot of this all the time, you know.

S: It was some time ago when, I think it was, you wrote and said that, you know, people were making a distinction between coarse energy and fine energy, and those who were organizing things and getting things done, they were obviously operating on coarse energy, and those who weren't organizing in that way were operating on more refined energy. This kind of distinction and implied criticism was going around some time ago, so I heard. So probably that's why you feel sort of faintly bothered.

Lokamitra: It's just like a lot of things. I'm sure that Buddhadasa and [278] Vajradaka feel the same. In London you just feel that a lot of things are directed towards you.

Buddhadasa: This is where patience is an essential ingredient, I think, in people who take activities in a front manner, lead a group. You sense people are just watching and waiting.

S: Well it's an occupational hazard. [laughter]

Buddhadasa: They're not doing anything at the moment but one day they will.

Lokamitra: No, it's different from that. It's not so much from non-Order members that I feel this sort of, if you like, often to do with parental negativity but it's from...

Buddhadasa: I'm not just thinking of non-Order members, but recalcitrant Order members. We must be patient to a certain extent and trust that our example of energy will get through to them in the end, because it's not what we say that has much effect, it's what we do that has the greatest effect.

Lokamitra: I accept that entirely.

Vajradaka: One of the lessons that I learnt very quickly in Glasgow was that if I gave the Glasgow centre a big shake up, I gave myself a big shake up as a consequence to that, because if I shook everything up there, everyone else would start shaking everything else and I would be part of the thing being shaken. So if you're going out and being really very kind of dynamic and energetic and shaking everything up then it's quite natural that you're going to be shaken up too.

Lokamitra: [Inaudible comment.]

Vajradaka: No, I don't mean it in the negative sense, I mean shaken up in the sense of having your ideals questioned, which does seem to happen. [279]

Buddhadasa: You have to learn... I think this is going to be with you the whole of your spiritual life. I think it's a problem you just have to live with. You must come to terms with that problem.

S: I think the main point that occurs here is that one doesn't really expect this problem in connection with those who, in principle at least, are as committed as you are. It's alright to have it with the outside world, you're quite prepared for that, but you feel rather sorry when you have to have it at the very heart of the movement itself and there you're not getting the kind of cooperation or at least understanding that you have a right to expect.

Buddhadasa: This is where I sympathize completely with Lokamitra. But there again you can see that somebody after, say, having gone for refuge, did have a great deal of enthusiasm and a great deal of energy going in that direction and just suddenly burns himself out and has to undergo a tremendous realignment before renewed energy will come forth.

Padmapani: Can you go into that? I mean I didn't understand. What do you mean burn themselves out?

Buddhadasa: Well, it's as though their original emphasis to go for refuge was not very deep and it very quickly disappears and they have to tap deeper for greater resources of energy within themselves before they can renew that commitment, but they have already...

Padmapani: It's as though it's meant in a sense they come up with so much resistance all the time.

Buddhadasa: I think it's when people are in this sort of dangerous state that they can tend to feel tremendously inadequate by the display of energy in other

people and you have to go quite carefully against this. I'm a great believer in kicks up backsides. [laughter]

Padmapani: [Inaudible comment] You do tend to manifest that sort of quality. [Further inaudible comment]

S: Well, there's no abstract noun for it but... describe it. [280] You were going to say something?

Vajradaka: Yes. the balance between this kick up the backside and seeing that when people are in this kind of state where this energy has run out, their impetus has run out and they feel cudgelled, bludgeoned. It's like a balance. One has to be aware that in a sense it's not their fault, you know, it's just like a watershed where they have to fill up again, or like they're going to the reservoir to get that impetus again and one just has to sort of not compromise with oneself, not make sure that oneself isn't as energetic as one could be but just a bit careful, I think, of how one treats them.

Lokamitra: I don't agree that it is entirely... that they have to... I can't remember exactly what you said there... as if they couldn't do anything else. I think a lot of people could do a lot more.

Vajradaka: I didn't say they couldn't do anything else. It's not entirely their fault. That's what I said. I'm sure they could do a lot, but the fact that this kind of lack has happened, you could say ultimately it's their responsibility, it's their fault, but sort of on a more kind of practical level it's something which is...

Buddhadasa: But going to the reservoir, stopping and going off to the side or going back to this reservoir sounds a bit dubious to me.

Vajradaka: No it's just trying to gain an impetus in what you're doing, not necessarily going to the side, I don't mean it in that way, but it's more taking in than giving out at that particular time. Although they may be giving out at that particular time, although they may be giving out but not with such dynamism and effectiveness as someone who's really in the flow and getting it on.

S: But sometimes they don't see it as clearly as that because if they saw what really had happened and that they need to go to the reservoir then they'd go off into solitary retreat or do more study, but that isn't usually what happened. You know, they not only deny anything has happened but even deny in some cases that there's anything wrong, and then it becomes difficult and then perhaps the skilfully administered kick in the posterior region becomes appropriate. [281]

Lokamitra: I think it's that. It's skilfully administered, and it's also a kick.

Padmapani: I presume from about this time onwards, so to speak, this thing's not going to occur so much because it seems to refer to the Order members who've accepted the mitra to be ordained didn't know what they were doing, in the sense that they didn't realize that the person was truly committed. I mean to say if they burn themselves out so to speak, it just proves they... I mean

they might be... it seems to reflect the state of the Order; either that or people are being accepted too quickly for Upasaka ordination.

S: Hmm, yes. There's also the point that as the movement itself grows in strength and in velocity, as it were, the demands made on those who come in also increase, in a way, and some people who sort of came in a few years ago might not be quite prepared for the demands being made on them now. They haven't realized in fact that this is what their commitment implied. I used to say, in fact I used to complain some years ago - I haven't had cause to complain for a few years now - that people didn't believe what I said, they didn't take me seriously, even some Order members. If I said something they would not believe that I really meant it. And it's only after a few years that some of them have started to realize that I did in fact mean what I said, but at the time they couldn't believe that I meant what I said even though I said it many and many a time. But in the case of some of the older Order members, it's coming home to them that I did in fact mean what I said, and some of them in fact don't find that realization very comfortable. But those who come in later, well they know from the beginning, you know, they seem to have better knowledge of me in a way, and also the Movement shows the basic intention much more clearly, they know that I do mean what I say. But the older Order members, in some cases at least, didn't really believe that I meant what I said. But at least now the movement itself is sufficiently developed and solid to show that, well, we all mean what we say, but then it was only my word, as it were, because there wasn't very much actually existing, and just my word they found very difficult to accept in some cases, and to believe that I meant what I said, but now it's much easier to sort of say that I mean what I say, because [282] you know, the Movement is there as it were to prove it.

Padmapani: I suppose in the beginning it was inevitable that it had to happen like that, you know, you ordained was it twelve or thirteen people in the beginning realizing that out of all those twelve maybe only, I don't know, maybe half or quarter would stick through it so to speak.

S: Well, I hoped that everybody would. I mean I always hope in that way, but still it was the beginning and I think quite a few didn't know what they were letting themselves in for, and when they started seeing, started withdrawing. For instance, when I spoke of ordination or Going for Refuge in terms of commitment no one took me seriously at all or hardly anyone. It was just Bhante's fancy way of explaining it. You know, finding a nice English word for the old Pali word. But by commitment, I meant commitment, nobody really understood in those days. And in those days if I had spoken, which I never did, in terms of having Centres overseas in other countries, they would have all laughed. They wouldn't have thought it possible. They had no idea they were committing themselves to something which was going to develop to that extent. Even in terms of, you know, giving up full time jobs, taking up part time work, though I spoke in those terms from the beginning, though I spoke in those terms even when I was at Hampstead, very few of the early members of the Movement or even of the

Order took me seriously. I mean you might think it, as it were, illustrative that when we had those first ordinations, all the men tuned up in dark suits. Now can you imagine that happening now? [laughter] Can you imagine it happening now? And the women in dark dresses?

So quite a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since those days, but you can't in a way blame those who, you know, didn't grasp the full significance of what was being done in those days because they only had my word to go by, nothing more than that, and they didn't have that sort of faith apparently in me or that things would happen as I said they would happen. You know, I was fairly clear about how things would develop and what I wanted, anyway, but many of the early members, though very sincere and very good and very helpful, weren't able to take me completely seriously and believe, as I said, that I really did mean what I said. When I said we were going to have a new [283] Movement, they didn't realize the implications of that. Many of them thought we were going to go on in the same way as the Buddhist Society of Hampstead, the Buddhist Vihara, only a bit better, a bit more efficiently, a bit more sincerely. So I said no, it's going to be a completely new Movement, but they couldn't even imagine that at the time.

So it means, it's not enough to make one's commitment and that's that, you've got to go on making a greater and greater commitment. You can't realize at the beginning what the commitment is going to involve. This might all apply to you one day. I mean, in twenty years time there might be a sort of fresh generation of really with-it, energetic, ardent Upasakas and, you know, thinking of all of you as a load of old has-beens, and you might find it very difficult to keep up with them. Who knows?

Padmapani: Well, we won't be staid. [laughter]

S: Well, I really hope not. Anyway, that's the wishful purpose or the vow, that resolution of determination, all along the line. This is very necessary if one is going to succeed in dhyana. Alright: "The second expedient activity of the mind is characterized by an earnest and zestful spirit. It means to keep the precepts with a persevering earnestness of spirit; it means to give up the five hindrances, and to persevere in our practice with wholehearted zeal both in the evening and in the early morning."

This seems to apply more to persistence and keeping up the practice especially in a regular sort of way.

Ratnapani: I like the word zestful, not just plodding on doing it at the same time each day.

Vajradaka: Every time done for the first time.

S: Yes. So you're not only making that initial determined resolution but really keeping up with it afterwards in a very regular and systematic and persistent and zealous sort of manner, zestful manner. [284] And then thirdly, third expedient activity, mindfulness and recollection. It seems as though in this particular

chapter the Grand Master is giving a general summary of the whole sort of field of dhyana from a slightly different point of view, you know.

Voice: It's not mindfulness or recollection in the sense we used to use it?

S: No, it is more like the recollection of impermanence, i.e. the contemplation of impermanence, and there's no reference in this chapter to samatha strictly speaking. You would expect that after the mindfulness and recollection would come the samatha or even before it, but though there's a reference to the giving up of the five hindrances and the continuing with one's practice with wholehearted zeal, both in the evening and in the early morning, there's no actual reference to samatha experience or practice.

The fourth expedient activity of mind is keenness of insight, which doesn't seem to be very sharply distinguished from the mindfulness recollection.

Vajradaka: The fourth one is developing that critical faculty that one doesn't kind of get drawn into the wilds(?) and ways(?)

S: There is critical in a sort of spiritual sense.

Nagabodhi: Discriminating.

S: Hmm, yes. "The fifth expedient activity of the mind is clearness and singleness."

Padmapani: What does it mean by "casting off all the evil influences of devas"? I don't know about devas, I don't know what they are.

S: Where is that? Let me look at Charles Luk's version.

Vajradaka: Just towards the end of the fifth expedient.

S: Negative, well, if one can use that expression, negative spiritual influences, presumably. Disturbances coming from the psychic or occult sphere, something like that. [285]

Padmapani: So devas doesn't necessarily mean a positive...

S: Not necessarily

Voice: What are tirthakas?

S: These are non-Buddhist teachers or followers, we talked about that the other day. The tirthakas, tirtha meaning a ford, the ford-makers, that is, those trying to make a ford to the other shore.

Voice: Ford?

S: Ford, crossing place, yes.

Buddhadasa: The implication being the water's too deep anyway?

S: Too deep for them anyway, yes. Or that their ford is inadequate.

Voice: Did the tirthakas became known as the Jains?

S: They were one kind but there were many of them in the Buddha's day. For instance a deva might appear to you while you were meditating and say, oh, you've done very well, you really are getting on wonderfully. I think you're enlightened, perhaps I can help you now, perhaps you should do such and such and become a really sort of prominent personality. And this would be a temptation coming from the deva. Sometime people do have that sort of experience.

Voice: Wouldn't an example of that be Milarepa's...

S: I think there is actually, in the Songs.

Voice: [Inaudible comment]

Buddhadasa: I was going to say there's a very graphic account in the Udanas when the yaksha flies over the head of Sariputra.

S: Yes, you enjoyed that one didn't you. [laughter]

Voice: Sariputra? [286]

S: With a slight headache. But Moggallana saw it all.

This particular chapter, though useful, doesn't seem really very systematic. Certainly the emphasis on a determined resolution is very good. Otherwise, the advice or the direction seems very general. It could well be that the disciples compiled together, you know, in this volume, quite a lot of miscellaneous material which the Grand Master had presented in his lectures.

Lokamitra: I haven't read the whole of this previously, but I was just wondering if this wasn't sort of like the foundation for the other lecture that he mentioned [at the] beginning, of Dhyana by Regular Steps.

S: But this also is dhyana by regular steps.

Sona: I was just wondering if...

S: He seems to have written this one last according to the introduction. It is intended to be complete in itself.

Buddhadasa: It says at the beginning of this that this was written down for the instruction of his brother.

S. Yes, yes.

Buddhadasa: Colonel someone or other. So perhaps he has him specifically in mind in some places.

S: It doesn't seem so. Yes it could be, in some places, but often he does address monks directly, doesn't he, and suggests that it is monks who are going to be practising. It could of course be that his brother's military title could be purely honorary. There were quite a few honorary military titles in the Chinese empire. For instance, I was reading recently about a famous painter who was given the title of general because he painted the emperor's horses. [laughter] It could

be something like that, but clearly he's a layman. The Grand Master is often addressing monks apparently. But this is very general. It could be that some of the material is addressed more specifically to his brother than others. It may even be that some of the monks put together a number of different lectures and a number of different writings. [287]

Ratnapani: The material he's covering here seems quite vague, in fact.

S: It does, yes.

Voice: It seems unlikely that he would have given a sort of lecture in a sort of western university sense, like a number of talks that have been connected together.

S: Though actually the Chinese Buddhist teachers did give those sort of lectures. It was quite sort of common and popular. They even gave courses of lectures.

Ratnapani: In the way that you do?

S: Yes, except they'd give them in the traditional way. They'd be sitting cross-legged with the text in front of them and commenting at length. This is quite sort of common practice in Chinese Buddhism. It was known in Indian Buddhism but it wasn't so prominent. The Chinese seem to have rather taken to this. And in fact they had a special Dharma Hall in all the big Chinese monasteries with a special platform for the teacher who was either giving the lecture or expounding the scriptures. So I think we can think in terms, you know, of definite lectures given by the Grand Master. I think it says, though, that this particular work was written, but from internal evidence it almost seems as though he might have written some parts and others might be from lectures that he had given presumably to the monks and might have been compiled together into one work. Or he might have used his old lectures given to monks in compiling a little work for the use of his brother.

Nagabodhi: It seems, by the title of the chapter, 'Expedient Activities of the Mind', you know, the way I feel you could take that as meaning an expedient activity of the mind before sitting is to review in a mental way, to review these things as a kind of... again as an inspiration towards effort.

S: But the translation in Luk is "expedient lines of conduct". I think probably the Chinese simply says expedient activities and doesn't say whether of mind or body.

Nagabodhi: There's certainly some of these things. I know, you know, [288] occasionally before sitting to try and get myself to take it more seriously I might somehow... one or two of these themes to remind myself...

S: Well, these are like expedient activities, skilful activities, skilful ways of behaviour, skilful ways of considering which are useful in practising dhyana in a general sort of way.

Nagabodhi: You see, again, an antidote to distraction when I'm sitting and

I know I'm only sitting because it's the time to sit and there's no chance of concentration, I'll try and recollect why I'm doing it rather than just going straight into the practice. Well, why am I here?

S: This has already been covered in the previous chapter, hasn't it, at the beginning when the development of the Bodhicitta was mentioned. So this doesn't seem to be, as I said earlier, a completely systematic step by step account of how to meditate. The subject is approached from different points of view in different chapters to some extent, although there is a sort of system running through it all in a more general kind of way.

Sona: Actually it doesn't say in the preface that it was based on a lecture. It doesn't say it was based on a lecture, it was just written down by the Grand Master.

S: Yes, but it gives the impression internally that some of the chapters were addressed to monks, possibly in the form of lectures, because definitely the way of life being referred to is the way of life of a monk, unless of course the brother was thinking of taking up the monastic life.

Sagaramati: Could you say something about this clearness and singleness of mind? It says that "even though we're unconscious of any marked success in our practice." That seems to imply that insight anyway hasn't arisen.

S: Right, yes, hmm, let's see what Luk has to say. "Single-mindedness by means of which the practiser can see clearly that the world is harmful and abhorrent and that merits derived from dhyana and wisdom are precious and exalted, therefore he should determine [289] to practise chih-kuan with a single mind and as indestructible as a diamond, a mind which cannot be deterred by either heretics or heavenly demons and which will refuse to backslide even when no results seem to be attained." [Luk p.129]

This is single-mindedness. It seems more like a general reflection to urge one to carry on with the practice of meditation even though no success has yet been attained. So it seems again to be something quite general.

Alright, any query about that whole chapter? Perhaps I should read Luk's translation. He seems a little more helpful in some ways at least.

He says, [reads whole chapter] "Expedient lines of conduct. The practice of chih-kuan is conditional upon five expedients.

"1. A vow to keep from all worldly thinking to realize all Dharma doors by means of dhyana and wisdom. This is also called (right) determination, (right) vow, and delight or fondness (for the Dharma). This means the practiser's 'determination' in his 'vow' to take 'delight' in his 'fondness' for all profound Dharma doors; hence a vow. As the Buddha said, a vow is essential for all excellent Dharmas.

"2. Unremitting zeal in the observance of all prohibitions so as always to avoid the five screens without backsliding. Unremitting zeal is likened to the friction

of (two pieces of) wood which must be continued until fire is obtained. This is unremitting zeal in the practice of excellent Dharma.

"3. Remembrance that the world is deceitful and despicable whereas dhyana and wisdom are two precious things worthy of reverence. If dhyana-samadhi is obtained, the practiser will be able to develop transcendental wisdom, to acquire all supramundane powers, to achieve universal enlightenment and to liberate living beings. This is the most excellent thing, hence (right) remembrance.

"4. Skilful discernment which distinguishes worldly happiness from the bliss in dhyana-wisdom with the resultant loss or gain. It enables the practiser to realize that there is more suffering than happiness on the worldly plane which is deceitful and unreal, hence the loss; and that the bliss in dhyana-wisdom, which is beyond the earthly stream, is non-active, still and boundless; is above birth and death; and is free from all miseries for ever; hence the gain. This ability to distinguish between the two planes is called skilful discernment.

"5. Lucid single-mindedness by means of which the practiser can see clearly that the world is harmful and abhorrent and that merits derived from dhyana and wisdom are precious and exalted. Therefore, he should determine to practise chih-kuan with a single mind and as indestructible as a diamond, a mind which cannot be deterred by either heretics or heavenly demons and which will refuse to back slide even when no results seem to be attained.

"For instance, a traveller should know first if the road is open or closed before developing a single mind to make a long journey. Hence, skilful discernment and lucid single-mindedness, the meaning of which is found in the sutra's words: 'Without wisdom, there is no dhyana and without dhyana, there is no wisdom." [Luk pp.128-9]

This I think makes it a little clearer.

Vessantara: This thing about even though we're in any marked success in our practice, it often seems to be the case with beginners that, especially if you take them away on retreat, after a few days they start looking brighter and they clearly are getting [something] from the practice, but if you ask them, they can't feel anything really, they don't feel they've got anywhere. It's quite difficult sometimes.

S: So one isn't the best judge in one's own case.

Vessantara: Also people come along who've had experience of other kinds of meditation who seem much more instant in terms of they feel a result from that. Divine Light and Transcendental Meditation. I find it difficult sometimes to talk to people about Transcendental Meditation, they start producing facts and figures about tests they've done which show that after six months of TM you're in the same state as a monk of twenty years experience and they... all this skin resistance [a reference to biofeedback, tr.] and so on and...

Voice: [Inaudible comment].

S. It seems quite competitive and also it seems that in some of these traditions there's a big previous build up and you're told what a wonderful experience you're going to get. [290] [Tape 12 Side B] And you're almost sort of conditioned into having it. You can become quite attached to that.

Buddhadasa: We have one or two people from the TM Centre in Brighton coming along, and their criticism of the TM is that there's no back up, that there's no sort of philosophy behind it. They expect you to do it and obtain results, there's no real philosophy at all.

S: They give you a copy of the Bhagavad Gita and that's about that.

Vessantara: I did TM about six years ago and I found that as a method of meditation it was certainly very calming, very relaxing, much more so than I found, say, the Mindfulness of Breathing for a long time. So in that way it did seem to have quite a definite positive effect. But the whole organization, the philosophy, just wasn't there so you spent the rest of the day doing things which were very against the whole spirit of the meditation without it ever drawn to your attention.

S: But in a way there was nothing against the spirit of the meditation according to the Maharishi. Well, if you were a millionaire, well you'd become a millionaire twice over if you practised this. You'd just be more efficient at everything you happened to be doing. So there isn't any basis for distinguishing what helps the meditation and what doesn't.

Vessantara: But simply as a method of cooling and relaxing it seemed quite a good method.

S: We found this when we were at Sakura [London venue of the first FWBO meditation classes, tr.]. A lot of people came along at that time who'd been doing transcendental meditation and they all clearly got some benefit from it, but as Buddhadasa said there was no philosophy and no follow up and some of them sort of turned to us at that time.

Vessantara: What do you think of it as an actual technique of meditation, leaving aside the...

S: Well, all techniques work if you practise them. On the level [291] of technique or method there's not much to choose between one and the other, not for the beginner anyway. So the main thing is to find a method and, you know, to practise it. But what is also important, no less, or even more so, is that the method should be connected with the whole sort of tradition of spiritual practice, and that again with the philosophy and the way of life and even a certain amount of external structure and so on. That is even more important, perhaps.

I think in a way the Maharishi's work is quite positive because at least it creates interest and sympathy for meditation in the minds of quite a lot of people. I think that there are and there will be quite a few people around who've practised this method and got something out of it and have found it not leading anywhere

and have just given it up, but meanwhile they've been quite sympathetic to meditation, and if sooner or later they come in contact with us then we shall perhaps find them very open to our particular way of doing things. Or even if they are keeping up with their practice, well if they are keeping up with their practice well they'll need a bit more guidance, they'll look for something more than the Maharishi is able to give them. So I think on the whole it's a quite positive thing. It seems rather on the wane at present, you don't come up against it or across it nearly so often as one used, at least that is my impression.

Vessantara: It's having another resurgence in America, I saw an article in the Guardian about a couple of weeks ago.

S: Hmm, a lot of people switch from Maharishi to Guru Maharaja. I think also in the States the Maharishi's apparent non-interference with the status quo is helping him. I think quite a few sort of parents think, well if my boy or my girl is going to get into meditation, well it better be the Maharishi, you know, that's sort of reassuring, he's not going to upset anything. I think there's quite a bit of that. He explicitly says he doesn't want to disturb anything.

Vessantara: I find it difficult when people do produce such scientific arguments and they say, well Zen monks have been doing the Mindfulness of Breathing or the Just Sitting practice for twenty years and their state is the same as, measurably, six months...

S: Well, presumably they go into a state of consciousness which [292] cannot be measured in that sort of way. Again it's a desire to get things in a quick and easy way, on the cheap, as it were. If you can get them on the cheap, then why not, but you usually can't, not in this sort of field anyway. They sort of misunderstand the whole sort of nature of what you're trying to do, you're trying to grow, not to grab something. If you can grow quickly, well, that's better than growing slowly, but make sure that you are growing, whether quickly or slowly. Even if you are growing, what's the hurry about growing quickly? Just grow, if you are growing that's all you need to bother about. Even to want to grow quickly can be a bit suspect. Obviously you don't want to waste time, but if you're growing, well, you're growing, that's enough. But to be worried about your rate of growth or to be interested that your rate of growth is higher than someone else's rate of growth, that seems a bit suspect.

Anyway, I think that'll be all then for today.

S: Alright then, page 463, Chapter Six, Right Practices, the other translation renders it "The Main Practice". So, in a way, today we come to the main part of the whole text, especially the fifth subdivision of that, we'll probably be going into that in some detail.

Right, let's read the first introductory paragraph and the first section, number one and then stop and discuss it.

Ratnapani: [reads from pp.463-5] "In the practice of Dhyana there are two aspects to be considered. The first relates to the sitting, and the other relates to

the circumstances and conditions.

"(1) First as the right practice of sitting: Dhyana can be practised while one is walking, standing, sitting or reclining, but the position of sitting, being the best for its practice, that it considered first. It may be considered under five different headings.

"(a) First, in its relation to the many and confused thoughts that fill the mind at the beginning of the practice. First we should practise stopping of thoughts in order to bring these many thoughts to a standstill and break off thinking all together. If we have difficulty in doing this we should next practise examination of thoughts. That is, to get rid of the many and confused thoughts that ordinarily crowd the mind at the beginning of Dhyana, we must practise 'stopping and examining.' We will explain this practice of stopping and examining' in two ways. (I) As to 'stopping.' There are three ways of doing this. It can be done by recalling the wandering attention to some part of the body as the tip of the nose, or the navel. By so doing the many and wandering thoughts drop out of attention and disappear. It says in one of the Sutras: 'You must keep your mind under control without any relaxation; you should keep it under control as you would a monkey.'

"It can be done by bringing attention to only one thought when the other will pass away, after which the one thought could more easily be excluded. The sutra says that of the six senses, the mental process is of the highest importance; if we control the mind we control the other five senses and the perceptions that spring from them. Again, it can be done by recalling the true nature of all objects of thought. We should recall that every object of thought arises from causes and conditions and therefore has no self-nature of its own. Recollecting this the mind will have no reason for grasping it and it will fall away. Referring to this the sutra says:

"'There is no substance in phenomena for phenomena are made up of causes and conditions. You are called a disciple because you recognize the true nature of all things and are able to stop your mind from dwelling upon them.'

"When we begin to practise meditation, at first our thoughts continue and ramble about without any cessation. We try to realize their true nature and to employ different means for stopping them, but the delusive thoughts continue to flow on. In this case, we should reflect on the history of the thought that has arisen:

"In the past it must have taken some form that has now been exterminated; and we know that in its present form it has no actual existence; and in the future it will have no more reality. By this consideration we realize that the phenomena of thought has no reality by which it can be grasped, either in the past, present, nor future, and so we exclude it from attention.

"Although we may be convinced by our insight that this continuing stream of thoughts has no substantial existence and we are able in the main to exclude it from attention, but there still may remain a consciousness of flickerings of

thought springing up occasionally from moment to moment. In this case we should try to realize the true nature of consciousness by which we notice these momentary flickerings of thought. Consciousness arises when the six external objects of thought are brought into contact with the six senses and the six internal sense minds react to them. So long as the six internal sense minds are not in contact with the six external objects of sense no consciousness of them will arise. Applying this to the consciousness of thoughts that we are convinced have no existence in the past, present, nor future we are forced to recognize that all such phenomena are mere assumptions of the mind. Being thus convinced as to the rising, extermination, and future unreality of thoughts, we exclude them from further attention and the mind becomes tranquil. As the mind becomes tranquil, we more and more become convinced as to the unreality of all thought, even the notion of our own existence. This is the ultimate principle of tranquillity and peacefulness that is embodied in the conception of Nirvana where all thought comes to a natural and final end. In 'The Lotus of The Wonderful Law Sutra' it is said that as soon as the mind becomes diffused we should bring it back into right mindfulness, and keep it under control of right mindfulness. This means that it is not by diffusion and scattering of thought that thought can be brought to a standstill but it is by concentration and mindfulness. The human mind is not an entity with its own phenomena that can be grasped and held by continued and forced effort; even right mindfulness is only an efficient means for controlling its activities. By this is meant that at the beginning of our practice of Dhyana we will find difficulty in controlling and excluding thought which if affected by too much violence might result in insanity. It is like becoming proficient in archery - we must take a long time for practice if we are to become proficient."

S: Alright, let's stop there.

There are several points to be gone into here. Let me just compare a minute with the other translation whilst you're looking through what we've read.

First of all a general sort of observation. At the beginning I remarked on the fact that in the Goddard translation, the title [293] of the work was Dhyana for Beginners, and I also mentioned that in the Chinese the term which they [he] rendered as dhyana is chih-kuan, and this relates to samatha and vipassana, but also it must be said, in a very general way it seems as though the Grand Master uses these terms chih and kuan sometimes as corresponding quite strictly to the original Sanskrit samatha and vipassana, but sometimes rather loosely in a way that does not correspond to the original Sanskrit samatha and vipassana, and we find something of that in the present chapter where kuan means something not like insight in the sense of vipassana but more like examining or looking into, in the more introspective and analytical sense. But we'll go into that a bit when we come to it.

"In the practice of Dhyana there are two aspects to be considered. The first relates to the sitting, and the other relates to the circumstances and conditions." This isn't quite clear. The first relates to the sitting, that is when we are actually

sitting and practising dhyana, the other when we are moving about in the world as it were becoming involved in different activities but in a sense still trying to practise dhyana. That is to say, still trying to retain the dhyana consciousness or still trying to keep the higher level of consciousness we have gained in our sitting practice, this is the basis of the distinction here. That's clear from the context as we go on.

Then: "First as to the right practice of sitting. Dhyana can be practised when one is walking, standing, sitting or reclining but the position of sitting being the best for its practice, that is considered first." This is a very important point indeed. I've gone into this a bit in the lecture I gave in Auckland entitled 'What meditation really means'. And I've emphasized in fact there that we mustn't identify meditation, dhyana, exclusively with sitting and meditating. What we are essentially concerned to do is to develop an experience and, if possible, retain a higher more positive state of consciousness, and it's certainly more easy usually to do that, at least initially, when we are sitting and meditating in the more technical and more traditional sense. But we must never forget that the higher state of consciousness is to be carried over into all our activities whether we're walking, standing, sitting or lying down, whether we're silent or whether we're speaking, whether we're at leisure or whether we're working. The important thing is to develop this higher state of consciousness, not just [294] to be meditating in the ordinary sense, sitting and meditating. In other words, sitting and meditating isn't an end in itself. We're concerned with the creation of a higher state of consciousness.

Any query about that or any comment? This is a quite important point. You sometimes find, for instance, that people are quite particular about keeping up their practice of meditation, even doing quite well at it, but they don't bother very much with their state of mind at other times. As if to say, well once they've done their meditation, well that's that. They're off duty for the rest of the day. So they may not be technically meditating and one shouldn't try to carry on with your meditation practice in an artificial manner as you're moving about the world as it were and doing other things, but certainly try to keep yourself in that sort of state of mind. I mean, sitting should just give you a little extra as it were. Do you think this is in fact sometimes overlooked or do you think it is clear enough to beginners?

Abhaya: I think it's overlooked.

S: You think it's overlooked. So how do you think, then, people usually look at meditation?

Lokamitra: They see it in terms of an experience and, you know, something to get, something to achieve.

S: Well, in a sense it is.

Lokamitra: But in terms of, you know, not something which is going to change their lives but something which, something nice that is going to happen - a high.

S: You mean to say they don't think in terms of prolonging that outside?

Nagabodhi: I don't think it is overlooked that much within our movement.

Lokamitra: Probably not.

Nagabodhi: Certainly in beginners classes that I've ever taken or that I've heard anyone else take, they strongly emphasized the aspect of constant mindfulness and extending the practice. [295]

S: Of course, it's more than constant mindfulness, even though the constant mindfulness is a step in the right direction. But I really do wonder whether people do sufficiently realize that what is to be aimed at is a higher and if you like more alive state of consciousness which you are in all the time. I mean, I feel that perhaps people haven't really grasped this yet. Not even really within the Order. You know, we may say it, I've been saying it for some time, but then, you know, just to say it is one thing but to have it really register is another.

Voice: It seems quite often, if I have a good meditation, this thought occurs to me, as it were, that for the rest of the day I can do more or less as I like. [laughter and inaudible comment] Yes it is a bit like that.

S: You've done your bit.

Ratnapani: Although I'm technically sort of aware of the idea of remaining permanently in a higher state of consciousness, I think my orientation is towards the formal meditation. I feel it all comes from that.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: That will just gradually accumulate and gradually the level will arise, with just a bit of care, what more is there but care outside of the shrine room, the ground work is done in the shrine room.

S: Certainly that is the point at which you can break through most easily, but I think also people ought to be more aware in a more practical way that there are, as it were, other possibilities and other means of keeping up the level of consciousness during the period in between sessions of meditation. They ought not to allow themselves to sink below a certain level. I think it also ties up with the fact that we should try to realize - or rather try to think of it in terms not so much of gaining a higher state of consciousness, at least, not at first, but of getting back to the state of healthy, happy consciousness which should be natural and which we should be enjoying all the time, and in fact we would be enjoying all the time if we lived in a more positive environment and led a more positive kind of life and were basically [296] more healthy. We haven't even explored the upper reaches of the kamaloka, not to speak of getting into the rupaloka where the absorptions are. I mean, a human being should normally dwell in the higher regions of the kamaloka, whereas most human beings dwell in the lower regions of the kamaloka, even little visits to hell and purgatory every now and then or to the asuraloka, but not in the lower heavenly worlds which represent the higher reaches of the kamaloka where there is a sort of happy healthy consciousness.

So we ought to speak of maintaining dhyana states throughout the day. That's very good but that's a long way off; we should think in terms of maintaining happy, healthy, human consciousness which is a slightly higher consciousness in relation to the state of mind that we normally experience. So I think what I'm trying to get at, perhaps I'm not making it very clear or putting it very well, that we ought to think in terms of a much higher average level of consciousness for ourselves and think of this higher consciousness and think of this higher level of consciousness for ourselves as something normal, not as something higher and mystical and, you know, anything of that sort. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Buddhadasa: A higher state of consciousness, that phrase is a bit misleading.

S: It is a bit misleading, higher is a relative term.

Buddhadasa: A more consistent state of consciousness.

S: More consistent also, yes, it certainly includes that too. But we ought to think in terms of persistently or constantly living at or living in a state of consciousness higher than the one we usually enjoy or higher than the one we enjoy most of the time, if enjoy is the right word, and also think of this relatively higher state as something normal. It's this side of the absorptions even. In other words recognize the fact that much of the time we are living on a level of consciousness which is not even up to the normal, healthy, human state of consciousness. If you like you can think of it in terms of the subdivisions of the kamaloka. We're familiar with the three lokas, the kamaloka, the plane of sensuous desire, the rupaloka the form plane, the arupaloka the formless plane. This is all within the conditioned.

Ratnapani: What's the second one again?

S: The form plane, the rupaloka; the kamaloka, rupaloka, arupaloka. [297] The absorptions, the rupa dhyanas, are found in the second, the arupa dhyanas, the formless absorptions, in the third. So what have we got within the first? Maybe we should go into that a bit more?

Voice: What have we got in the arupa, the kamaloka?

S: Yes, I'm saying let's go into that in a bit more detail. It illustrates this point that I'm making.

Buddhadasa: Horizontal and vertical concentration?

S: No, no it's not quite that.

Sagaramati: The different realms?

S: Yes, I'm thinking in terms of the subdivisions, as we get in the Wheel of Life. I've mentioned before that the...

Buddhadasa: Is it the six realms?

S: Yes, that the Wheel of Life is a bit misleading. It crams the higher reaches of the kamaloka and all the subdivisions of the rupaloka and all the sub-divisions

of the arupaloka into one of those segments, the world of the gods. That is quite misleading. But suppose you stratify the different sub-planes of the kamaloka. Let's start from the bottom. What do you get right at the bottom?

Voice: Hell.

S: You get the hell worlds which are predominately realms of suffering. And what's the next one up?

Voice: The hungry ghosts.

S: The pretas, the hungry ghosts. And the next one up?

Voice: The animals.

S: The animals. So these are called the three duggatis which means the ill-faring, sometimes the apayas, the downfalls, the lower realms. Not abhayas; apayas.

Abhaya: That's why I would ask anyone please to call me Abhaya. [laughter] [298] Not Apaya. A lot of people seem to call me Apaya.

S: Ah, it's definitely a 'B', Abhaya.

Abhaya: The 'B' helps.

S: Hmm. Apaya is easier to say, it must be Ab-haya.

Buddhadasa: I thought you had a slightly hurt look on your face. [laughter]

S: So these are the three duggatis. Alright, which comes next? The asuras. Usually the asuras are enumerated next. Though there's a slight inconsistency there which I shall point out in a minute. And then what comes after that?

Voice: The humans.

S. The humans. And after that?

Voice: The gods.

S: The gods. That is to say, especially, the heaven of the Thirty Three, Indra's heaven. So all this is in the kamaloka. So if we look at that we see there are various possibilities. So where at those six levels are we normally dwelling?

Abhaya: Occasionally the human.

S: Occasionally the human, very occasionally the realms of the gods. This might be, for instance, when you're absorbed, for instance, in the enjoyment of nature or music or the arts. Something quite inspiring and ecstatic of that sort, but a lot of people are sometimes in a very suffering state. Sometimes it can be said that people are very severely mentally disturbed, are in a sort of hell state, and people who suffer from intense neurotic desires, intense craving, well they're in the pretaloka, and people who are overwhelmed completely by purely animal desires, well, they're in the animal world. [299] And those who are intensely competitive, they're in the asura world. So it isn't often that we sort of stay on the human level or reach up into the lower divine realms. So when I say that

we should keep up a normal sort of human consciousness, that we should raise our level in that sense, it means dwelling on the human and divine plane, by divine meaning of course the upper reaches of the kamaloka and not allowing ourselves to fall down, not even into the asura world, much less into the world of the pretas or the world of the animals or the world of the tormented beings.

So in other words, as far as state of consciousness is concerned, we should set our sights much higher than we usually do. Usually we are satisfied with a far too low, far inferior state or level of consciousness. In other words our meditation shouldn't become a sort of self contained thing, experiencing a few momentary highs which reconcile you to a lower state of consciousness the rest of the time. When you're not meditating, your state of consciousness should be truly human, that is to say much higher than it usually is, and when you meditate you should reach up into the rupaloka, if not the arupaloka, but normally you should be dwelling in the higher regions of the kamaloka at least. And, you know, some people do; when you meet them you at once feel they're more happy, more healthy, more normal, more positive, more creative. You sometimes get this with quite young people who are healthy and happy before they've started getting entangled in the world, and the world gradually brings them down. You could say in perhaps rather a crude way even small children are on this sort of level, in this sort of state, but the world brings them down. It's not a spiritual state, I'm not going to idealize it, but it is a healthy, happy human state. Rather than I'm not going to idealize it, I'm not going to sentimentalize it, there's nothing about lying in Abraham's bosom or anything like that, as Wordsworth says, not even 'trailing clouds of glory', but certainly being normal and human and healthy and happy. [laughter] These are esoteric references to the Ode. [laughter]

Padmaraja: I'm sure sometimes it is like that, without wishing to sentimentalize it. Sometimes it is almost like that, thinking back to one's very early childhood.

S: No, I wouldn't agree. I say that's human. We've sort of lowered our human standards so much that we think of that as spiritual, but that's human. The spiritual is even higher because, you know, you can also see [300] little children, practically all of them, showing selfishness, greed, craving, anger very quickly and easily, which they wouldn't if they were in a highly spiritual state of consciousness. Provided you don't frustrate or thwart them and they get things more or less their own way, they stay in this very sort of happy, healthy state, which is a really human state. But you very rarely get a child exhibiting complete unselfishness or self forgetfulness, or... [301] [Tape 13 Side A]

S: In other words the more specifically spiritual qualities.

Abhaya: I think there is a lot of that though, thinking that children are in some kind of heaven or...

S: But in a sense they are, provided that you identify your heaven correctly. It is at first in a lower kamaloka state, which is quite high compared with most states of consciousness that adult human beings enjoy, but it's certainly not angelic

or, you know, spiritual in that sort of sense. It's certainly not dhyana-like or nirvanic. This is a gross sort of exaggeration.

Abhaya: I think a lot of it stems from Christ saying, 'Unless you be as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven'.

S: Yes, but 'like little children' in what sense? This is what is to be understood. I was going to say that we also notice at the other end of the scale that very old people sometime get into this sort of truly human state. You know, when the battle of life is over, you know, they've retired from it all. They're just leading a calm and quiet and leisurely life, and provided they have been relatively normal and relatively healthy during the whole period of their adult life, their mature life, and are not too rigid, not too conditioned, you see them becoming almost like small children in some sense or in some ways, in a positive manner. I don't mean that they become senile or have to be looked after or become childish. It's as though the extremes meet.

But anyway, the point that I am just trying to emphasize is that our average level of consciousness is much lower than it need be and that whatever higher experiences we get in meditation should be encouraged to flow over into our normal waking state, our normal waking consciousness, so that too gradually rises and we eventually come to a state or level which is the one we should be on all the time, just as ordinary healthy happy human beings, leaving aside any question of spiritual life and higher evolution and all that. [302]

Buddhadasa: Cannot this sort of line of thinking be quite off-putting, say, to a beginner to whom you say, well, you're not even human yet. Surely you've got to assume that he's human and that he's got the normal sort of human emotions and feelings and aspirations so that he can think in terms of the spiritual, initially anyway, and then realize after a time that in fact he's not really human.

S: Probably this is an aspect of having to pursue or pretend to pursue the path of irregular steps and then get people on to the path of regular steps. OK, think at first, yes, you're a human being and you're trying to lead a spiritual life, but eventually you'll come up against the fact that you're not even human in the full true sense and you've got to make a start there. But by that time you will have understood the whole situation and be prepared to accept it and work on it and be human and then be a spiritual human being. If you say to people straight off, well you're not even human, this can be very discouraging and, you know, even unkind, especially if you say, well, look at me I'm human [laughter]. You're not much better than some lower species as it were. This could be quite dangerous, you know, to suggest it in that sort of way, so certainly don't make too much of a point of it too soon, but when the time seems appropriate just quietly take people into confidence. Not speak in terms of you [laughter] but speak in terms of us. Say, well, we're not really human, not you're not really human. Very often, we're not as human as we think we are. We have to become human first and then think in terms of higher spiritual development, but include yourself too, even though you may think or even know that that doesn't quite apply to you.

Sona: Then, they think, well, Buddhadasa's been at it all these years [laughter] he's not even human yet [laughter].

S: And also, it's an important point that, I mean at least people in the Order have to show human qualities. I mean, just the ordinary human qualities like consideration and awareness and sensitivity and responsibility. If you're not even able to show those, there's not much point in talking about higher spiritual qualities.

Nagabodhi: Is somewhere involved in all this is a miccha ditthi [303] somewhere? I think you've talked about it before.

S: Well, let's hunt it out then [laughter].

Nagabodhi: You've talked about it before - I wasn't there - this distinction between disillusionment and disgruntlement. Because I think that a lot of people in a way feel that a healthy starting point to the spiritual life is to come in contact with all this what one would call lower states of consciousness, to come in contact with their suffering, with their neurosis. I think people see that as a kind of healthy preparation for making effort.

S: I'm afraid this links up with a very big miccha ditthi indeed. It's also connected with this whole question of 'the truth of suffering'. For instance some people say, well, an experience of suffering is almost automatically a preparation for the spiritual life. Well, in some cases that may be but I'm afraid not in all cases. For instance, the experience of suffering does not give you a realization of the noble truth of suffering. This is quite erroneous. These two things must be distinguished, I'll go into it just in a minute.

This word 'aryan' here is very important. What do you think 'aryan' means here?

Voice: Noble?

S: Yes, but the real meaning.

Lokamitra: Holy and transcendental.

S: Holy or transcendental. So when you speak of the four noble truths, the four aryan truths, including the aryan truth of suffering, what exactly do you mean by the aryan truth of suffering?

Vajradaka: The absolute consciousness.

S: Yes, you could say. Yes?

Buddhadasa: The insight into the fact that conditioned existence is suffering. [304]

S: Yes, the actual insight, yes, this is very important.

Nagabodhi: Seen from the top of the mountain rather than the bottom.

S: Seen from the top rather than the bottom; at least seen from half way up, because a Stream Entrant can have this understanding of or insight into suffering. So it also means that a person who actually suffers is not necessarily nearer to seeing the aryan truth of suffering than somebody who does not actually suffer. In other words actual experience of suffering does not necessarily bring you any closer to the aryan truth of suffering. In fact sometimes suffering in the ordinary sense of the term may make you so bitter, so resentful, so frustrated, so disgusted, so disappointed, so disillusioned that you're just not in a fit state, just not in a mood to listen to any sort of spiritual advice or teaching at all. You just don't want to know, you're in such a bitter, resentful state. But again sometimes with some people an experience of suffering does give them a jolt, does start them thinking, does open their eyes a bit, but not necessarily so. On the other hand there can be people who are leading a quite happy life with quite pleasant experiences but who do start one day thinking about it all, thinking, well, is this all? Is this enough? Isn't there something more? - without any very sort of catastrophic experience of suffering, having led a quite pleasant and smooth and easy-going life rather like the Buddha himself, and then maybe just seeing something that sets them thinking but doesn't necessarily involve them personally at all. It wasn't as if the Buddha's wife had died or his father had died or he'd lost his kingdom or been stricken by leprosy, you know, he was leading a perfectly happy life and he just happened to see an old man, a sick man, a corpse and then the wanderer.

Nagabodhi: Emphasis is often placed in some accounts of that story on him asking the charioteer, well, can this happen to me? This gives it almost a neurotic sense and quality . . . [unclear]

S: First he is usually represented as asking, well, does this happen to everybody and then, well, would it happen to me too? But anyway the point I'm making is that actual experience of suffering does not necessarily bring you any nearer to insight into the aryan truth of suffering. [305] How did that connect up with the miccha ditthi?

Nagabodhi: I think that largely is the miccha ditthi that people think, well, if they're not suffering . . . [unclear].

S: So it's certainly not the case that a sort of happy, healthy, optimistic sort of person isn't fit for the spiritual life, that you have to be all broken down and frustrated and having lots of problems and get into spiritual life that way. This is just not so. It may be so but not necessarily so. I mean you may be able to use even your problems as a springboard. It's not a necessary springboard. You can enter on the spiritual life just from being a very normal, happy, healthy sort of person.

So I think it's also a miccha ditthi that the person with problems or the person with difficulties, or who finds life very hard and with a lot of bitter experiences, is almost automatically more open to the possibilities of the spiritual life than someone who has not gone through all that. I think this is a miccha ditthi. Well,

how did your point come to be raised? The point of departure?

Nagabodhi: Well, the point of departure was talking about young people who have true humanity and this whole kind of area of living... accepting lower states of consciousness. I think people do because in a way they think that it's a favourable starting point to the spiritual life.

S: I noticed when I was in Helsinki that towards the end of my stay that quite a few young people started coming, really young - seventeen, eighteen, nineteen - and they were very, very happy and very healthy and very positive, cheerful and friendly, really open to the idea of spiritual development or personal development or whatever, and one felt that this was a very good thing and that they didn't have, as far as I could see, any problems or hang-ups or traumas but were quite ready - as far as I could see - to take up meditation and to think in terms of a higher development for themselves, whereas with many people who come along to us it would take them years to get up to that level which those particular young people were already on. But that's not spiritual development except in a very, very broad sense, that's just getting back to being what you ought to be in all the time, just a healthy, human being. So I therefore feel that we ought to stress, very much [306] more perhaps, than we do, this whole sort of idea that we are living at a lower level of consciousness much of the time than we really need or ought to just as human being, leaving aside the question of higher spiritual development and emphasizing much more a general raising of the level of consciousness all the time and throughout the day, whatever you're doing, as well as the determined effort to gain a higher level of consciousness, using the absorptions at the time of meditation.

So therefore the Grand Master says "Dhyana can be practised when one is walking, standing, sitting or reclining, but the position of sitting being the best for its practice, that is considered first. It may be considered under five different heads: (1) first in its relation to the many and confused thoughts that fill the mind at the beginning of the practice. First we should practise stopping of thoughts in order to bring these many thoughts to a standstill and break off thinking altogether. If we have difficulty in doing this we should next practise examination of thoughts. That is to get rid of the many and confused thoughts that ordinarily crowd the mind at the beginning of Dhyana, we must practise 'stopping and examining'. We will explain this practice of 'stopping and examining' in two ways: (a) as to 'stopping', there are three ways of doing this."

This is becoming a little complicated with all these subdivisions.

"It can be done by recalling the wandering attention to some part of the body as the tip of the nose or the navel. By so doing the many and wandering thoughts drop out of attention and disappear. It says in one of the Sutras: 'Thou must keep thy mind under control without any relaxation; thou shouldest keep it under control as thou wouldest a monkey.' It can be done by bringing attention to only one thought, when the other will pass away, after which the one thought can more easily be excluded. The Sutra says that of the six senses, the mental

process is of highest importance; if we control the mind we control the other five senses and the perceptions that spring from them. Again it can be done by recalling the true nature of all objects of thought. We should recall that every object of thought arises from causes and conditions and therefore has no self-nature of its own. Recollecting this the mind will have no reason for grasping it and it will fall away. Referring to this the Sutra says: 'There is no substance in phenomena for phenomena are made up of causes and conditions. Thou art called a disciple because thou [307] dost recognize the true nature of all things and art able to stop thy mind from dwelling upon them."

Then the remainder is a sort of elaboration upon that. It isn't very clear and I think I'd better explain that in my own words, with some help from the other translation, which at this point seems to be a little clearer.

It seems that we've reached the point in the step by step practice when the five hindrances have been suppressed. In a way we're picking up the thread of the regular step by step practice. So we've made sure that we're practising the precepts; we've made sure the external conditions are right; we've made sure the internal conditions also are right. In this way the five hindrances have been suppressed. That's apparently where we are at the moment.

Well, perhaps we should recapitulate in a little more detail. There is really quite a bit more to it than that. So what have we done? First of all there was the external conditions, and the first of those is that we're in possession of the precepts; we're observing the precepts. Then we've made arrangements for food, clothing, shelter, we're free from worldly responsibilities, and we're enjoying spiritual fellowship with our spiritual friends.

Then we're guarding the gates of the senses, we're preventing impressions from sense objects from giving rise to unskilful mental states, and we've also suppressed the five inner hindrances. These are the regular steps that we've traversed so far.

So that's where we now find ourselves at this point in this particular chapter. In other words we're sitting and meditating, or about to start meditating or trying to meditate. There are no violent cravings, these have all subsided. There are no feelings of anger and aversion, those have subsided. We are not feeling drowsy, we are not feeling agitated. We're quite alive and alert and at the same time at peace and balanced, and we've no doubt that we shall be able to practise dhyana and attain to these higher states of consciousness. But there's one thing bothering us. What do you think that's likely to be? [308] Just thoughts. The hindrances have been suppressed but even that's not enough. There are all sorts of wandering thoughts which may not be related to any of those hindrances at all. Just thoughts about this and that, recollections of things that have happened during the day, anything you're a bit worried about. Things that we've got to do after our meditation is finished, or just snatches of memories of things that have happened long ago, maybe recollections of things that we have read or maybe a tune than keeps going through our head and it won't go away. In this way there is a whole stream of wandering thoughts. So it's this stream of

wandering thoughts that stand between us and entering upon the higher levels of consciousness, entry into - eventually - the first dhyana. There's just this stream of thoughts that stands in the way. So the question arises, what are we to do about it? What are we to do about those thoughts? How are we to get rid of them? And the Grand Master is suggesting three different methods, three different ways in which this can be done. He calls them chuan methods or methods of stopping. They're certainly quite efficacious although it isn't quite clear later on exactly how they differ from the kuan methods.

Lokamitra: Would these be on the level of the first dhyana whereas the later things would refer to actual insight?

S: No, no, it doesn't seem like that at all. One hasn't got anywhere near the first dhyana yet. If you successfully deal with the wandering thoughts by virtue of any of the three methods suggested then you start entering upon the first dhyana, but so long as those wandering thoughts are continual then you're completely cut off from that.

Ratnapani: So there is the possibility in the first absorption for mental activity but it's not this wandering...

S: Yes, right, yes. What that is we shall see in a minute. I have already mentioned it I think on the first day, but I can go into it again. So let's see what these three methods are.

The first method is that you concentrate all your attention on a single thought or a single thing, and try to shut out all the other thoughts in that way. Now there are various instances or various [309] examples given of single thoughts, of single things on which you can concentrate your mind. It's here we come into the region of the concentration exercises. You can concentrate on the breath. This is specifically mentioned by the Grand Master, or the navel, that is to say a space below the navel or a mantra or any of the objects of concentration. In this particular work he doesn't go at all into detail with regard to the use of methods of concentration or particular subjects of concentration. Presumably he leaves that to be supplied orally by a teacher, though that is very, very important and for the beginner it is the main thing or at least the central thing. So this is why essentially we take up a concentration object or, as we can also say, a subject of concentration. It's the one thought on which we concentrate our attention so as to get rid of those many thoughts. And then of course when we've got rid of the many thoughts, after a while we can throw away even the one thought. You can see now the point of the concentration exercise. The concentration exercise helps you to unify your thoughts, unify your attention, when there's a whole stream of thoughts. You reduce the multiplicity of thoughts to one thought by thinking about one thing, as it were, whether the breath or the mantra, you stop yourself thinking about everything else. This is the rationale of the concentration method, and the vitarka vicara which remains in the first dhyana can be either very, very, subtle, peripheral mental activity of which you are hardly conscious at all, or simply your mental activity with regard to your object of concentration,

as when, for instance, you are counting the breaths. That means there is a certain amount of mental activity, but you could be in the first dhyana at that stage.

So this is the first method of counteracting the stream of thoughts, reducing all the thoughts to one thought which is the thought concentrated on the so-called subject of meditation, whether the breath, the mantra, or even a visualized form and so on, and we know that this does actually happen. The more deeply absorbed you are in that one thought, the more the other thoughts will die away. It's as though their energy goes into that one thought and in this way you become concentrated. This is what is meant by concentration. This is the first method of dealing with those thoughts or in fact that stream of thoughts which is standing between you and the first dhyana. Reduce all those thoughts to one thought by means of a concentration exercise or method of concentration. So that's only the first method. This, needless to say, is the one we generally employ. [310] This is the standard technique. So there are others. So what is the second one?

The second one is simply cutting off the thoughts as they arise. You inhibit the thoughts as they arise; you just stop them; you prevent yourself from thinking. This seems to be for most people very much more difficult. But you just sit there and the thoughts come up, but each time a thought comes up you just cut it. You don't pursue it. You just let it stop there. You see the nature of the method? It's quite difficult.

Padmapani: It seems like one's got to apply a lot more work to that as well.

S: A lot more work, yes, and in a way a lot more attention, so that the thoughts don't just sneak up on you or go on developing and elaborating themselves without your sort of knowing.

Nagabodhi: [unclear ... something about: Am I thinking? How am I thinking?]

Lokamitra: [unclear comment, laughter]

Padmapani: Surely in practice, Bhante, it's possible [that] as one experiences a thought that comes up, another thought comes up and bypasses that thought that you're trying to cut across?

S: Well, you should just cut, you shouldn't think about cutting or think about yourself as cutting, just cut off the thought.

Buddhadasa: It's not an easy practice, this one, when you are living in the world rather than sitting there in meditation when all of the ..[unclear].. are going on.

S: You're just cutting out unnecessary thought, thoughts not directly related to what you're doing or trying to do.

Buddhadasa: Or cutting daydreams or things like that.

S: Yes, yes, right.

Buddhadasa: Or heavy duty thoughts.

S: I personally think that if one can get into a subject of meditation, [311] a meditation method that will reduce all the thoughts to one thought, that is better, that is better, easier and more natural. This sort of cutting off thoughts is much more difficult and probably for most people a bit of a strain.

Ratnapani: You can produce negativity where you begin to dislike the thought and dislike your own mental processes.

Voice: And emotions.

S: And possibly even alienation. So this is a traditional method and is the second one mentioned here, but I think I would strongly recommend the first, in fact, in practically all cases.

Voice: [unclear comment}

Ratnapani: If you use a particular mantra, you use a combination of the two. Often you can have both going together, there's not quite the attention on the mantra but that's still going on and thoughts are joining it too and then they sort of cut across and clear the ground as it were.

S: But here of course the method is just cutting off thoughts exclusively.

And then the third method is, of course, examining into the true nature of the thoughts and realizing that in a sense there aren't any thoughts there: what are you bothering about, for instance reflecting things like, 'Where do thoughts come from? How do they arise? What produces them? That they arise in dependence upon causes, so they haven't any real nature of their own. In a deeper sense there aren't any thoughts; why should I be bothering so much about them? They aren't really there at all, they are illusory, they are just like bubbles on the surface of the water.' In other words, getting rid of the thoughts by convincing yourself of the unreality of the thoughts. This is the third method. This, of course, would be suitable only for someone of some intellectual capacity and also with some understanding of Buddhist philosophy. You can see that this method is a little bit akin to insight even though it isn't described as such. It's more like using a sort of insight for the purposes of samatha. So it doesn't amount to insight, it's more like a sort of intellectual reflection, but you use it in the interests of samatha, of mental pacification. [312]

Ratnapani: I know the words and I know the theory, I've never actually tried it but I don't think I really believe it enough to have any good effect.

S: Yes, right. If you are convinced of the truth of those sort of teachings then of course one might try the method, but if you weren't convinced of the truth of the teachings it would be pointless.

Lokamitra: I find it very useful as a practice to be...

S: Ah, you do, for instance the reflection on: 'How long does a thought last? It's infinitesimal. Well, if it's infinitesimal, then the thought doesn't even exist.' In

this way you sort of convince yourself, 'Well, there aren't any thoughts. What am I bothering about?' If you can do this that's fine, but if you can't, if the underlying assumptions don't appeal to you, aren't convincing, then the method is not for you.

Voice: Could you just go into the distinction between saying something has no self-nature and it doesn't exist.

S: Well, to say something has no self-nature means that it's a product of different causes and conditions, that it is actually there, it is experience, but it has got no self-nature in the sense of it being something self-existent or something which never changes, something which is eternal. It simply rises in dependence on causes and conditions. But something which is non-existent, well, is just not there is any sense and is not even perceived.

Voice: Is it safe to say the form only appears to exist, it doesn't actually exist?

S: It is sometimes put in this way but even that can be misleading, because if you say it only appears, but it isn't really there, it really isn't a clear statement. It's better to say, 'Well, it does exist, it is there, it isn't an appearance, but what is the nature of what is there, it isn't anything eternal, it is just something phenomenal arising in dependence on certain conditions, it's just a process of this kind, not something unchanging. I think probably we confuse the issue by using words like appearance and reality.' [313] That is a one-sided view, to maintain that the so-called experience doesn't exist. This is considered a one-sided view. It does exist because it is experience, but its true nature is mistaken, it's wrongly interpreted. But it is certainly experience and to the extent that it is experience it is there. It's the same with our own selves, not that the self is completely non-existent, we do experience something which we call the self. The trouble is we wrongly interpret it or we act upon the assumption that it is permanent and unchanging and so on, but there is something there, but what is there is a changing process, not a fixed entity.

We went into this in some detail and quite thoroughly in connection with a chapter on the outlines of Mahayana Buddhism dealing with the three kinds of truth. Illusion, conventional reality, and absolute reality.

Abhaya: Was this a seminar?

S: Yes, that's all on tape.

And the point that was made there is that the so-called phenomenal order is not illusion, it is only conventionally real, only relatively real, it is not complete illusion. It is not maya in the sense of illusion. It is only relatively real, but it is there as relatively real. So to reduce the relatively real to the status of being a complete illusion, this is a great mistake. But sometimes in their enthusiasm, as it were, even some teachers use language which suggests that the relatively real is completely non-existent. This can be very misleading indeed.

So knowledge or wisdom is threefold. To understand the absolutely real as

absolutely real, to understand the relatively real as only relatively real, and the illusory as the illusory. Whereas, we may say, the ordinary person regards the absolutely real as illusory and the illusory as real, and the half-baked spiritual person regards the relatively real as illusory. Whereas the mature person regards, as I said, the absolutely real as absolutely real, the illusory as illusory, and the relatively real as relatively real. [314] So the paticca samuppada is the relatively real or the teaching of conditioned co-production pertains to the true nature of conditioned existence, i.e. that it arises in dependence on causes and conditions.

Buddhadasa: What is the objection to not using the more common term, cause and effect? And then sort of elaborate it as conditioned co-production?

S: Well in Indian philosophy there was, apart from Buddhism, two schools of thought which have, as it were, philosophies of causation, and we refer to Buddhist teaching as a teaching of conditionally so as not to confuse them with these sort of schools. For instance there is a school which says that cause and effect are in reality identical. This is of course satkaryavada - that the effect is only a transformation of the cause, that the two are substantially identical. For instance, the illustration they give is the clay and the pot. The lump of clay is the cause, the pot is the effect. But the pot is clay.

Buddhadasa: Is it a change of form?

S. It's just a change of form. Then this applied metaphysically says there is only one absolute reality which is Brahman, and that Brahman has transformed himself, or itself, into this world by a process of, as it were, emanation, you may say. So this world is Brahman, not that Brahman is the cause and the world is the effect, as two different things, but that the world is the transformation of Brahman which means that the world is in reality Brahman just as the pot is in reality clay. This is the standard Vedantic view.

The other view, the opposite view, says that cause and effect are completely different. Just as, according to this view, you churn the milk and you get butter which is a completely different thing from milk. This is the same illustration, so therefore they say cause is one thing, effect is the other. According to Buddhist criticism if the cause is identical with the effect, really there could be no change at all even in appearance, and if the cause is one thing and the effect another, the two would be completely [315] unrelated so it would be meaningless to speak in terms of cause and effect. But the Buddhist view is that you cannot speak in terms of cause and effect being identical nor in terms of their being completely different. So what is the relationship between these two things, cause and effect? Buddhism says conditionality, neither the same nor different. So in order to express the fact that it doesn't take any one-sided view in this matter, that it is not a theory of causation in that sense, we speak of Buddhism as a teaching of conditionality, paccayata, not as a hetuvada or theory of causation.

Vessantara: Could you repeat one of those terms again? What was the first school?

S: Satkaryavada, sat meaning existence. And then asatkaryavada which is the opposite. Satkaryavada says cause and effect are identical. Asatkaryavada says different.

Abhaya: Asatkaryavada is another form of Hinduism?

S: Yes, for instance it's represented by the Samkhya school. But one could say that in Indian philosophy generally Satkaryavada is the dominant view.

Buddhadasa: Calling that the Identical school?

S: Yes, and that this world is a transformation therefore of Brahmin and that you should try to see it in that way.

Ratnapani: Would it be true to say then that conditionality [316] [Tape 13 Side B] is cause and effect when the effect is neither quite just the same nor quite completely different from the cause?

S: Well, you could put it like that if you want to. [laughter]

Ratnapani: I got the impression that there was something radically different between cause and effect and conditionality, in fact the interpretation of the relationship.

S: Well, that interpretation does amount to a radical difference.

Ratnapani: Radical difference from those two, there's no radical difference from anything that's in my mind because I don't know anything about those two. [laughter]

S: There's also the point that in Buddhist teaching there's always a plurality of conditions, not just one cause producing one effect, but a number of factors co-operating. In fact, it's one of the, as it were, axioms of Buddhist thought that you never have one single factor producing anything, it's always a number of different factors combined. So therefore we speak of conditions rather than a cause, and therefore of conditionality rather than causation. According to the Sarvastivadins there has to be at least two factors cooperating to bring about an effect. This is one of the Buddhist arguments against creation by God, that creation by God suggests just one causal factor only. I won't go into the arguments now as to why there has to be more than one factor.

Buddhadasa: It's a recognized form of chemistry, isn't it, that there has to be a third element . . . [loss of sound for the rest of this contribution and one or two others]. . .

Voice: . . . has a catalyst as the third element present but it doesn't apply to all reactions. Sometimes it can occur spontaneously when two elements are present ..[too softly spoken to hear clearly]

Abhaya: But in the example of the pot of clay, it is an oversimplification because you need someone to make the pot. [317]

S. Sure, yes. They point out obviously the limitation of the illustration, you know, you only take the illustration with regard to what it is meant to illustrate.

Ratnapani: Is there a technical term, just out of sheer interest, in practice when one comes into the next argument, is there a technical term if one were to use this pot and clay argument and someone were to then start talking about the potter.

S: Well, the Vedantic, that is to say the Hindu, reply to that would be that, for the purposes of the illustration, the clay and the potter are identical because, for instance, they say the Brahman is the original substance and he transforms himself into the world by a process of emanation as we say in western philosophy.

Voice: If you speak in terms of cause and effect it sort of implies some point in time where it all began, the first cause, which in turn implies some sort of God or first cause or prime mover or something . . . [rest of sentence impossible to hear - something about these concepts met in Buddhism]

S: In fact in Buddhism you just get this chain of conditions extending indefinitely back into the past. There's no perceptible point of absolute origin.

Nagabodhi: In terms of one's inner experience, take the spiritual life, if one thinks in terms of cause and effect it gives a rather mechanical idea. . .

S: Mmm, that is also true. I think Govinda has gone into that a bit, I think, in his 'Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy'.

Nagabodhi: You just see your practice as creating conditions, you expect results.

S: Yes, if you create the conditions, the effects will be there. Yes, this is very true.

Vajradaka: Do you consider this is a positive thing? [318]

Nagabodhi: I personally haven't found it useful to see things in a mechanical way. You sit and therefore you expect something back immediately, a mechanical link. I found it a much more. . .

S: You think in terms of setting up conditions and then it's up to whatever it's up to to manifest. You've done your bit, you've set up the right conditions, after that you can sit back, that's all you can do. You've fulfilled your part and then the sort of nature of things has to take over. It's the attitude of the gardener in a way, he doesn't say, well, I'm going to make the flowers grow, I'm just going to create those conditions which I can. I'm going to loosen the soil. I'm going to give sufficient water etc. I'll do whatever I can, contribute whatever factors I can, after that it's up to nature.

Lokamitra: But you can say a bit better than that: I'll do absolutely everything that is necessary so that unless there's a freak of nature it will be. . .

S: Yes, in a way in this analogy you can't be absolutely certain because there may be an unexpected frost, and even in your practice, you can't be absolutely

certain because there may be some unknown psychological factor in the depths of your mind which may be coming into play without your knowing it, or it may be the Bodhisattvas have other plans for you [laughter]. They don't want to give you too much immediate gratification in your meditation this time [laughter], but it's probably a more positive attitude or a more Buddhistic attitude to think of yourself as setting up conditions and then allowing things to take their own course rather than to think in terms of yourself as producing results almost automatically. Sometimes if the results don't come then you start getting a bit angry or a bit resentful, and also one can even have the attitude that the meditation consists in setting up the conditions for meditation, that's all you need to bother about.

Lokamitra: And if you set up the right conditions, you're sowing good seeds, and karmically speaking they can't but help produce good effects.

S. Right, though not necessarily immediately. [319]

Lokamitra: And not exactly what you might feel attached to.

S: Yes. So you just have to have that quiet confidence that you've done your bit and under the law of karma then things are going to be alright at least in the long run.

Vajradaka: I think it goes the same way as the development of positive skilful attitudes of mind. If one sets up one's situation as best one can at one's highest positive attitude then they just have their effect.

S. Anyway there are these three principal methods of controlling and eliminating the stream of thoughts that are preventing one's access to the rupaloka plane, the dhyana levels, the levels of the absorptions. That is to say reducing all thoughts to one thought by a method of concentration and then snipping off the thoughts as they arise, and then as it were convincing yourself, by a process of reason, that the thoughts don't really exist, in a sense they're not really there or at least have no business to be there or you can't understand how they possibly should be there or ever got there. So that they just vanish, they can't stand up against your reasons as it were, you've reasoned them out of existence. As I said, to be able to do this you need to be convinced of the truth of your own reasonings because they are your thoughts and, if you are not convinced, well the thoughts won't be convinced either. [laughter]

Ratnapani: They convince you that you don't ..[unclear].. [laughter]

S: Hmm, alright, let's stop there and have our coffee. [end of tape was coffee break] [320] [Tape 14 Side A]

S: Alright let's just take stock of exactly where we are. Exactly how far we've come. Remember the five hindrances are in a state of suspension, that we are confronted by the stream of wandering thoughts. The Grand Master has suggested three methods of dealing with these, that is to say, reducing all the thoughts to one thought, then just cutting them off, and then thirdly trying to

understand their true nature in such a way that they simply disappear of their own accord, as it were. You see that they are unreal, illusory and so on. So these three methods are said, according to the text, to correspond to chih or samatha.

And we come now, with B, to some more methods under the heading 'Stopping and Examining'. Now according to the other translation simply examining, simply kuan. I must say I'm not quite sure here of the basis of the distinction there seems to be, not this sort of distinction between these two sets of methods. One may well correspond to samatha but the other set doesn't seem to have much connection with vipassana, at least except towards the end. But anyway let's not bother about that too much, let's just look at them or go through them as methods of helping us to get rid of or overcome the flow of thoughts. So (b), that's at the bottom of page 465.

"As to 'stopping and examining' ", and the translator here is rendering kuan or vipassana as examining rather than as realizing or developing insight; it's as though he himself is aware that the word isn't being used quite in the same sense. "One way is by opposing this bad state of mind with its corresponding good state, as for instance, thoughts of purity as opposing licentious thoughts and desire, thoughts of kindness as opposing hatred, thoughts of the five grasping aggregates that make up personality as opposing egoism, and thinking about breath in controlling too much effort at the beginning, or controlling rising thoughts during the practice."

This almost suggests as though the hindrances have come up, whereas the first group of methods were more methods dealing with the flow of thoughts disconnected with the five hindrances. Perhaps one can say that the two overlap to some extent, but certainly if one finds when one is trying to concentrate and meditate that the flow of thoughts is, say, predominantly characterized by resentment or anger, then obviously the way of getting [321] rid of that is to develop metta.

"Another way is to oppose definite things or thoughts with consideration of the causes and conditions that make them what they are, namely, empty, transitory and egoless." This is a little bit akin to the third method in the second group of practices just before. That is to say you try to see into the origins of the particular thought, how it has arisen, the factors it depends upon for its existence. It seems to me as though the Grand Master has at the back of his mind, as it were, the four very early Buddhist methods which seem to be the simplest sort of statement of the question. Do you remember these, the four early Buddhist methods of dealing with wandering thoughts?

H: Watching them pass like clouds in the sky.

S: Yes, one is just watching them without letting the mind become attached to them, just looking at them, just letting them go, that's one.

Voice: Cultivating the opposite.

S: One is cultivating the opposite, yes.

Nagabodhi: Thinking about the consequences.

S: Yes, the consequences of just continued indulgence. And then the fourth?

Vessantara: Suppressing them.

S: Just suppressing? More like cutting off. So this would seem to be in a way a more rational set.

Lokamitra: What's the exact order for those? Is it. . . ?

S: Hmm, I'm not quite sure of that. [322]

Vessantara: In the lecture you give it as seeing the consequences, cultivating the opposite, cultivating a sky like attitude, and then suppression.

S: Mmm, suppression is usually kept until the last. I think that cultivating the opposite comes first as, in a way, the easier and gentler method.

Abhaya: Sorry, did you say these are four. . . what methods. . . very, very, basic. . . ?

S: These are four basic methods simply of dealing with wandering thoughts or the stream of thoughts.

Vajradaka: I've never heard of it that way before. In your lectures you've always had cultivating the opposite as the second.

S: Is it so? I don't recollect it. Which have I put first then?

Lokamitra: Seeing the consequences.

S. Is it? Hmm, OK. So these are the four basic methods and these are mentioned many times in the sutras, in the Pali texts. They may of course sometimes be given in a different order, but I don't recollect offhand now.

So it seems that the Grand Master has got these sort of methods somewhere at the back of his mind, examining the consequences is obviously a bit similar to going into the true nature of the thought but it's more practical, less theoretical, less metaphysical.

Nagabodhi: A bit like you were saying about John Cowper Powys, looking to what it really is, but that also implies what the consequence will be.

S: Mmm, yes, one could say with regard to the five hindrances, that the five hindrances represent thoughts or mental disturbances which are as it were very heavily emotionally loaded, whereas the flow of thoughts or the disturbing thoughts that we are referring to now, and the method for dealing with - which we are considering - are thoughts with a much less emotional content. [323] Do you see what I mean? If, for instance, you are absolutely overpowered with craving, well, this is a hindrance. Your mind is so possessed by craving you can't even hope to meditate. Or anger or resentment really comes up violently, well this is the hindrance. In the same way if your mind is really dull and stagnant, or on the other hand really jumpy, or if there's really serious doubt or

lack of self-confidence that, well, 'I can't meditate, I'm not going to attain any higher state.' Well, these quite heavily emotionally loaded thoughts, these can be referred to or understood as the hindrances. But supposing there isn't that sort of experience, supposing you're just sitting there with no strong craving, with no strong aversion, you're just sitting there, you're quite peaceful but some wandering thoughts are there, some gentle, subtle thoughts, these methods refer more to dealing with those. Obviously some of the methods which can be used at this level can be used at the level of the hindrances, at least when they sort of subside a little bit. But the assumption is that the hindrances representing the more heavily emotionally loaded thoughts, as I said, have subsided and you're left with the relatively subtle, less emotionally loaded thoughts. Not very disturbing, they may be only slightly disturbing, yet still stand in the way, getting in between you and the absorptions. Little thoughts about this and about that, recollections, memories, ideas and even sort of slight feelings of desire, slight feelings of aversion but nothing very much, a slight dullness. So these are the methods which are to be used in this sort of situation. So you've gone, as it were, one step further.

The Grand Master doesn't seem to say very much about actual details of practice, especially as regards methods in the concrete, but perhaps as I said earlier, he leaves that just to be supplied by personal instruction.

Padmaraja: Does he get in touch with that what you call the sky-like way of dealing with them? Observing thoughts as clouds?

S: He doesn't seem to, no.

Sagaramati: Going back to these ..[unclear].. in the kamalokas, it seems like the hindrances are sub-human? [324]

S: Yes, it's as though the hindrances are sub-human, in a sense coming from the animal level. They're, as it were, almost biological, they're part of our animal heritage. Alright, let's go on to section two, a third of the way down page 466.

Voice: [reads from p.466] "Second is the relation of the practice of Dhyana to such 'sicknesses' of the mind as sinking and drifting. Often during the progress of the sitting the mind will become darkened or obscured or inattentive or unconscious or sleepy. On such occasions we should practice a reflecting insight; we should practise 'stopping to stop them.' This is a very brief suggestion for the treatment of these sicknesses of the minds sinking and drifting, but in adopting it you should be careful to have the remedy fit the disease for there should be no inappropriateness."

This isn't very clear. There has been something already about these two states or what seems to correspond to the two states of - what were they called before - dullness and distraction, restlessness. Where was that? Can you find it? Oh, it was in connection with the hindrances, wasn't it?

Abhaya: page 456, number 2, I think.

S: Yes, "Sloth is one of the besetting hindrances." Not quite the same thing. It was more in connection with the hindrances wasn't it? That is regulating and readjusting. It's more the hindrances, page 450 and 451. It says: "the hindrance of laziness and sleepiness and the hindrance of restlessness". There is a slight difference here. The context is more the context of actual dhyana practice, and again the context is that of the application of either chih or kuan, according to which is appropriate. So the situation seems to be that one has suppressed the five hindrances, they're not troubling one any more. You've also been able to deal quite successfully with the lighter, less emotionally loaded, wandering thoughts by one or other of the various methods suggested. So you are getting on quite well with your practice, whichever method you might have adopted of getting through those wandering thoughts. But suppose after a while you start, as it were, sinking. Now what do you think that means?

Ratnapani: This is a sleep or a ..[unclear].. sleep comes over the mind.

S: No, not quite like that. You know, when you have a successful meditation, you feel very light, don't you? You almost feel as if you're floating, going on very well, energy is coming up, you feel very alive and very fresh and it's almost as though [325] you're sort of soaring upwards, at least metaphorically. But then after a while you may start sinking, it's more as though you get a bit fatigued. For the time being you've come to the end of your energy and you start sinking, and as you sink you become a bit dull, a bit dark. So this experience can quite easily happen. So what should you do then? According to the Grand Master here, on such occasions we should practise a reflecting insight. That is to say we should stir ourselves, we should rouse ourselves, by means of reflection, by mental activity. He doesn't give any sort of detailed instructions, but it could be of almost any kind. It could be simply reflecting that this won't do, I must get on, I must bestir myself. It could be something of this sort. Or it could be thinking about the Buddha: 'The Buddha didn't let himself sink in this sort of way. He made a tremendous effort. I should do the same.' It's sort of reflecting in this kind of way.

Vessantara: Some of those passages sounded more inspirational than...

S: Yes, in other words this sort of sinking is something that takes place after a while, when you've been getting on with your meditation successfully, when you start, as it were, running out of steam a bit, and maybe there are factors in the depths of your own mind that are beginning to work against you, to pull, to drag on you as it were, so you sink and become a bit darker, a bit duller. So you should bestir yourself with positive reflection. This is what it really means, not try to calm yourself, you know, this won't do, you need to stir yourself up, to rouse yourself, to invigorate yourself by even positive thinking, reflecting, even reciting a few verses to yourself that you happen to have by heart, but anything to get you in a more aroused, a more active state, to get your second wind. This is what it is referring to.

Vajradaka: Is this during the meditation?

S: During the actual sitting and practising, yes. Obviously you can do it at other times.

Nagabodhi: [Unclear comment about falling asleep and yoga mudra]

S: This would be very much more extreme. That's much more like being overcome by sloth and torpor. [326] But this sort of sinking sets in apparently after one has been meditating for some time with a measure of success and then you get sort of puffed, as it were, you run out of energy, you run out of fuel and you start sinking, you start losing height. So when you get into this sort of state in meditation, it would be a mistake, it would be an inappropriate remedy, to try to calm yourself down. That isn't what is needed at all, you should rouse yourself.

Goddard's translation doesn't make it all quite clear. The other translation is more helpful. But there's another possibility. After you've applied this remedy or even without having started to sink at all, the mind, instead of sinking, may start drifting and becoming a bit restless and uneasy, then you should practise the other method of trying to calm it down, trying to stabilize it. If you're concentrating on a particular subject of concentration, perhaps by concentrating on it more vigorously, more intensely, more mindfully than ever before. But if you have this sort of distinction of practice between calming and introspecting as we may call them in this context, then you introspect and examine and reflect and reason as it were, when you sink and become dull, and you calm and quieten when you become restless and uneasy and either of these two can happen in the course of your relatively successful practice of meditation.

And also the Grand Master says, "in adopting it you should be careful to have the remedy fit the disease for there should be no inappropriateness."

At the same time, the Grand Master is saying there shouldn't be any rigidity in the application of this method, and that carries us on to this next paragraph three. Let's go on and then, it's all related to the same topic.

Padmapani: [reads from pp.466-7] "In the relation of the sitting practice of Dhyana we should take advantage of every means available to secure tranquillity of mind. As has been said, if the mind is disturbed or over-active or sinking, we should practise stopping and examining. If the mind does not become tranquil, then we should practise 'stopping to stop' our thoughts: if the body and mind then become calm and peaceful we have reason to believe that the remedy was suitable for the disease and we should use it as occasion demands. If in practising Dhyana we feel the mind to be unsteady and not advancing toward tranquillity notwithstanding our practice of 'stopping to stop,' then we should try some form of insight. If, as soon as we employ insight, we notice that the mind is more serene and pure as well tranquil and peaceful, then we know that insight was adapted to our need and we should employ it at once, in order to complete the pacification. This is a brief statement of the way to use adjustment means in the practice of stopping and reflecting. But all these suggestions should be followed

with care and discrimination if we are to expect the good results of a tranquil and peaceful mind and the following rewards of successful practice of Dhyana."

S: In other words in the previous [327] paragraph, the Grand Master has said that if the mind sinks, apply insight, as it were, if the mind drifts or is restless, apply calming. But then he goes on to say, as it were, this may not always work. So there's no question of applying these remedies in a very rigid way. Sometimes it may happen that the mind sinks and you apply the insight, the reflection, quite vigorously but nothing happens, the situation doesn't improve. If that happens, then apply the other method even though it may seem on the surface, as it were, to be inappropriate. In other words apply the method of calming. That may work, and if it does, well, continue to apply it vigorously. And in the same way it may happen that when your mind is restless and unsteady and you apply a calming method, that doesn't work. If it doesn't work try the other method. The normal procedure seems to be that if the mind is sinking and dull, you invigorate it through insight. Only if that doesn't succeed you try the opposite method of calming, and in the same way if the mind is floating and unsteady you apply the method of calming, initially, and only if it doesn't succeed you apply the opposite method that of insight and reflection.

Abhaya: What does 'stopping to stop' correspond to technically in your...

S: 'Stopping to stop' - calming samatha, the samatha has previously said to be practised - though the direct sort of link is not made with that term - by those first of all three methods, that is to say, the development of one thought, which suggests the mindfulness of breathing, mantra recitation and so on, and then cutting off thoughts, and then reflection, and then some of the other methods which were included under what seems to be insight, like cultivating the opposite, are in a way really methods of this first kind, the samatha kind. So here, as far as I can see, in practising calm or applying a samatha method, it would mean for instance if one was practising the cultivation of one thought it would mean the continuation of that practice more vigorously, or more carefully, or more attentively, with more energy because the wavering or unsteadiness would be due to the fact you are not sufficiently into that one thought. So you would intensify your practise. But if that didn't work then you should go on to a method of insight, as it were, or reflection or investigation. [328] There seem to be some, as it were, gaps here. All the connections aren't fully made. I was thinking it might be a good idea to write a systematic little summary, you know, giving all the stages and leaving out all the very detailed explanations and making it completely unified and step by step. It would be quite useful for someone to do.

Abhaya: Because I find, when I read the text afterwards, I find that your notes are much clearer and sometimes it's quite difficult to connect the notes with the text. There seems to be a sort of very loose connection sometimes.

S. Well, that is partly because I'm filling in the gaps. I think if we do edit these in book form, we must make the book that is produced, sort of systematic or completely systematic in a way that the text isn't.

So you see the sequence? I mean let's forget about the very early stages, but first of all there is the suppression of the five hindrances. Once you've suppressed the five hindrances, that leaves you only with the relatively light and subtle thoughts which are not emotionally overloaded but which are still flowing on pretty vigorously. So you can deal with those in various ways. You can either try to reduce them all to one thought by taking up a subject of concentration, or you can simply cut them off one by one as they arise, or you can reason them out of existence. So practising in this way you manage to get beyond the thoughts. You're relatively concentrated and you're beginning to approach the states of absorption, the dhyana states proper, but after a while, you may start sinking, you may get tired, as it were. If that happens, rouse and refresh yourself with positive reflections. On the other hand instead of sinking you may start floating and becoming a bit unsteady, even wobbling. If that happens, calm yourself down. If you were practising a particular concentration method, well, calm yourself down by practising that method more vigorously than ever.

Voice: Sorry, could you repeat that again?

S: If you were wandering and you start wandering again, calm yourself down by practising concentration on the original, [329] more vigorously than ever.

It may happen, of course, that though you apply what is normally the correct remedy for sinking, you still go on sinking. In that case apply the other remedy. And in the same way when you happen to become scattered and unsteady, though you apply the normal remedy for that which is the intensification of your concentration exercise, it may happen that that doesn't work. In that case try the opposite remedy, that is to say the positive reflections.

So this is, putting it in a step by step form, the advice that has been given so far from the time of the suppression of the hindrances. This could be tabulated and put in a step by step or stage by stage form quite easily.

Padmapani: I get mixed up between the restlessness and floating. Was the floating . . . restlessness. . .

S: It's more like floating is more like drifting and is connected with restlessness.

Padmapani: Ah.

S: Floating is different from sinking. It's floating more in the sense of being tossed from side to side. But you see what is being done? The appropriate methods are being applied so as to keep the mind in a state which is calm, but at the same time vigorous. A state in which smooth energy is operating. So this is very important. Once you've broken through the barrier of wandering thoughts you should be in a state which is vigorous, you feel very alive and very clear at the same time and calm. You must feel great energy but at the same time feel very peaceful. You can lose this state in one of two ways. It's as though the two elements which were integrated in the experience start sort of drifting apart, so you can either then start sinking when you lose the vigour or drifting and becoming restless when you lose the calm, and you apply the method to

correct the imbalance, and to bring yourself back to a state where you're full of energy and at the same time calm and peaceful. That is a state of integration or at least approaching integration. [330]

Vessantara: Do you think it's valid to mention the introduction of positive contemplation, or reflection rather, say for example in beginners meditation classes?

S. No, I don't think so, I think this would just confuse them and I think it's so important that they should get a bit concentrated. In a way the fact that there is a definite exercise given means that you have sort of decided for them which of the three methods to use, the other two are much more difficult and they can be introduced later if at all.

But you see the importance of this and you see the point that is being made as it were implicitly here? That we're at a sort of point now which is in between the wandering thoughts and the first absorption. You're on your way to the first absorption, so you could say, as it were, what are the main characteristics of that state? It's a state of energy, but it's also a state of calm. But this is a state that people get into quite easily after a few weeks or months of meditation practice, a state in which they feel very calm, peaceful, buoyant, with energy there, they're quite alive. At the same time they're quite calm and peaceful. Obviously you usually get into this state by working on or with your subject of meditation, whether it's the breath or the metta or whatever or mantra recitation and so on. So is the sequence so far clear? So you can lose this state of unified energy and calm, either by sinking, which represents a loss of energy, or drifting, which represents a loss of calm. So you get back the energy by vigorous reflection and you get back the calm by intensifying your practice of the method.

Abhaya: I think this arousing technique, if you're sinking, is a very good hint for one's meditation as someone said before ..[unclear].. practice, especially if you're involved say in taking classes or talking about Dharma to somebody. I mean I often feel I've experienced this, not so much in meditation perhaps, not consciously, but in other circumstances, a real sort of sinking when you really have to arouse yourself with some positive internal action. I find that a very useful hint.

S: And also sometimes communication and discussion can have this sort of rousing effect. But if one is on one's own or doesn't have the possibility of that sort of communication, then obviously [331] one has to rouse oneself by means of one's own positive reflections and considerations and self exhortation. There is a story that I have at the moment for review about a Zen master who used to exhort himself every morning saying, 'Come on, Master so-and-so, it's time you were up and doing this that and the other, and don't forget Master so-and-so what you've got to do today, and so on. He would exhort himself every morning [laughter].

Nagabodhi: And isn't there somebody who used to call out his name and then reply 'Yes'? [laughter]. Milarepa seemed to use this constant awareness of death.

'The hour of death is uncertain,' is constantly coming up.

S: There's some quite good exhortations in the Door of Liberation. I don't know whether you remember? We can have a look at those later on. And there's also a quite lengthy text someone, I think Trungpa, has translated in 'Mudra', a certain lama's exhortation to himself. Do you remember that, that's quite good too, isn't it?

Abhaya: What's that in again?

S: I think it's in 'Mudra'.

Padmaraja: This seems very basic, fundamental religion, that the Grand Master is just using the five spiritual faculties, isn't he, there? Or two of them anyway, patience and vigour, and applying them to meditation.

S: One could say that, yes. Or calm and vigour.

Padmaraja: And mindfulness, the balancing factor.

S: Because it does seem that there are these two sides. Perhaps we should look at these two opposites almost in more general terms because they seem to be running through this text quite strongly in a way. We encounter them in different forms - sloth and torpor and hurry and flurry - in terms of the five internal hindrances. And then in connection with meditation, there's distraction and dullness and there's also sinking and floating, and there's over-exertion and under-exertion and, you know, we could say even in [332] terms of ordinary everyday life, sometimes we're very down and gloomy and not very enthusiastic, and sometimes we're over-excited and over enthusiastic, a bit hysterical, and we find it very difficult to balance. So that we should be in a state of aroused energy which is very calmly and smoothly operating and it's this that should be the case at the stage of practice that we've now reached it seems according to the text. There should be plenty of energy, but it should be very smoothly operating and the mind should at the same time be very calm. In a way that sounds very contradictory but only because we don't usually get these two things together in our own experience. Usually when we're very vigorous we're a bit scattered and when we're calm we're a bit sort of slack. You know, only too often our vigour is just excitement and our calm is just dullness. But we should have very heightened vigour and very heightened calm at the same time. And it's at this particular level in meditation that they sort of come together, so we feel very energetic and restful, at the same time calm and peaceful. This shows that, you know, the meditation is going as it should go, but unfortunately after we've been in that state for a while, we may either start sinking or floating. So we should apply the appropriate remedy just to maintain that state of calm energy.

Vessantara: This is slightly off the point, but in visualization and mantra recitation I often find visualizing the mantra, if I'm really concentrated, they can go together, they can become one experience in a sense, different facets of the same thing. But when I'm not all that concentrated it seems to be a question of either putting all my attention on the visualization or [on] the mantra.

S: Yes, this certainly does seem to correspond.

Vessantara: Do you think there would be a particular advantage in doing one as opposed to the other?

S: If one wanted to correct a particular imbalance. When you're repeating the mantra, this is more like the calm and when you're doing the visualization this is more like the insight. So the closer they come together the better. Or if not exactly calm and insight, the mantra recitation represents the concentration and the visualization represents, as it were, the encouragement. [333] [Tape 14 Side B]

Sagaramati: What did you say the mantra represented there as opposed to encouragement?

S: Concentration. Right, let's go on to the next section which is a bit more abstruse.

Lokamitra: [reads from p467] "The fourth relation of the practice of stopping and examining to our practice of Dhyana is the treatment of minimum thought in the concentration of mind. This means that after using stopping and insight for the suppression of confused and maximum thinking, we should now use it for the control of minimum thinking. As soon as our confused maximum thinking is tranquillized we attain a measure of concentration and because of that the mind enters into a more subtle state. Because the body and mind are comparatively tranquil and peaceful there is a feeling of exhilaration in which state it is easy for minimum thoughts of heretical prejudice to seep in. If we do not recognize this and do not adopt ways to prevent these false and deluding thoughts from arising they will easily increase and run into thoughts of egoism and craving desire. As soon as the mind begins to crave things it has already forsaken the idea of emptiness and has reinstated the idea that some things have a real existence. If we recall to mind the universal emptiness then these two vexations of sense perception and desire will be eliminated and the mind will continue tranquil. This is the practice of stopping. But if those thoughts of sensation and craving continue to arise it proves that the mind is still in bondage and we must try the other remedy of insight into the nature of these minimum thoughts. As soon as we recall there unsubstantial character we will cease to be attached to them; as soon as we cease desiring them they will quickly pass away being only the vexations of a moment. This is a brief account of the remedy of stopping and insight as applied to the minimum thoughts that arise in the course of our practice of Dhyana. There is a slight difference between stopping and insight, which must be kept in mind when we come to passing out of concentration because a mistaken use of them at that time would be serious."

S: Do you see what the Grand Master is getting at? Have you any idea?

Padmapani: It seems that as one gets into a more rarefied air, so to speak, the absorptions, the smaller hindrances, become very, very, large ones in the sense that the minutest detail is blown up to gigantic proportions and that one now

has to be very, very careful.

S: Especially he has in mind for instance a state in which - for instance, you are in this very refined state - the Dwight Goddard translation uses the expression minimum thinking, but it's a more like refined mental state. Supposing you are in a unified sort of state of consciousness, you're not sinking, neither are you floating. You're going on quite well, your practice is quite vigorous, and you're at the same time quite calm, but a very fine subtle thought may come up that, oh, I'm doing really well, maybe I'm well on the way to Enlightenment, so the chih way, the as it were samatha way, the stopping way of dealing with that, is just to reflect, 'it's all empty. Me, attainment, higher, lower, it's all empty.' And then it should just subside. But if it doesn't subside then you apply the kuan method. You examine more closely into the arising of those thoughts, how they arose. You examine their nature, that they are only transitory thoughts, they don't really mean much anyway, and in this way they should [334] subside, but you don't build up anything. In other words you are dealing with sort of delusions connected with the very success itself which you're experiencing in connection with the dhyana. If you don't take this sort of action then it may develop in a very extreme and dangerous way.

Vajradaka: What does it mean right at the end when it says a mistaken use of them would serious?

S: It doesn't elaborate at all on that.

Vajradaka: It seems to be implying that one way is the right way to use in one situation and the other is the right way in another.

S: The other translation is completely different.

Lokamitra: What does it say there?

S: It simply says they're similar to those previously taught, except that the notion of stillness is discussed here. Just a minute, let me see if I can work out something... No, I'm afraid no particular meaning emerges. We'll just have to wait and see if any light is thrown on this as we go through the treatise. I think for the time being we can ignore it.

Any query on that? On that section?

In other words it seems to be saying, this particular section, that when we attain the refined mind which is exhilarated and at the same time calm, we have to beware of our success in meditation at that stage from becoming the basis for any deluded thought which can become the basis for conceit or craving and so on. This would simply defeat our long term objective.

Lokamitra: This is quite a danger...

S: Yes, right, and don't forget the Grand Master here is still concerned with applying his method of chih and kuan to different aspects of dhyana practice. This is what he is basically concerned with here. So he envisages a situation in the

course of the successful [335] practice of dhyana when your very success gives rise to thoughts of conceit and craving. So, he says, first of all apply what he calls the method of chih - whether that really corresponds to samatha is another matter - but try to get rid of those deluded thoughts by just remembering they're all void as it were, there's nothing in them. And if that doesn't work then examine or investigate the arising of those thoughts, how they come into existence anyway, in a more detailed manner so that they may die down. This he calls his kuan method, his insight method, his investigation method or introspection method. Sometimes the way in which the Grand Master uses these terms samatha and vipassana is quite loose and approximate, or free we should say, free rather than rigid.

Ratnapani: I'm reminded of Hui Neng and his use of Buddhist terminology. He seems to put it to his own purpose.

S: Yes. We also mustn't forget that the Grand Master, like Hui Neng, didn't know the original Sanskrit, he was relying upon Chinese translations, and no doubt it was very difficult very often for the translators to use one Chinese word and the same Chinese word for one and the same Sanskrit word always. So this led to a certain freedom if one was relying only on, say, Chinese translations.

Lokamitra: Would you see it being important for people to, I mean, you know Sanskrit and Pali, for others to take up such studies?

S: I'd like to see a few people taking up such studies but I don't think we're ever going to have many scholars in the Order, but I think there should be a few. Though even those few shouldn't make scholarly pursuits an end in themselves. It would be good if a few people had some knowledge of original texts and could even do some translation work. That would be very good indeed, you know, contribute their specialized knowledge to the whole Order, to the whole movement. It isn't easy though. Usually if one goes through the appropriate academic discipline one becomes so distorted often, you know, mentally in every way, that you just lose your contact with anything spiritual, anything of a traditional [336] nature. So it's a great risk in a way, unfortunately.

Abhaya: Couldn't it be done without going through the normal rigid disciplines in the framework of the practice you've developed in the Order?

S: I'm thinking for instance if you take up Sanskrit and Pali and Chinese at university, you're fully involved with university life and the academic approach and curriculum and all that kind of thing. If you are particularly good at languages, you could of course study at home but these are difficult languages, especially Sanskrit, and so not many people could make much headway studying by themselves. Chinese too is very difficult. Perhaps the best thing would be for someone to go to a place like Benares Sanskrit University or a Chinese monastery or something of that kind and study there, including study of languages. I would certainly like to see some people knowing something of the original languages, Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese mainly. But at the same time I think it should be made clear that from a spiritual point of view, as regards one's own practice

and personal development, you don't need to know a word of any classical Buddhist language. Provided you're in contact with the living spiritual tradition, you can get along without the knowledge of those languages. But a few people in the Order, I think, should have this sort of knowledge.

Meanwhile we just have to make good use of those translations and similar works made available to us by people who do know the original languages, but we have to discriminate and make sure that we're not misled by translations of texts made by people with no sympathy for Buddhism as a spiritual tradition and who only regard it as grist for their particular academic mill. Just raw material for their theses. It's extraordinary how many of them do have this attitude, so that the Buddhist, the person who is actually practising and trying to follow the spiritual path, has got just no right to any opinion on the subject at all, that they are the authority, the academic people are the authority, they are the ones who know all about Buddhism. Vajrabodhi has been coming up against this quite a bit in Helsinki. There's a very learned member of the University, quite a young man, who knows Pali and Sanskrit and some Tibetan and who is now specializing in Mongolian and who is now always writing and correcting everything Vajrabodhi puts out. He clearly regards himself as the authority and he gives public lectures about Buddhism, especially Tibetan [337] Buddhism, and he sort of scoffs at any attempt to practise it or to practise meditation, and he claims that his interpretation is the correct one and that he is the authority in Helsinki about Buddhism, and people like Vajrabodhi know nothing at all, they're just Buddhists. And he's very sort of scoffing and scornful and intellectually very arrogant, though he has admittedly a good scholarly knowledge.

Lokamitra: I came up against this in the British Museum in the thangka section. There was someone who was really keen on helping us and so on and knew the details and was trying to find me a Vajrapani and so on, really interested and promising, and I sort of asked him if he was interested in Buddhism in any other sense and he really held back and was quite shocked that I should ask.

S: We're up against this sort of thing - much less in this country because here the academic figure doesn't have the same prestige that he has, say, in Finland and on the Continent in many parts, especially Germany, and most people would prefer to accept what an authority, i.e. an academic authority on Buddhism, says rather than a practising Buddhist, however well informed. In fact the view of many people would be that the view of the Buddhist would be prejudiced and not able to give an objective account of Buddhism just because he was a Buddhist. And Vajrabodhi said he came up against this in his dealing with publishers for his Finnish translation of The Three Jewels. He said that the fact that 'The Three Jewels' was by a Buddhist told against it because the publisher said it could not be an objective account if it was written by a Buddhist, and they would prefer an objective account.

Ratnapani: It's a horrible implication isn't it?

S: It really is, isn't it?

Buddhadasa: The only way you can know anything about anything is to be nothing.

S: To be alienated from it.

Ratnapani: Yes. [338]

S: So, I think this is one of the things that we have to be very firm and clear about. If there is such a thing as authority in Buddhism, where does that authority reside? Once when I was Hampstead, Christmas Humphreys brought up this question and sort of implied that he was an authority and so on and so forth, so I said, well I don't personally like to discuss the question in terms of who is the authority, but if there is an authority then it can only be me, not anybody else, because at least I've had twenty years of study and practice and traditional type training whereas Christmas Humphreys has had nothing of that sort of thing at all.

Padmapani: People like Conze, are they Buddhist?

S: Well, Conze certainly does consider himself a Buddhist and I think he is, and he has practised some meditation, but even in his case the academic cloven hoof does show. Some passages of his 'Buddhism, its Essence and Development' are really very bad in this respect and have a very negative feel to them, especially when he talks about Buddhism sort of inevitably running down after a certain number of hundreds of years. And what I notice more with all scholars is that in discussing any particular Buddhist teaching they make no attempt whatsoever to relate it to actual spiritual practice. Why did the Buddha teach this? What was his reason for teaching this? What is its purpose? What is its function? They treat it entirely without reference to that. They never even consider that it might have that sort of function, that sort of meaning, that sort of purpose.

Ratnapani: Not many people can even conceive of the transcendental, can they, and they may as well not bother because that's where the whole thing is orientated.

S: Well, leaving aside the transcendental, even the effect of some teachings on the ordinary mind as it were, you know, the extent to which they affect your sort of ordinary attitude in dealing with other people just in the course of your normal social contact, even that sort of relevance is not considered very often. And so I have sort of come to the general conclusion that the academic approach to religion, philosophy, poetry, the arts, literature is completely irrelevant and harmful, well it's worse than irrelevant, it's actually harmful and should be [339] completely discouraged.

Buddhadasa: It's almost parasitic, isn't it?

S: It is parasitic, yes. They're sort of intellectual parasites. They have the effrontery to consider themselves the authority on Buddhism and such like and the wretched practising Buddhist as actually coming nowhere, having no standing

whatever, no right to voice any opinion about what is Buddhism. They know, they will tell you. You know, this seems sheer effrontery. The more I think about it the more aghast I become. I think we should take a very firm stand here.

Nagabodhi: I don't know where it's gone, there's a big book called 'The Occult' by Colin Wilson.

S: I've borrowed it.

Nagabodhi: Have you seen that little thing right at the beginning, they've taken a few passages out of the book in very heavy black type just to attract you to it. The so-called Bodhi tree, the fruit of the Bodhi tree, has a very high content of serotonin, serotonin being a drug that that gives this idea that you're making contact with reality. They don't say therefore that's what the Buddha did, but that's the implication! Quite apart from any other consideration, coming from a scholar he seems to have completely omitted from his mind the fact that, well OK, if that's what the Buddha did surely he would have told his disciples, surely somewhere in the scriptures there would be a record of the Buddha saying why...

S: Yes, they'd be gathering... yes, well the strange thing is he quoted the fact there were these figs, the ficus religiosus, the so-called sacred fig, but actually the so-called sacred fig is not a fig tree at all, that's just the botanical classification. It doesn't produce figs. So there's that misunderstanding too. I presume it produces a fruit of some sort, a berry, but certainly not figs. That is just a botanical classification.

Nagabodhi: That kind of assertion, it has a really sort of academic feel [340] to it, as if, ah, he really must have researched this, but in fact he's done nothing.

S: Actually, of course, Colin Wilson is quite shallow, he's not very much more than a popular writer.

Buddhadasa: That book, with the title of 'The God of Buddha', well, it's a heinous crime, you don't even have to read the book to get a wrong impression. I can just see that book in a shop window.

S: Yes, I think this is another miccha ditthi, that a man who has no feeling for his subject can be the authority. And you get this, not to speak of Buddhism, in the field of literature and poetry - someone teaching literature sometimes without any feeling for literature, teaching poetry without any feeling for poetry.

Buddhadasa: Teaching without any feelings at all.

S: Anyway, let's go on. Number five now. I think we'll stop with that one because it's quite an important one and after that we come onto a completely different aspect of the subject.

Vessantara: [reads from p.466] "The fifth relation of the practice of stopping and examining pertains to the need of establishing an equilibrium between Dhyana and intelligence. If, in the practice of Dhyana, we come into concentration of

mind, either by the method of stopping or the method of insight, and have no attainment of intelligence, it is an ignorant form of concentration and cannot cut away our bonds of mental habits. Again, we may have attained a little intelligence but have not enough to develop into full intelligence or to wholly remove the bonds of defilement. In such a case we should apply the insight of analysis to our bonds and defilements, and by so doing would be able to get rid of them and thereafter would be able to realize concentration with intelligence and thus be able to employ the right ways for the attainment of enlightenment.

"As we are sitting up and practising Dhyana, especially by the means of insight, it is possible that all of a sudden we will be enveloped in a wave of intuition and intelligence, but as our power of concentration is still weak our minds will be weak and fluctuating like a candle flame in the wind, so this measure of transcendental intelligence will not be lasting. Under this condition we must again go back to the method of stopping all thought. Then by the patient practice of stopping all thought, the mind will come to be like a candle in a closed room that burns steadily and brightly. This is a brief account of the methods of stopping and examining applied to securing equilibrium between concentration and intelligence, or concentration and realization. If we practise Dhyana with the body in right position and make good use of these five means for securing right conditions of the mind, choosing the one that is most appropriate at the time, we will soon become competent and be able to make good use of our whole life."

S: Mmm, by this time it seems that one has entered into the absorptions. The Grand Master doesn't say this explicitly but the suggestion is that we have had some experience now of all the absorptions, perhaps even of all the absorptions and we have started developing insight. This is the situation which is now envisaged. Previously we were concerned more with the development of calm, the development of concentration, but here we are in the absorptions and also some measure of insight has been developed. So now the Grand Master is suggesting a [341] means of applying his teaching of stopping and realizing or chih and kuan to an imbalance between samatha on the one hand and vipassana on the other. So we have to understand first of all what we mean by imbalance as between samatha and vipassana.

I take it that everybody is clear in the light of our discussion on the first day what is meant by samatha and what is meant by vipassana? I take it that this is fairly clear. Hmm? Samatha represents calming down of the mind; the concentration, the absorptions and insight or vipassana representing the whole contemplation side.

Padmapani: Is the imbalance just a desire to stay in beautiful mental states without going on to then develop transcendental wisdom through vipassana?

S: No, I think that would apply lower down just with calm, just with concentration and, you know, the conceit and craving and wrong views that could arise in connection with that. The suggestion is that we have got beyond that, we've

definitely some experience of samatha and some experience of vipassana, but they are not balanced.

Padmaraja: I thought maybe dwelling in the fourth dhyana without then coming back down to neighbourhood concentration to go on...

S: But there is that possibility that the Grand Master himself hasn't said anything very specific about entering into the absorptions. This is my, as it were, addition to make the whole thing clear. There is that possibility.

So, what does one mean by the imbalance? Supposing you do have a quite considerable experience of samatha, a quite considerable experience of the absorptions, but suppose your insight is weak. Then what will happen? Or rather, what will not happen?

Nagabodhi: It won't make any difference to you.

S: It won't make any difference to you. Or in the language of the Grand Master himself, the vipassana will not be strong enough [342] to cut off the roots of the defilements. So it's not much use having a well-developed samatha and a weak vipassana, a vipassana which is not strong enough to cut permanently at the roots of all those defilements which tie you down to the conditioned, including of course to the samatha state itself.

Lokamitra: Devadatta is an extreme example of how this can happen or...

S: Devadatta apparently did not develop any vipassana at all.

Abhaya: Is there a classical list of the defilements?

S: There is in the Abhidharma, there's quite a lengthy list, fifty are often mentioned and sometimes eighty or a hundred.

So if vipassana is weak, there is no destruction of the fetters. This is what it really means.

Then again you might have a good strong flash of insight, but the samatha side will be so weak that your insight will be rendered unsteady. The illustration is given just like the plane blown about by the wind in a draughty place. Do you see the connection? You can be a person with great natural insight and you may be intelligent and see things very well but that isn't very operative or effective because it is not backed up by a very solid basis of calm, of samatha. So you should then intensify your experience of samatha so that the vipassana can be rendered more steady, more directed, more powerful because only then it'll be able to cut the fetters.

Lokamitra: So insight doesn't mean that? To cut the fetters or...

S: Yes, but insight backed up by samatha tends to be more of the nature of just an intellectual understanding. You can say that insight by itself can't cut through the fetters, or you can say insight by itself is not really insight.

Lokamitra: In Bucke's 'Cosmic Consciousness' - I haven't read that - it gives a number of examples of people who could see or have had this sort of insight of some kind.

S: Well, it's usually insight in a very loose sense here, it isn't [343] a Buddhist work after all.

Lokamitra: He is referring to transcendental insight?

S: No, I mean there is a sort of understanding which is not insight and that needs to be backed up by even stronger samatha and also to have a sort of correct conceptual basis, as it were, for its development.

Nagabodhi: You could talk about that in terms of time can't you?

S: Mmm, yes.

Nagabodhi: You may just have a flicker of ..[unclear].. and something's clear but within seconds you're trying to give it an intellectual formulation.

S: Yes, the mind is working, you're giving it an intellectual formulation, but why is the mind working? Because there's no samatha.

Nagabodhi: We were talking about LSD the other day, that sort of experience of going through hell because they can't remember what it was that was so good, fumbling around, lost.

S: Yes, it is very much like that in a way but the samatha experience provides you with a good, solid, steady basis for the reception and even in a sense retention of the insight that arises. But if those insights have got no basis to receive them, as it were, then they almost immediately degenerate into simply an intellectual understanding. The samatha gives them body as it were.

Lokamitra: If something is so strong that it just. . .

S: You know, what is strength? What gives it this strength? It's the samatha that gives it the strength, you know, the way one is speaking of them, you know, the samatha gives it the strength. You suggest two sort of different kinds of things; it isn't quite literally like that. You can say that insight which is not backed up by samatha is more of the nature of an intellectual understanding. It's sometimes [344] very difficult to draw a precise line of demarcation between intellectual understanding and insight or between a very strong intellectual understanding and a very weak insight, but there is a difference between the two things none the less. So if your understanding, your intellectual understanding, comes to be associated with a degree of samatha it starts turning into insight. And even if you have a genuine flash of insight, if it is not supported by samatha, then it will be of very brief duration and therefore able to assert very little influence, very little effect. But you see the nature of the connection between the two things?

Lokamitra: Yes, I was just under the impression before that vipassana, insight, could arise, not necessarily on the basis of samatha and. . .

S: Well, there has been a great discussion about this in Buddhist literature, and some teachers do maintain that there is what they call a dry insight which arises without any samatha at all, without any samadhi at all. Most teachers deny this, but the sort of compromise that is sometimes reached is that there is a momentary samadhi, a momentary samatha, and that the insight lasts as long as that samadhi lasts, so that it is a genuine... [345] [Tape 15 Side A] Inasmuch as it's momentary, it's not very effective. The effective insight has to be, apparently, of some duration.

Lokamitra: If one could have quite a strong flash of insight or whatever, without being based on samatha, I can't...

S: Yes, but no, there's in a way a contradiction in terms. If you say a very strong insight, it means that samatha is there. It becomes almost a matter of words. Strong insight is insight backed up by samatha.

Voice: Could you put it in another way and say that if you do have some kind of insight, if you do then fall out of the meditative state, out of the samatha state, it's simply not possible to grasp hold of the insight, you can only sort of put it in mundane, intellectual terms which are sort of meaningless as far as having the power to change you is concerned.

Voice: [Inaudible question]

Voice: Well, a bit...

S: It's not as though the sort of insight is actually there on some other level, as it were, still operating even though you can't grasp it.

Nagabodhi: A niggly little question, I know, but... I could see how samatha is karma-producing: is vipassana?

S: Is vipassana what?

Nagabodhi: Karma forming.

S: No, in fact the exact opposite.

Sagaramati: So it actually destroys karma.

S: Yes, right, yes, which is another way of saying it breaks the fetters. [346]

S: I'll just look through the translation of this section in Luk's rendering and then we'll have to think of stopping. It is by the way twenty to two.... Yes, that seems quite clear.

Padmaraja: You did speak, on another seminar, about this distinction again between the persona and samatha and you said that anybody who wasn't sufficiently impregnated [sic], or whatever the word is with the dhyana states, could probably have a 'road to Damascus' type experience. That is to say an insight, a blinding insight, but without being prepared for it.

S: Mmm, and you'd just not be able to catch it?

Padmaraja: Yes.

S: In a sense for all practical purposes it would be as though you hadn't had it. You might really after a while persuade yourself that you hadn't really experienced anything, that it was an illusion or something of that sort.

Vessantara: I got the impression from that transcript that it wasn't so much that one hadn't had it but that it would be a shattering and in a sense unpleasant flash of insight or realization.

S: Hmm, it can be this because it is the sort of impact of the insight on your unrefined being. Your being as it were in the dhyana states is very refined, so that there's not such a disparity between your refined state of being in the dhyanas, in the absorptions, and the flash of insight. But your state of being on the ordinary levels of consciousness is as it were very gross, and there's very strong attachment and so on and no forth, so that when a flash of insight comes, when you're on that sort of level, as it were, well it can be experienced as very upsetting.

Lokamitra: Well, presumably, when you were saying that when vipassana arose and there was no practice of samatha beforehand but samatha was there at the same time, if there was... [347]

S: It's just a positive state of mind, on a very high level.

Lokamitra: Yes, if there was this sort of flash or whatever then it would polarize all your energies for that time to such extent that you would be totally integrated with that experience at that time, which would be, in a way, a sort of samatha which is what you were meaning, I suppose.

S: Hmm, I'm not quite sure what you're saying.

Lokamitra: Umm, if in a road to Damascus experience...

S: Don't take that too literally. I don't remember the context myself, I'm not even sure definitely whether I was referring to an insight type experience. I don't know, I can't remember. You can even just have an understanding, not even an insight which can be quite shattering, on the ordinary mundane level, a piece of information. Supposing you suddenly learned that your dearly beloved wife has been unfaithful to you, well that may have a shattering effect upon you even though it isn't an insight in the transcendental sense at all, except perhaps into the nature of perfidious woman generally [laughter] as one particular aspect of, you know, unsatisfactory mundane existence. But just an item of information can have a shattering effect, you know, by virtue of its implications. So the fact that something is shattering doesn't necessarily mean it's an insight.

Lokamitra: I didn't really mean that aspect of the experience, rather the totality of the experience. I'm not very clear about this. I think I'd better stop there.

S: It isn't really easy to explain what happens, that is the truth of the matter. But the Grand Master clearly envisages two possibilities: one where you are

very happily going along, blissfully absorbed in your absorptions, in these higher dhyana states, but your vipassana is not sufficiently developed. You have to bestir yourself and make an effort. That won't come automatically, as from the first absorption, which means that if you're in a higher absorption you have to come down, you have to come back, as it were, [348] to that first absorption, start up your mental activity again, and direct it to the contemplation of reality, as it were, and in this way develop your insight and make your insight stronger, because it's only that insight which can cut at the root of conditioned existence, cut the fetters, cut karma, and really radically change your whole being. On the other hand you may have a sort of very rarefied momentary vipassana which you can't keep, as it were, you can't retain hold of, you can't make permanently part of yourself, just because there's no basis for it. You haven't got enough samatha, you're too unsteady. So you have to then strengthen your samatha side so as to have a basis for the reception for the insight so that the insight can become more operative, you know, throughout your whole being. It's as though the absorption level is the sort of conducting medium through which the insight reaches the rest of you. Perhaps we can look at it like that. If you have developed the absorptions then it's as though the insight can contact the absorptions and then run through the absorptions through the rest of you. They can't reach the rest of you directly. This is only a sort of analogy but perhaps it will convey the meaning.

Buddhadasa: Yes, what's coming out of this is that the absorptions are treated almost as, or very secondary to the importance of, vipassana; he doesn't dwell on the glorification of succeeding in the dhyana state.

S: Yes, right.

Buddhadasa: He almost dismisses them with contempt.

Vajradaka: But, in a sense, samatha is almost the good friend of vipassana in that vipassana, in relating to samatha, affects the whole of one's life and can only do it through samatha so, you know, vipassana really needs that good friend so it's not to be sniffed at.

S: Another illustration occurs to me. It's Benjamin Franklin flying his kite to catch electricity and bring it down to earth in a jar along the string of a kite, that the lightning wouldn't come directly into the jar but he had to get a kite up into the air and then the lightning would strike the kite and then go down the string into the jar; in this way he collected the [349] electricity and could use it. So the kite is of course like a samatha which can collect or transmit the electricity of the insight. It seems to be like that.

Lokamitra: Could the ... one last...

S: Yes, one last word.

Lokamitra: The lightning could still strike that glass jar without any electricity remaining there.

S: Yes, I agree, by a happy accident and will probably shatter the jar. [laughter]

Padmapani: That's what you were saying already.

Buddhadasa: Determined to go the easy way round.

Lokamitra: Eh?

Ratnapani: He seems determined to go the easy way round.

Lokamitra: No, I'm just trying to...

Padmapani: What, by electricity?

Nagabodhi: No, there is a whole sort of area of experience that you hear about that otherwise seems to be being missed out. People do seem to have these experiences which do change their lives.

S: Of course it also does mean going into the nature of the experiences and also the nature of the change. You can give a different direction to your life without it necessarily being an upward direction. I mean, somebody might have an experience and he may become a very grand type creature. Well, sure, it's an experience and it's changed his life but I wouldn't regard that as an insight experience just because it's changed his life in that way. Even though it might be a nominally religious way. It could be psychological, not to say pathological. So one would have to investigate quite carefully what was the nature of the experience, [350] and what was the nature of the change. It's not just any old experience and any old change, however powerful or however dramatic or even however religious in the conventional sense.

Nagabodhi: I think a lot of things like the apparition of angels and things are messages from the personal unconscious telling him that something's missing.

S: Yes, hmm, well, any query on all that? That's as far as we're going to go today. We seem to have covered quite a bit of ground and I think ground that we don't usually cover. I think it's a quite useful sort of distinction, broadly speaking, that the Grand Master does make in this text, even though perhaps not always very closely correlated with the meanings of the terms samatha and vipassana in the Sanskrit. Hmm? Alright let's end there. [351]

S: Page 468, number 2.

Sagaramati: [reads from pp.468-9] "We now come to a consideration of the second division of right practice of Dhyana. The first division had to do with right sitting and right conditions of mind control. This division has to do with the employment of stopping and examining in the circumstances to be encountered and the conditions to be experienced. It is of first importance that we sit up in proper position but as the body is under bondage its condition is not always the same and the circumstances vary. We should learn to practise stopping and examining under whatever circumstances we are placed and in whatever condition we find ourselves. Otherwise the practice would be intermittent, the practising mind would be checked by reverses, the bonds of desire and grasping

would be renewed, and the defilement of habits would be intensified. Under these circumstances how can we expect to advance in our understanding of the Dharma or in our powers of cognition? But if we keep our minds steadily under control and constantly employ the best means for practising then we will steadily advance in our power of understanding and realizing.

"Now, let us ask, what is meant by stopping and examining in relation to conditions and experience? Under the heading of conditions and experience there are six conditions and six aspects of experience, making twelve items to be considered.

"(A) First as to the condition of acting, (B) while standing, (C) while sitting, (D) while reclining, (E) while doing things, (F) while speaking. In these conditions there are six aspects of behaviour, namely, (G) as regards eyes toward sights, (H) of ears toward sounds, (I) of nose toward smells, (J) of tongue toward tastes, (K) the body toward tangibles, (L) and the mind toward ideas. We will now explain the relation of stopping and examining toward these six conditions and six aspects."

S: Hmm, alright, well let's stop and consider that.

Originally at the beginning of the previous section, number one, the Grand Master has mentioned the four postures, as they are usually called. That is to say sitting, standing, lying, and walking, and he has mentioned that the best posture for dhyana practice is the sitting one. But obviously you can't always be sitting, the body needs to relax, one needs to move about. There are perhaps other objective demands, other objective considerations. So you can't be sitting and meditating all the time. You can sit and meditate periodically. But the question arises, what are you going to do in between, and this is the question we are now considering. You may have a very good meditation, you may experience quite a high degree of samatha, but then you have to give up your sitting practice, you have to become involved in other things. You have to face phenomena; you have to become involved in the conditions of life. So what are you going to do then? If your practice, your practice of samatha and vipassana, is simply confined to the sessions of sitting and practising, especially in the case of samatha then you'll simply be going up and down, up and down, all the time. Up when you sit and practice and down when you stop sitting and practising and have to move about doing other things in the midst of worldly conditions. So this is the question which he's considering here now. What are you going to do in between? In other words he is suggesting and this would come out more explicitly later on, that you cannot, as it were, have a periodic practice, you have to have, in one form or another, permanent practice, a constant practice, otherwise if you just have a period of practice and then a period of non-practice, during the period of non-practice the gains that you had acquired during the period of practice would all be frittered away. So there's no question of practising and then stopping practice, practising again and then stopping practice. There's no question of sitting and meditating and then forgetting all about meditating and then [352] again sitting and meditating and again forgetting all about meditating. Either

you practise all the time or you don't practise at all. This is what he is really saying. So how is it possible to continue practising stopping and realizing, or samatha and vipassana, or whatever one may call it, during those times, under those conditions when you're not actually sitting and meditating. In other words how to carry on meditation when you're not sitting and meditating. It isn't enough to cultivate the mind when you're in the sitting posture, you've got to do it all the time, so what is to be done? It's a question of what the Tibetans call your in-between practice, the practice that you carry on in between the two formal sittings, so that you link up the two sessions of sitting and practising to maintain a thread of continuity between them. But perhaps the Grand Master here is being even more demanding, even more radical. He's practically insisting on full time practice in one form or another. If it can't be in connection with the sitting posture, well, it has to be in connection with the other postures. And if it isn't in connection with formal meditation, well, it has to be in connection with one's ordinary everyday activities and experience of life.

Do you see the point that he's making here or the question that he's raising? Anybody got any comment to offer on that? Any fruit of experience or any reflection? It is a very important question obviously.

Sagaramati: I think when you lead a retreat or something like that you become aware of that. You may be not consciously trying to keep it up. You're aware of that continuation into...

S: I don't know how it is nowadays, but I remember formerly, some years ago, people used to say that after a long retreat, that is one week or two weeks, they found that the retreat state of mind, the retreat clarity and energy and optimism, persisted even for a week or two afterwards. But that after that it was gradually lost, gradually dissipated, gradually frittered away, and they were usually sorry about that, and eventually, looking back, it seemed as though the whole retreat had been like a dream. They wondered whether they had been on retreat. They were now so far away from it or from that state of mind. But now that there are more frequent classes and other activities going on all the time [353] obviously the possibilities of renewal are much greater than they were in the earlier days, especially as not very many people now have to go back to uncongenial full-time jobs.

Vajradaka: The communities also help there too, I think.

S. Mmm, yes.

Padmapani: Do you feel in a period of like you say in this sense, Bhante, three month retreat, might have a sort of permanent mark on people for that amount of time, that period of time in sort of strict meditation?

S. Hmm, I think even the effect of three months' retreat can be permanently lost in a sense, in the sense that you can lose the effect of it unless you make a definite positive effort, the same sort of effort that you had made during that three month retreat. If you just as it were let things go, if you haven't developed

any actual insight during that three month period, then you would be back where you started from with the difference, perhaps, that you would now know that, given the favourable conditions, given the opportunity, you could get into that positive state of mind. Perhaps that would be the only permanent gain, that you had had that experience at least once.

Ratnapani: Although that I can't claim to practise permanently, I'm sure that I'm at least slightly less inhuman, shall we say, than I was a year ago and there have been effects that have been going on so that I can't remember them so that they're the norm. If I look back carefully I can see that that is so. So I think that one does progress even without vipassana but rather slowly perhaps.

S: I would say personally that where there is definite permanent progress - and obviously that has to be tested - there has been a measure of vipassana. It doesn't have to come as it were dramatically. There can be a slow growth in understanding so that one can hardly tell the point at which understanding merges into a sort of insight. It isn't necessarily even associated with meditation. I mean, as this particular passage will go on to make it clear, it can be the slow, gradual outcome of one's whole way of life, one's whole practice over a certain period. It needn't or may not come in sort of dramatic flashes. So if someone's life did seem [354] to be permanently changed, then it would suggest to me, in one form or another, in one way or another, there had been some experience of insight, but maybe what one could describe, perhaps, as a sort of diluted insight, not concentrated into identifiable flashes or 'that's when I had that great insight' but sort of diffused over one's whole life and permeating it perhaps in a sort of diluted way, but nevertheless permeating it and bringing about some small, admittedly, but at the same time quite permanent and definite gain.

I think that in the case of quite a few people, their evolution proceeds in this sort of way. Nothing very dramatic, nothing that can be identified as a great spiritual experience, but a rather slow steady slog with an overall increase of understanding amounting virtually to insight over a considerable period of time so that you are on the whole much steadier, you do on the whole see things much more clearly; you are on the whole much more skilful in your thoughts, words, and deeds, but you can't point to any major spiritual experience or any sudden access of insight or wisdom at any one time, or at any one point.

Padmapani: That seems to refer to... that the whole Order can be permeated by individual people who are permeating this and that, you know, I seem to have heard also that people can be supported in that way.

S: Mmm, yes, well, this is obviously one of the main reasons why one has an Order at all, if only for the sake of the mutual moral and spiritual support that people give one another or can give one another and which is, as it were, always there. You may have your own little ups and downs, but the Order as a whole maintains a fairly constant level, a fairly constant level of positivity and energy.

Padmaraja: But in the strict technical sense isn't vipassana having a direct insight into the selfless, impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of existence?

S: Yes.

Padmaraja: So how would one then relate that to these minor or this very subtle modification? [355]

S: Well, let's take the hypothetical or even actual case of Ratnapani [laughter]. Let's assume that he hadn't had any remarkable spiritual experience by way of an insight into the impermanence of all things. But let's assume that, on the other hand, supposing over a period of one two or three years, he has sort of noticed that certain things that are quite pleasant don't last, or he's noticed that even difficult times and little upheavals, they do pass, and he's also noticed that changes take place in other people, changes take place in society, there are sort of fads and fashions, comings and goings. Well, supposing he's noticed these things and because he's noticed these things, he's tended to be a bit more relaxed, as it were, tended not to grasp things quite so convulsively, tended to let things go a bit more easily or to be less bothered by them or to be less keen on them or to pursue them energetically. There's been a sort of general effect, so that one could sort of say therefore that there was this diffused or even diluted understanding of impermanence due to him noticing things and taking what he'd noticed quite seriously over quite a period of time in lots of little ways that had added up and built up at least in terms of his behaviour into something amounting to insight, without there being any dramatic insight into his meditation, being any sort of road to Damascus experience, it's just the road to the village shop [laughter] or the road to the potato patch, you know, but he notices, as it were, all the time and this adds up. You know, little drops of water, little grains of sand. The Buddha has said the same thing in the Dhammapada, that just as a pot becomes full by the constant dripping, the constant falling of drops of water, in the same way little by little a man fills himself with good, with the skilful, and I'm sure this applies to insight too very often, with some people, and I take it that it is especially so with those who are of fairly equable temperament and who are following a fairly regular way of life, especially semi-monastic, or monastic as in the old days and are trying to keep up a moderate degree of mindfulness and awareness and never get very far away from the spiritual life and who are carrying on with their meditation. There's a sort of what I can only describe as a diluted insight sort of being developed all the time and having a sort of slow and imperceptible but nevertheless quite definite transforming effect on their whole life which perhaps may become noticeable even to themselves not to speak of their friends, only over a period of years. There's nothing [356] dramatic about it, no sudden change, no violent conversion but just a steady increase in skilfulness and clarity and understanding and, when you compare the present with the past, even insight, though you might not be able to say exactly when it arose, it was so gradual, so unnoticed, so unobtrusive. I'm quite sure that this sort of slow and very quiet sort of transformation takes place with quite a number of people.

Lokamitra: You said something like there's a balance eventually. You go from samatha to vipassana, that increases the samatha and so on. So one can see this

- perhaps working from the very beginning if one is practising within the context of the spiritual community - would give the necessary impetus for the insight to come up.

S. Yes, right. I don't want of course to exclude the possibility of periodic as it were breakthroughs. As I've said before, this is also a very common happening, and supposing our hypothetical or actual Ratnapani went off to a very intensive retreat, then he might have a very definite, as it were, recognizable and identifiable breakthrough or flash of insight in the retreat or in the course of the retreat just because the whole pattern of activity was much more intensive and he himself was making an even more intensive effort than usual. Then back he'd go afterwards to the quieter more regular way of life and then that special insight which arose in connection with the retreat would be fed back into that situation and affect it.

But the point that I'm just wanting to make or trying to make is that there can be overall progress even in terms of insight and in terms of real change, real transformation of a very slow and very gradual nature, almost imperceptibly.

Sometimes of course people may wonder whether anything is happening, if at all, but if some of their friends haven't seen them maybe for six months or a year they will notice the difference. But perhaps those who see them every day or every week may not notice any change at all.

Any other point regarding all that? [357] Alright then, we are going to be concerned now with ways of practising stopping and examining in relation to conditions and experience, that is to say, ways of acting, standing, sitting, reclining, doing things, speaking and as regards, sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles, so that in one way or another we shall always be practising not just when we're sitting and formally meditating.

Alright, let's go on to one then.

Vajradaka: [reads from p.469] "Acting. When engaged in any activity we should ask this question: for what reason am I engaged in this activity? If we are conscious that we are acting from unworthy motive - because of discouragement, vexation, or some other evil instinct - we should cease the action. But if we are conscious that we are acting from some good moment, such as charity or some spiritual service, then we should go on with the activity. If we go on with the activity we should concentrate the mind one the pure activity with no ulterior purpose in mind. If we cease the activity, or the mind is disturbed by desires, or angry or egotistic thoughts, then we should stop practising. What is meant by this; it means that the mind should be tranquillized by getting rid of the thoughts, which prompt the action. Action in itself is unwise as it leads to further multiplicity and increased confusion and dissatisfaction and suffering. Action is warranted by some good purpose and when the mind is convinced of this it will be quieted and if there is no good purpose in mind the activity will cease. The acting mind and all that eventuates from its activity have no reality that can be taken hold of. When this is fully understood, the disturbing activity

of the mind will cease, and with it the activity of the body. This is what is meant by practising stopping under the conditions of action.

"What is meant by practising examining or insight under these same conditions? This means that we should recall that the mind is crowded with impulses to activity, which have no substance in, themselves and which lead to vexation and disturbances good and bad. We should reflect upon this and realize that neither the acting mind or the following action has any true existence but are alike, empty and vain. This is what is meant by the practice of examining under the condition of acting."

S: Hmm, I expect that we shall find that this is the most important of these six or twelve little sections. The question of acting in general. And the Grand Master says first of all, "When engaged in any activity we should ask this question: for what reason am I engaged in this activity? If we are conscious that we are acting from some unworthy motive - because of discouragement, vexation or some other evil instinct - we should cease the action." In other words he is saying a quite drastic thing in a way. Don't forget of course he's saying it within the context of the practice of dhyana, that it's better not to act at all. It's better to do nothing rather than to act with an unworthy - and the suggestion is a completely unworthy - motive. If your motive for doing something is wrong, is unskilful, well just stop doing that thing. Obviously this will cut out quite a lot of action and it does point to the fact that so many of our activities are motivated by what are definitely unskilful mental states. So in connection with the practice of dhyana in the widest sense we should examine ourselves when we are acting, that is, between our sessions of meditation, and try to understand, try to see, why we are acting, why we are engaged in that activity. What is its motivation? And if we see, if we realize, that we are acting because of discouragement or vexation or some other evil instinct, we should cease the action. But if on the other hand we are conscious that we are acting from some good motive such as charity or some spiritual service then we should go on with the activity. If we go on with the activity we should concentrate the mind on the pure activity with no ulterior purpose in mind. [358] That's also very important.

Vajradaka: No thoughts of what you're going to get out of it?

S: Mmm.

Nagabodhi: A direct contradiction of the old maxim - it doesn't matter what you do so long as you do it mindfully.

S: That's true, yes. But whose old maxim is this?

Nagabodhi: I don't know whose it is but it's something that I've heard around.

Lokamitra: Is it a contradiction then? I mean if you're doing something positive or skilful and you're concentrating on the pure activity then you're going to be totally mindful I would have thought.

Nagabodhi: Yes, but if you're not doing something that's positive and wholesome,

you stop, you don't just say, well, at least I'm aware of it and carry on.

Lokamitra: I see.

S: One can say that an action is a good action to the extent that you're mindful of it. But if you are really mindful then you come to realize that what you are doing is in fact unskilful, and that according to the Grand Master's advice here, that you should just stop it.

Of course, Buddhism does say, traditionally, it would be better to perform an unskilful action with mindfulness than unmindfully. It does say that because if you perform it with mindfulness, well, sooner or later the mindfulness will start really biting, as it were, and you won't be able to continue with that unskilful action or activity. But if you aren't even mindful, if you don't even realize that the unskilful action is unskilful, if you think it's skilful or you don't think about it at all even then, you'll just go on and on.

Nagabodhi: This implies that mindfulness, I think this is probably another general view, this implies that mindfulness isn't really a passive quality, simply just watching, it's watching plus awareness of the [359] precepts.

S: It does occur to me that to the extent that it's possible to go on performing an unskilful action which you are aware is unskilful, to that extent the awareness is alienated. Do you see what I mean?

Vajradaka: Because then you wouldn't really feel that it was wrong.

S: Mmm, yes, you're just sort of technically identifying it as unskilful, you're not really aware. You're not really seeing and feeling that it is unskilful. You're merely labelling it in a very impersonal sort of way. 'Oh yes, that's unskilful, the Buddha hasn't approved of that. I ought not to be doing it, so what?' and you just go on doing it. So you could be said to be aware that what you were doing was unskilful or mindful of that fact but it would definitely, it seems to me, an alienated awareness, not an integrated awareness. [360] [Tape 15 Side B]

Padmapani: It would still have some sort of karmic connotations then?

S: In what sense?

Padmapani: If one was aware of an unskilful act which one was performing, being aware of that, would you. . . ?

S: It wouldn't help. The unskilful would remain unskilful.

Lokamitra: Yes, It might even give more weight in the other way, surely, because you'd be. . .

S: It would suggest a certain obstinacy.

Lokamitra: Yes, a more weighty volition.

S: Almost, yes.

Buddhadasa: This seems to be characteristic - well, actually quite a number of years ago, but - of people trying to simply remain mindful in between meditation practice. What we've just been talking about seems to be almost characteristic of those attempts particularly after reading books which said the training is constant. Train your mind all the time and so on and so forth. I don't know whether we've got over that completely or whether it's new people coming in. You get the problem on retreats. A couple of years back it seemed quite characteristic.

Nagabodhi: It sounded, what you said, sounded quite good but I think there's something else you haven't said because you're implying there's something wrong with it that people were...

Ratnapani: Yes, there was something wrong with it. It was alienated.

K: Yes.

Ratnapani: What we were just talking about was alienated. [361] But surely to some extent awareness is going to be alienated until you get in touch with the unconscious. When it's only conscious awareness then it's going to be alienated to some extent?

Voice: It's not so much alienated mindfulness as complete mindfulness.

Lokamitra: In a way that's what... I was just going back to what you were saying here, that you're aware with one part of you...

S: It's almost a cynical awareness which does suggest the absence or the lack of that feeling quality. I think perhaps the point we have to put our finger on here in this and other contexts is that mindfulness is not just something as it were cold and clear merely. There is a feeling quality to it as well. I think sometimes the impression might have been given even by some Buddhist texts that mindfulness or awareness is something cold, clear, objective, scientific, as it were, excluding any element of feeling or warmth. But perhaps we can say that you aren't really fully aware unless the awareness is imbued with a quality of feeling as well. Otherwise you're cut off, as it were, from the object, and if you are cut off from it you don't influence it. You don't affect it in any way.

Ratnapani: What I was going to say before in fact was that I got this from Zen literature, particularly characteristic.

S: For instance, when you suddenly become aware that you've been a fool. If it's real awareness, well, what is the experience like?

Vajradaka: You really want to get away from it and change it.

S: Mmm, but if you say, well, that was silly of me. I was a fool wasn't I, and then go on acting just as before. Was that a real awareness? Awareness is more in a sense almost like a realization. It's not just cool and objective. But certainly it includes the element of objectivity and clarity and seeing because you're in touch with what you see and not isolated from it, not aloof from it.

Lokamitra: Could you say the whole body has to respond? [362]

S: The whole of you, the whole being is aware. It's not just a sort of mental awareness.

Padmapani: I suppose at the beginning one can't help a certain amount of alienated awareness. It seems to, you know, after a while that awareness becomes more integrated.

S: You can't help having alienated awareness so long as you yourself are in an alienated and disintegrated and fragmentary condition. But the more integrated you become, the more integrated your energies become, the more integrated also the awareness will become.

Vajradaka: It seems that example of a man discovering a snake in his lap is a really good example of when your mindfulness is very effective and you discover something that really isn't right within your psyche, and it isn't just that kind of sort of intellectual understanding or just a cool kind of awareness, or, 'look there's a snake on my lap,' but rather a response from the whole being.

Voice: [Inaudible comment]

Vajradaka: Right, yes.

Nagabodhi: I think I've always seen in opposition two different approaches to mindfulness as a practice. There's the kind of mindfulness you see where people are sort of watching their hands, this sort of thing. And there's an attitude to mindfulness of just like, say, being a warrior in a dangerous situation in a jungle and it's more like an instinctive sort of total taking in the whole situation which... it's got that kind of...

S: It's continuous.

Nagabodhi: Yes, it's not a kind of just watching your hands moving or your mind, it's taking into consideration the whole purpose as well as the situation. That seems to be, I think, the only useful attitude. I've had arguments with people...

S: There is a way of teaching so-called mindfulness which quite clearly leads to a state of alienation, an even quite extreme one. And this way is often associated with the so-called vipassana [363] practice. I say so-called because it's a highly specialized form. It calls itself vipassana practice or vipassana technique but it's certainly not vipassana practice in this sense. And this particular way of practising mindfulness usually goes something like this. You think, 'I want to raise my hand, I'm going to raise my hand, I do raise my hand.' [laughter] Yes? 'I'm going to lower my hand, I'm about to lower my hand, I do lower my hand.' And it can become much more elaborate than this owing to the heat element in myself or the functioning of the heat element in myself. 'I am able to perform the operation of lifting my hand. So I am now going to do that.' This is a bit of a parody but this is how it goes.

It's often much more complicated and people are made to do these exercises walking. This is called mindful walking, for instance, or even everything that they do during the day. Supposing - well they don't study - but supposing you are studying: I have an intention of turning over the page of the book. 'I'm going to turn over the page of the book. I now turn over the page of the book.' So I studied the effect of this on people. This is what was being practised in the Hampstead vihara when I arrived from India in 1964. It is this which is generally understood as vipassana. So I noticed that the effect it had was to make the awareness very jerky and it meant that the energy was turned on and then turned off, turned on and turned off. Stop go, stop go. And this seems to produce a great sort of frustration or blockage resulting eventually in alienation, really extreme and chronic, such as I've not seen since. And I paid a visit to the Biddulph Meditation Centre which at that time was being run by the Hampstead Vihara and I saw people practising in this way, some of them had been at it for two or three weeks and they became quite literally just like zombies, completely vacant, completely alienated and they didn't realize what was happening. Sometimes they broke down and this was interpreted in terms of a real genuine insight arising. Sometimes they had extreme sensations of pain and nausea. This was interpreted as an experience of the truth of dukkha, that they were now developing real insight. It was absolutely terrible the way this thing was being taught in its highly perverted form.

And this was very, very popular with quite a number of people going to the Vihara. And you can guess the sort of people who were attracted by it. They were already people who were quite alienated, maybe with strong feelings of self hatred and guilt. A few healthy people thought that they were getting on to the right thing and all the suffering [364] was good for them. There was this sort of, you know, mixed up with it too. If it hurt it did you good. There were quite a few masochists among these people, and the monk who was taking it or leading it, or the monks, used even sometimes to say, 'Oh, it's very dangerous. It can result in a mental breakdown, you can go insane.' But this would seem to attract quite a lot of people. They seemed really fascinated by this prospect [laughter]. And some of them did break down and a few did go, for want of a better term, insane and into mental hospitals, and one or two are still there to the best of my knowledge. They were certainly there for several years, long after I left Hampstead, and I just had to stop this, and this is one of the reasons why I made several enemies, that I stopped these practices under the auspices of the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara so I incurred the wrath of several people who pinned a lot of faith onto these practices, and invested a lot of faith in these practices. So I appeared to them as a very evil sort of figure, you know, stopping their practices and ousting their teachers and so on. But it was really dreadful so I did this without any hesitation. But as far as I know this is not going on any more now, not in this country. Those who do...

Ratnapani: Someone was talking to me at the Centre once who just came from, I thought it was Biddulph, and was describing just what you said. I thought it was about two years ago.

S: Well, Biddulph was sold quite a few years ago. Some of the Thai monks are still teaching this and a few other people, but I gathered that it's in a much more modified form. Though I wouldn't like to guarantee that, this is just what I've gathered, but it is essentially the same sort of practice and it's connected with a sort of pseudo-scientific approach to Buddhism. It's rather interesting that in this sort of technique or method they outlaw everything devotional. This is regarded just as pure superstition, nothing to do with the real practice, so there were no devotions and people were also encouraged to cut down the hours of sleep. Some of them had cut down to two and three hours a night. This helped also to get into this highly alienated state. Then they'd hallucinate, there was a lot of hallucinations going on and this was also interpreted as a sort of vipassana type experience. It was almost as though some of these [365] people wanted experience at any price, something tangible, even if it meant almost madness, something tangible, some tangible result. It's this that they were craving for apparently, that something was happening, that anything was happening, but let something happen so that we know that something is going on, we're getting somewhere. And they were just going round like zombies, literally, absolutely literally, like zombies.

Buddhadasa: What's the nature of these three month vipassana courses that one hears about?

S: This I don't know. This whole vipassana movement started in Burma and it spread, it spread quite rapidly and there are many teachers, but I must say also there is considerable variation between the teachers. Some are much milder in the use of these methods and seem to get quite good results I must say, others seem much more extreme and get more breakdowns and intensify people's alienation.

In India at present there is an Indian, an ex-Hindu, functioning, teaching vipassana methods and having courses and camps and so on, who seems to be quite popular but I just don't know where he stands in this regard, I've no direct information except that, yes, someone in Auckland had been to courses run by people who had been trained by him and it was in a milder form the same familiar pattern. Everything devotional was outlawed and the overall effect was to slightly increase alienated awareness, and one of the people who is now an Order member was attending these classes and courses before and, you know, he had a very thorough discussion about it with me after I arrived in Auckland and he was able of his own accord to grasp the situation to some extent and what was happening simply by listening to that tape on 'From Alienated Awareness to Integrated Awareness'. He began to see this for himself even before I arrived, and then after my arrival we had quite a thorough discussion about it and he then, one might say, really did see the light and he gave up those practices and severed his connection with that particular group.

But the particular tradition, if one can call it that, it's a quite modern one, has become quite popular and widespread, quite [366] rapidly, all in the course of the last fifteen to twenty years. The famous exponent in Burma, though not the

original one, was Mahasi Sayadaw who was believed by many to be an Arahant. I met him years ago in India, and I spent two days with him.

Voice: What's his name again?

S: Mahasi Sayadaw. I'm not sure if he's still alive or not. I've no information, but he was the famous teacher, and apart from the famous lay teacher, U Ba Khin who was the teacher of the Indian teacher who is now going around, Goenka, that is, Mahasi Sayadaw is the most famous monk teacher, U Ba Khin is the most famous lay teacher, and they've many centres in Burma and elsewhere.

But, as I said, I met Mahasi Sayadaw it must have been about 1960 roughly. And since I'd heard about his tremendous reputation, I wanted to have a good look myself and I spent two days with him. He came over with a crowd of anagarikas, female disciples who'd taken the ten precepts, and they had special uniforms. It quite sets the whole vipassana movement a bit separate from the rest of Buddhism sometimes. So they had little orange skirts and little white blouses and there was about twenty, [or] twenty-five of them of all ages and I met them all in Delhi and again one or two other places. And all the anagarikas seemed much more intent on going off and doing shopping in Delhi than visiting holy places or doing meditation, that was the first thing I noticed. And then I noticed that the teacher himself was a bit strange in his behaviour. Every now and then he would screw himself up and screw his eyes up especially. He'd go like this, every now and then, all the time I was with him. During those two days he'd be doing this on and off, so I interpreted that and this confirmed my general feelings as indicating a certain amount of general strain and tension. This is what I felt. And also I was present when he delivered a lecture, this was for the ex-untouchables in New Delhi, and he was explaining the five precepts and he was being translated. So he would speak a few sentences and then a young Burmese from the Burmese Embassy in Delhi would translate, and half way through the exposition of the five precepts he forgot where he was and forgot which precept he'd just dealt with and which one came next. So this to me suggested that his mindfulness wasn't as good as [367] it should have been, but he was supposed to be an arahant. So my overall impression was of someone very dried up and very unalive and quite tense underneath. This was my overall impression. I certainly didn't feel he was an arahant or anywhere near it. I was quite convinced of this. But he is the most important figure, apart from U Ba Khin, possibly in the whole of the vipassana movement, or was. So I regard it as something quite unhealthy and it links up with a pseudo-scientific approach to Buddhism or pseudo-scientific interpretation of Buddhism. It's supposed to be very scientific, this vipassana, it's a purely psychological exercise, nothing to do with faith or devotion. You don't need to be a Buddhist to practise it, you don't need to go for refuge et cetera, it's a pure scientific technique and this is how they advertise it. In fact I saw one of the little ads of the vipassana group in Auckland and it said, advertising the course and giving the details, that no unnecessary rites and ceremonies... [laughter]

So this is certainly a quite strong movement or at least tendency in the Buddhist

world today. Needless to say, it's confined to Theravada circles and I think it's partly due to the fact that in Theravada circles there's nowadays very little experience of meditation, very little spiritual experience of any kind. It's all become rather dried up and a little intellectual and some people are a bit desperate for any sort of experience as it were. I think it ties up with that, and some friends of mine have become involved in it. I've no recent contact with them but if I do go back to India for a while on my way to New Zealand next time, I'll be quite interested to meet them and see what has been happening. And the person who is running the centre in Buddhagaya has been known to me for about twenty-five years and he went off to Burma and learned this method and came back, and now he's got a meditation centre and he's sponsoring Goenka. He's been known to me for many years and probably I should see him if I go over there and see what is going on, but I can't regard it as anything very healthy or really Buddhist or really spiritual. It just seems to me that the practical counterpart of this very desiccated, very intellectual, pseudo-scientific, dry approach to an interpretation of Buddhism that one gets in the name of the scientific approach. Fortunately it isn't catching on very much in England but it seems to have a renewed [368] lease of life due to this Indian Goenka who has taken it up and who is a millionaire apparently and has got a lot of money to spend financing it, and is very active and energetic and goes around holding camps and courses all over the place and has a number of western pupils who have been spreading it elsewhere in New Zealand and Australia and America and India itself and possibly, though I haven't yet heard, in England too. So it's taken a new lease of life as it were these last couple of years.

Buddhadasa: Could you repeat the name, please?

S: His name is Goenka. On the other hand I know very little about his personal methods of teaching and it may well be that his whole way of teaching is milder and more positive than that of the other teachers. I just don't know. But from what I gathered in Auckland it does seem that this sort of flavour of alienated awareness does persist even in the milder versions of the tradition, the milder versions of the method.

Lokamitra: Certainly I've met quite a few people who've been with him or talked to him. People whose...

S: And what was your impression?

Lokamitra: I don't know. One person I know quite well who attends the teachers yoga class which I go to, a bit stiff and, I don't know, something funny about him.

S: Hmm, but one of the original points about this vipassana method - and there was a lot of controversy in this connection in orthodox Buddhist circles and in the Buddhist press - was that this vipassana could be developed without samatha. You didn't have to practise dhyana in the samatha sense, and this was very strongly contested by a number of orthodox bhikkhus in Burma and

Ceylon: that you could have very much vipassana at all without the backing up of samatha.

Sagaramati: The other excuse for this: I've heard people say that is due to the first moment of birth consciousness in this life. It didn't have enough good roots. Therefore it can't attain dhyana experience in this lifetime, so you have to obtain it [369] by the dry method.

Vajradaka: Didn't have enough what?

Sagaramati: Something about the three roots.

S: Yes, skilful roots.

Sagaramati: Yes, and you didn't have these at birth and you can't develop them during this life. Therefore you can't obtain dhyana.

S: Of course, one could reply to that, you know, along orthodox Buddhist lines, that without skilful roots you can't be born as a human being. Skilful roots must be present for you to be a human being at all.

Buddhadasa: May I enquire what the skilful roots are?

S: Hmm?

Buddhadasa: What are the skilful roots?

S: Non-hatred, non-craving, and non-delusion.

Nagabodhi: I once - I think it was at a homeopathic doctor's - his matron who saw me instead of him, she did meditation, sort of vipassana meditation, and she said - we were talking about meditation - what do you do? Samatha-vipassana practice? I said, well, mainly samatha practice, and she said, 'Well how long have you been doing that?' I said, 'About three years.' She said, 'Oh dear, dear, dear. That's quite dangerous. Does your teacher not give you vipassana?' I said, 'Well, the emphasis is placed very firmly on samatha at the beginning.' She said, 'Oh well, at the beginning. He'll probably give you some vipassana soon. Maybe you should ask him.' [laughter]

S: Yes, samatha is regarded as something very inferior that only very sort of, well, practically half-witted people bother with, and also it ties up with another sort of real miccha ditthi, intellectual snobbery, that vipassana is for the more intellectual people, the academic people, the people with real understanding and real knowledge, not for the superstitious masses, these blind and stupid people who want to mess around offering flowers [370] and lighting candles and worshipping images. It's above all that, so it appeals to the innate, intellectual snobbery of a number of people, especially in the West. So one can say that very broadly speaking this so-called vipassana method is characterized by alienated awareness, by discouragement of any devotional practice, non-experience of samatha, intellectual snobbery, and also, most dangerous of all, identification of pathological experiences with insight experiences.

Sagaramati: Would you go through that list again? [laughter]

S: No, it's all on tape [laughter]. So it's really quite insidious. It also goes hand in hand with a kind of Theravada orthodoxy, though many orthodox Theravada bhikkhus have strongly condemned the method on purely scriptural grounds. In fact they're not at all happy with the whole conception of dry insight as understood by these particular people. I mean the only good thing one can say about it is that you can't get very far with it. [laughter] If you get on too well with it you break down and become completely useless. So you're only able to go about teaching it at all only to the extent that you don't take it too seriously and don't practise it too much. It does contain this sort of inbuilt self-limiting factor. [laughter] And after a certain degree of proficiency you just break down as it were, you know, this is really terrible. So I am quite sure there are some relatively healthy people who have got hold of this method and technique, might even have benefited to some extent from the associated discipline. Maybe they don't do too much of it and remain moderately healthy and positive. But also, I noticed when I was at Hampstead, the people who were devotees of this particular approach were extremely fanatical and intolerant and they quite definitely thought that only vipassana was really meditation at all, every other form of practice was a complete waste of time and if you weren't doing vipassana you weren't meditating - that is vipassana in their sense - everything else just didn't count and a very extreme fanatical approach...

Lokamitra: This is what I pick up most from the people I've met doing this...

S: Hmm. This was one of the reasons for some of the troubles I had at the Vihara that I discouraged this particular method and upset quite a number of people. Anyway, that's perhaps a digression, but perhaps it's quite an important one inasmuch [371] as this particular method and technique is still current. Any query on all that?

Sagaramati: Is there any point ... I mean if you meet ... you have met a couple of people recently you said who do go to ..[unclear]..

S: Go to?

Sagaramati: I don't know where.

S: To where?

Sagaramati: I think it might be that British Buddhist Association.

S: Yes?

Sagaramati: About four months ago.

S: I think they're connected with that particular method, I think to some extent at least.

Sagaramati: I just wondered, should one try and discourage it?

S: Usually I found they were very difficult to deal with. If it happens that they've got onto that method just because it was the first one that they happened to encounter, simply that, then one can suggest that there are various other methods, and this particular one doesn't suit everybody, maybe other one might suit you better, in any case why not have some contact with other methods before finally making up your mind. You can sort of speak in this sort of way, but the sort of die hard vipassana meditator is sort of into it usually for [what] I can only regard as quite neurotic reasons, and is therefore quite difficult to influence or to move in any way.

Sagaramati: Some of them ..[unclear].. it was their first contact with Buddhism, that's why they were there.

S: Yes, right.

Lokamitra: I think people just seeing us is often enough, just seeing how serious we are [and] [372] what we're doing. I know this guy who I know best of all. He's quite amazed that I can be a Buddhist and not be practising vipassana, but still, you know, very obviously a Buddhist, and he can't quite make the connection.

S: There's also another strange thing. I don't profess to understand this, but this vipassana movement to some extent is a lay movement. It seems to stress that you don't have to be a monk; in a sense you almost don't have to give up anything. You combine it with your ordinary lay life. And a lot of quite conventional people I found were following this and practising it. But this seems to give rise to fresh difficulties in as much as their ordinary life was so different - in a sense - from their interest in Buddhism, and this seemed to increase the alienation. Some of them were very sort of staid, square, middle class, middle-aged types indeed, and there's almost sometimes a sort of - not exactly anti-bhikkhu attitude but it's sort of certainly unnecessary to give up the world; you can practise vipassana just as easily at home as under any other circumstances. And there have been several prominent lay teachers of vipassana who are like U Ba Khin and like Goenka himself.

Ratnapani: Is there nobody in the Theravada world who has got neither the knowledge, the real insight, or the authority - I suppose you need the authority - to look and to say what you've just been saying to us, in any way? I mean, you obviously cast the money-changers out of the temple in a way here, but was nobody else in the world able to do that?

S: Well, it's also related to the general sort of organization of the Buddhist world, which is non-organized, and also the general attitude of tolerance. The Theravadins, though in many ways very strict and rigid, usually would not interfere with anybody's practice or what they were doing. They might disapprove, discourage, they might not allow their particular temple to be used for that particular practice, but they wouldn't go any further than that. They'd certainly not start a witch hunt or anything like that, even though they thoroughly disapproved of what was going on.

Ratnapani: Even though they knew it was dangerous?

S: Sometimes even so I'm afraid, sometimes they sort of go to the other [373] extreme and are sort of over-tolerant, as it were. But certainly a number of articles have been published and even pamphlets appeared, criticizing these methods, and very detailed expositions of what meditation really is, exactly where this method goes wrong, but usually on very technical grounds, by very scholarly bhikkhus, with quotations from the sutras and very detailed quotations from sub-sub-commentaries, some of which have not even been printed, but not on more general and psychological and human grounds as I've been giving. Usually they get very very technical indeed, and very people are interested enough to follow it up to that extent. But in 'World Buddhism' there was a whole series of articles by very learned Burmese monks, going on month after month, for two years, refuting the vipassana technique and assumptions from the Buddhist scriptures - that is, the Pali Buddhist scriptures, not on the suttas but the Abhidharma and the commentaries and the sub-commentaries, and giving it a really first class point by point expose and meeting all their objections.

There were many replies, in fact it got quite amusing. You got for instance an instalment in 'World Buddhism'; it was reply number two to rebuttal four-point-five [laughter]. That was the [whole] instalment for the month, you know, but they eventually got to the end of it. So there Has certainly quite a lot of discussion and quite a lot of bhikkhus aren't happy with this particular method and its teachings and its assumptions. But, in a way quite rightly, there's been nothing like a sort of witch hunt or persecution. It's just individual bhikkhus expressing their strong disapproval and giving reasons for that. We can only hope it will die out in due course, you know, as people have a better understanding about meditation. But I never hesitated to criticize. In some of my lectures at Hampstead I did this, incidentally, but again I made several enemies for myself.

Lokamitra: And this is what Dhiravamsa is teaching?

S: Dhiravamsa, yes. He was responsible for some of the confusion in Hampstead, and I mean he was there for about a year or more when I was there, and my impression was [that] he didn't practise himself this actual method, but he certainly taught it, and my feeling was that he - and this may apply to some others - got from it a certain sensation of power. I saw this in the case of the English monk who was teaching it and to some extent in Dhiravamsa's case. Some people [374] come along with great sort of faith, and so on and so forth, and they stress the complete submission of the disciple. They stress this very much and the disciple has to follow absolutely implicitly the vipassana teaching and instruction. And I saw people breaking down and the two monks apparently giving instructions and leading them in such a way that they were bound to break down still more! So the feeling you get is of people with very great power over others, really doing things to others and almost revelling in it. Admittedly Dhiravamsa in a much quieter sort of fashion, but I certainly got the impression that he too rather enjoyed this sense of power, and that someone could come om your retreat, and then in two or three weeks you'd have him sort of absolutely

broken down. You'd have him sort of grovelling on the floor in front of you, quite literally, and they seemed to rather enjoy this sensation, and this was one of the reasons I felt it was so unhealthy.

Vajradaka: Who was the English monk?

S: That was the famous Ananda Bodhi. [Les Dawson 1931-2003, tr.]

Vajradaka: He's dead now?

S: No, he's still going strong as Namgyal Rimpoche. He now claims to be an incarnate lama. And he got ordained by the Karmapa. He had a few followers in New Zealand but they aren't really doing anything.

Padmaraja: Do you know Ananda Bodhi?

S: Oh yes!

Padmaraja: When I was up in Samye Ling last year, when I was in Glasgow, he was up there. He gave a very short talk. I found him quite impressive, what he said.

S: He's a very good speaker and he's got quite a personality. I knew him ten years ago, but at that time he'd only been a monk for two years. Well he was just conceit personified; that's all I can say. And he'd got hold of this method, and he'd only been in a meditation centre in Rangoon for about three weeks and then he started, and then he came back to England and he was teaching this method and he was [375] also very interested in schizophrenic cases and treating schizophrenia with this particular method. So several times you had schizophrenics at Biddulph all undergoing this vipassana training, and it didn't seem to do anybody my good at all. And he had almost messianistic ideas and there was a conference of psychologists and whatnot at Hampstead Town Hall, I think it was Hampstead Town Hall, and Ananda Bodhi went along and some of his followers, and he got up, apparently, in the midst of the proceedings and said... [removed] [376]

[Tape 16 Side A]

Lokamitra: This summer I think he's taking at teachers training course in Crete. It's costing a lot of money.

S: He certainly gets around a lot, and is very active, but it never seems to add up to anything.

Lokamitra: It sounds, from what I heard it sounds very funny, very suspicious.

P. What is his connection - maybe this is a big digression - but what is his connection with the Karmapa?

S: It was simply that after he was thrown out of Hampstead, he went off to Canada, he is a Canadian. He was there for a while, started a centre. He's very restless and roving. And then he went to India, I heard, and then went up to Rumtek and decided he liked Tibetan Buddhism. Before that he he'd been a very

rigid Theravadin. He likes Tibetan Buddhism. He got ordained by the Karmapa and was very much in his good books for a while, and then after a while they started not getting on so well and he left, but with this Tibetan ordination. And at that time - I don't know whether it was with the Karmapa's encouragement or not - he declared that he was an incarnate lama and changed his name to Namgyal Rinpoche. He then appeared in North Africa, that's where I heard about him, at least where I got news about him again. And then I heard he'd been to New Zealand and deposited a few of his followers there. They're staying in little place near Christchurch but they're not doing very much, there's no activities. But he moves around. He's very active. He attracts people. He's got quite a personality. He's a good speaker: very, very confident and restless. He has to move round. He always likes a lot of people with him, preferably ten or twelve people all the time, but he never really settles anywhere or does anything very constructive. But still I must emphasize that I haven't seen him for ten years and he may be better now, I don't know. You know, this is a quite long digression and maybe we'd better get back to our text. There's still something to be said about action. [377] Sometimes I feel, or have felt in the past, a little bit sort of hopeless, almost, with all these miccha ditthis going around, and not only going around but being vigorously propagated and attracting people and being supported and flourishing. So it just means that one has to be so vigilant oneself and just offer the real thing as much as one possibly can, and not only offer it but stick up for it and defend it and not allow some of these people to get away with anything - in a nice sort of way!

Lokamitra: It means we just have to be very vigilant within our own movement.

S: Yes, and very clear, and know what we are about. And this is one of the reasons why I am so firm about only Order members teaching or conducting anything under the auspices of the Friends, nobody else.

Anyway, the Grand Master also says, and this is very interesting, "action in itself is unwise as it leads to further multiplicity and increased confusion and dissatisfaction and suffering. Action is warranted by some good purpose and when the mind is convinced of this it will be quieted, and if there is no good purpose in mind the activity will cease." It's as though the Grand Master is saying that, from the standpoint of dhyana, the natural state of affairs is that you should not be doing anything in the way of action. If there is a definite positive good reason for doing something, do it, but otherwise don't do anything. When the good positive reason is no longer there, then the action ceases.

In other words it's as though action is the norm. That the need for action has got to justify itself, as it were. Of course, by non action the Grand Master doesn't mean sloth and torpor. It means the alertness and readiness of those who stand and wait. They're ready for action, they're ready for the call, but there must be a positive good reason for doing something. Then they do it. When that reason is no longer there, when the action is accomplished, they stop acting. They don't go on acting out of force of habit as it were, or automatically or unconsciously. They know when to act, they know when not to act.

So there are various possibilities, as it were. If you are [378] acting, if you are already acting, and if you become aware that the motivation of your acting is wrong, then just stop acting, don't do anything. If you become aware as a result of your mindfulness of what you are doing that the motivation of what you are doing is right, is good, is positive, carry on, even put all your energy into what you are doing, but act quite disinterestedly. And when there is no further need for that action, just stop. If you are in a state of not acting but you see a good positive reason for taking up a certain activity, then take it up, and when that reason is no longer there, when the activity is no longer needed, just stop. If in the course of the activity some wrong motivation creeps in, either just stop at acting and deal with the wrong motivation, or deal with the wrong motivation as you go along, as it were, but don't allow it just to continue. But think more in terms of the natural state being one of non-action than of the natural state being one of action in this sense. And of course the action that is meant here is more relatively external worldly action, as it were, in between the sections of sitting and meditating.

So therefore it's suggested that it's very important to sort of stop and ask ourselves from time to time, why am I doing this, is it really necessary? Like the posters used to ask during the war: is your journey really necessary? Is what you're doing really necessary? Do you really have to do it? Is it really skilful? Is it really positive? If it isn't drop it. Practise to do nothing, positive nothing, that is.

In other words we mustn't forget the sort of framework of the whole discussion. The framework of the discussion is that you want to keep up your practice all the time. You realize, or you have realized, that you either practise all the time, as it were, or not at all. Is isn't enough just to sit periodically in meditation and then in between you get involved in a lot of activity which dissipates the effect of your meditation and leaves you back where you were before you started. You've got to keep up practice in between, which means you've got to maintain a higher state of consciousness, a more skilful and positive attitude, throughout.

So when you find yourself in between the sessions of sitting [379] and meditating involved in various activities, what you've essentially got to do is to ask yourself whether these activities are compatible with the state of mind that you're trying to develop when you sit and meditate. When I say compatible, not in the sense of are you able to carry on sitting and meditating, but truly skilful and pertaining to a higher level of consciousness. So in between sessions of sitting and meditating, of course, you have to act, you can't help it sometimes, but be careful you only engage in those activities which have a motivation compatible with what you're trying to do in meditation generally and in the course of your whole spiritual life. You see the point that is being made?

So all this the Grand Master regards as a practice of stopping in connection with the in-between factors, as the Tibetans would call it, in connection with acting.

Then he go on to consider practising examining or insight under the same

conditions. I must confess I don't see much difference between the two, the comparison here - or the application here - does seem a little bit artificial. But anyway under this head the Grand Master says that we should recall that the mind is crowded with impulses to activity which have no substance in themselves and which lead to vexation and disturbances good and bad. We should reflect upon this and realize that neither the acting mind nor the following action has any true existence but are alike empty and void. In other words, it seems that under this head the Grand Master suggests we just look into the general nature of the impulse to action and the action which results from it. Just see that it's all a bit automatic, a bit mechanical, a bit instinctive, and in this way try to lessen our sort of blind, impulsive inclination to activity for activity's sake almost.

So this is the keeping up of one's practice, more specifically one's practice of stopping and realizing, or samatha and vipassana, in between sessions of sitting and meditating in connection with action or acting.

Is the import quite clear? What the Grand Master is really saying here? [380] I mean, the best thing is, in between sessions of sitting and meditating, that you have nothing to do at all. That would be best, as it were, but that is an ideal state of affairs. There are some actions, some activities, in which you can't help getting involved. So as you find yourself involved in this activity and that, just scrutinize the motive, and if the motivation is incompatible with one's overall spiritual objective, just stop that particular activity. Confine yourself to such actions as are compatible with your whole spiritual life. It sounds in a way a bit platitudinous but no doubt there's quite a lot that one can get down to if one really decides to do that. Right, any general query on that?

Padmapani: Is he assuming at this stage that one is in the first dhyana? Or can we assume that he is referring to somebody in that state?

S: I don't know. Possibly. But he's referring to someone who has been practising dhyana, which means practising samatha and vipassana in the sitting posture and who can't go on doing that indefinitely. He could be referring to someone who has been doing that for just a few days or just a few weeks or just a few years. So he could be referring to someone who had experienced not only the first but even the second, third and fourth absorptions. It would still apply. But if you had a very powerful and very deep experience of the absorptions, there would be less inclination to action anyway and less likelihood of any unskilful motivation, but if you remained without a further session of sitting and practising for longer than a certain period of time, then the effect of all those absorptions would wear off. You'd feel more inclined to action and there would be a greater possibility of unskilful motivation action.

Ratnapani: Telling somebody who wasn't very experienced really that the best and the norm was non-action, I think wouldn't be at all useful. In fact [it] would be rather counter-productive. People would just sit around and feel they shouldn't do anything and get stagnant. I think often there's a feeling in the

back of one's mind that action does disturb, any action of any sort, but often better mindful action and a slight disturbance of that is, I [381] find in the past, better than just making myself sit around and get sleepy. I think now perhaps one can take ..[unclear].. be useful.

S: But it does say also, "if we are conscious that we are acting from some good motive" we should go on with the activity and that good motive would apply also to keeping yourself in a fresh and active state, in that sense, and not allowing oneself to stagnate and get slothful and torpid. Even if you were making little jobs for yourself so that you didn't become dull and torpid, well that would be a good motivation, wouldn't it?

Lokamitra: This is only - as you were saying before - for the full time dhyana [practitioners].

S: Apparently full time dhyana practitioners.

Lokamitra: And not for most people who come to the centre .. have to get sila...

S: Applying mainly to people who are engaged in regular practice and don't want what they're doing in between sessions of sitting and practising to undo the good work that they've already done when they were sitting and practising. So it applies in a way to anybody with a regular practice of sitting. In other words just make sure that you're not undoing by night what you're doing by day, as it were, that you're not a sort of Pineapple of the spiritual life, [a reference to Homer's Odyssey, tr.] weaving a beautiful web of samatha, you know, while you're sitting and meditating and then unravelling it in between. You'd be a very foolish Penelope if you did that, so just make sure that you can at least do a little bit of weaving in between or at least that you're not unweaving, or perhaps that you're not unweaving too much.

Vessantara: That's easy to contemplate, sitting here, [but] I'm just thinking of going back to Archway and putting it into practice...

S: I'm sure there are lots of skilfully motivated actions just waiting to be performed. [laughter] I think we'll pause there and have our tea or coffee and then carry on... [382]

S: Anyway, now we deal with the other postures which we have to assume when we're not sitting and meditating: standing (I think we'll go through these rather more rapidly than we went through acting because I don't think there's probably all that much to say about them that hasn't been said under the heading of acting. Alright, number 2, page 470.

Padmaraja: [reads from p.470] "If we are standing because we are vexed or disturbed or are seeking some selfish thing, we should cease standing. But if we are standing for some good purpose, we should remain standing but with tranquil mind. What is meant by standing? When a man is standing, he is neither active nor at rest; he is simply 'standing by,' that is, in a position to

begin activity or sit down and relax. What is meant by practising stopping and examining under these conditions of 'standing by?' If in this condition we recall that by remaining in it we shall experience all manner of vexation and disturbance, good and evil, and also recall that our standing by mind and all the arises from it by its manifestation in activity have no substance that can be grasped then the deluding thoughts are quieted and activity ceases. Now what is meant by practising examining or insight under the condition of standing by? It means that the mind, being located in the brain is the cause of all the following vexations and disturbances both good and bad, which should lead us to reflect that not only are the vexations and disturbing activities empty of any substance, but so, also, is the 'personality' that seems to initiate the thoughts of standing by and the thoughts of activity and that all alike are emptiness and vanity. This explains the practice of examining."

S: Hmm, right. Any query about that? Standing? The principle is exactly the same as we've said about acting, except that there's the interesting point that standing is midway between being at rest and acting. You're ready for either, just like a soldier standing to attention, ready for any order that may be given to him.

Abhaya: That doesn't mean then, standing by, it doesn't literally mean standing on your two feet?

S: Yes, I think it does mean literally standing on your two feet, but the Grand Master seems to have interpreted it as associated with an attitude of standing by in as much as when you're in a standing position, you can either start walking - in other or acting - or you can sit or recline. Perhaps it is quite a good mental attitude to have that when you're not actually doing anything, you're standing by, you're ready for the call of action or the call of rest, whichever seems appropriate.

Ratnapani: Often, just standing still produces a very good mental state of its own, being ..[unclear]..

S: We shall see this when we do the walking and chanting practice, and then we hear the bell and we just are standing for a minute or so. This is quite an experience of its on, isn't it? And it's also perhaps connected with what Anginal said to the Buddha: Stand still and let me catch up with you. And the Buddha said: I am standing still; it's you who are moving. I'm standing still in nirvana - as it were - but you are moving on within the wheel of life. I appear to you to be going more quickly [383] than you are going, but actually I am standing still because my mind is at rest.

Abhaya: We say things are at a standstill.

S: Hmm, but that's a bit negative, isn't it, rather than positive? When things are at a standstill that's quite different from being in a state of standing by, which is a state of readiness.

Voice: ..[unclear].. isn't it?

S: Or stalemate. In a way the discussion is a bit artificial because in Buddhist tradition we've got these four postures, as it were, the walking, the standing, the sitting and the lying down or reclining, and the Grand Master is having to use this as his framework for discussion. Therefore he's got remarks under each of these headings, but actually it is to do with engaging of activities of any kind in between different sessions of meditation. So much of what he says under a particular heading will apply to the other headings as well. Alright, on to sitting then.

Voice: [reads from p.470] "Sitting. We have already discussed the problem of the application of stopping and examining to the condition of sitting in the practice of Dhyana; we will now only refer to it briefly. First we should ask ourselves the question: why am I sitting here? If we are sitting because of vexation and a disturbed mind, we should not do it. But if it is for some good, unselfish purpose, then we should take our seat with a concentrated but tranquil mind. What is meant by practising stopping under the condition of sitting? When we are sitting, we should comprehend that by our sitting there will be all kinds of disturbances and vexations, good and bad, and by so comprehending we will prove the arising of delusive thoughts. This is the practice of stopping. By the practice of examining at the time of sitting, we mean, that at the time of encountering the vexations and the disturbing experiences while we are sitting in practice, we should recall that it is by our sitting with legs crossed with body in right attitude that we are encountering these vexations and disturbances, but that they have no substance and will pass away. And just as we reflect that the sitting mind has no substance of its own, so the sitting 'personality' has no existence and is nothing but vanity and emptiness. This is the practice of examining as applied to the condition of sitting."

S: This presumably applies not only to sitting for meditation in a general way, but also to sitting in general, when you just happen to be sitting or resting maybe. But as applied to dhyana it suggests that you should even ask yourself, well, why am I meditating at all? Am I doing it just because it's the thing to do nowadays or because everybody else is doing it? My friends are doing it. Why am I meditating? Not, of course, in a too introspective sort of neurotically analytical fashion, but just knowing why you are doing it at any given time, what exactly the function of meditation is, what purpose it is meant to fulfil. [384]

Voice: I think it was yesterday in the section of right practice at the end of number four, it said there is a slight difference between stopping and insight which must be kept in mind when we come to passing out of concentration because a mistake in use of them at that time would be serious. And he says in a paragraph before that, there should be no inappropriateness as to which of the two one uses. I couldn't quite get that yesterday, and now I see that different personalities can use one of those methods more appropriately, or people at different levels in their development, can use...

S: Well, presumably, but it doesn't make it clear what the exact method is or

what sort of person should use which method.

Vajradaka: It doesn't, but it makes it clear what the two methods are: stopping and examining, but examining like, say, for example, is saying stopping rather is saying, oh it's all void and emptiness and sunyata. For some people this might spin them out and make them very angry.

S: I still think that that sentence at the end of that paragraph isn't clear. It isn't in the other translation so I just wonder what has happened there. If we take that sentence literally, it suggests that when you terminate a session of meditation there's the possibility of either emerging from it practising vipassana or emerging from it when you're practising samatha, and that there are definite advantages attaching to either method, but more than that we're not told. How you emerge in one way or the other, and why you should choose one way rather than the other, we're not told. Presumably it refers to your general temperament and situation. We're not given any further information, so I think we're still really in the dark as to that particular point.

Voice: Could you explain, especially in number three which we've just read, exactly how stopping and examining are different, because it seems...

S: Well this is a point that I've mentioned before. Sometimes it is quite difficult to distinguish between the two. The basis of the distinction doesn't seem very clear. It's partly, perhaps, [385] because, as I said earlier, the terms samatha and vipassana, stopping and realizing, are used rather freely, and also perhaps because the Grand Master is following the traditional framework, but that it doesn't always quite fit, not in the case of every item. After all, under every heading he's got to say something, for instance about standing, in relation to samatha, in relation to vipassana. But it's as though sometimes the distinction doesn't quite apply, the method doesn't quite work. In other words, you can't pursue it down to details too much.

Padmaraja: Do you think he can be using them in sense of vitarka and vicara, of actually holding the thing and then the investigation of the thing?

S: It could be, but that doesn't seem always to apply. I think myself if you do take the vipassana and samatha to mean what they do mean in general Buddhist tradition, in certain situations, and as applied to certain functions and activities, the force of the distinction breaks down or is no longer applicable.

Abhaya: In the text?

S: Hmm, yes, it is a little too schematic. This is what I feel. I mean, after all, the Grand Master's general point is fine. I think in a sense, all that needs to be said is said under the heading of acting. But he is, as it were, almost landed with this list of the four postures. There's not only just acting, there walking, sitting, lying, standing. And he's also landed with a few other lists. He's landed with the senses and their respective objects and he's trying to work out his method of samatha and vipassana with regard to all of these. But I think sometimes therefore it's a little bit far fetched, because all that he's trying to

do is to make sure that you go on practising samatha and vipassana in between actual sessions of sitting and practising them. So he suggests therefore that since he's got this list of four postures, well these will be the four postures that you will be assuming, and therefore he tries to work out the practice of samatha and vipassana in connection with each of those postures. Then you'll also be using the five senses, the six senses, they'll be coming into contact with their respective objects, and he tries [386] to work it out again with regard to each of the senses and each of the sense objects in turn. But again it becomes a bit too schematic and almost artificial. Do you see what is happening? This often happens in Buddhist texts and Buddhist literature by the way.

Abhaya: A bit laboured.

S: Overlaboured, yes. So sometimes because you've come to a particular item and because you've got to apply your practice of samatha and vipassana to that item, the item itself doesn't give you much scope for a definite practice either of samatha or vipassana, but you have to make that distinction. Then it all becomes a bit artificial. Do you see what is happening?

So let's go on and maybe not spend too much time on these items, let's have a more general discussion at the end about the general principle involved. Reclining.

Voice: [reads from p.471] "We should keep in mind the question as to why we are lying down. If it is because we are lazy and sleeping we ought not to do it, but if it is the regular time for sleep, or because we truly need rest, then we should do so with tranquil mind. When we lie down we should take the position the lion takes - on his right side with his feet crossed. What is meant by stopping at this time? When we are about to rest or sleep, we should recall that various disturbances and vexations of mind will follow but that all of them are unsubstantial and unreal and with that recollection the mind will become tranquil."

S: This does seem more like a vipassana exercise, doesn't it? But it is included here under the heading of samatha.

Voice: [reading continued] "By this is meant the practice of stopping at the time of reclining. What is meant by examining at the time of reclining? We should recall that it is by our hard labour and following weariness that we have become fatigued and our senses dulled. From this will follow many disturbances and vexations but that all of them, good and bad alike, are empty of any self substance and are empty and vain. We should recall also that the reclining 'personality' and all that arises from the condition of reclining are nothing but emptiness and vanity. This is the practice of examination under conditions of lying down."

S: Here too there doesn't seem to be any real difference between the samatha and the vipassana, the stopping and the realizing. Under the first he reflects that they are all insubstantial and unreal, and in the second he reflects that they are empty of self substance and are empty and vain. So, you know, this seems

really vipassana in both cases. So it seems as though the point is being laboured a bit and the distinction isn't really holding good in all these cases. But perhaps we should think about it in more general terms. I'm not quite satisfied with this treatment of the subject. Perhaps we should ask ourselves, as it were more independently, is it possible to practise samatha as distinct from vipassana and [387] vipassana as distinct from samatha when we are acting, or when we are sitting or lying down, and if so, how do we do it?

Nagabodhi: I would have thought that all one can consciously apply in practice is samatha, and the very fact that, assuming one, say, reaches the point of absorption, the mere fact of doing something is providing the object for vipassana. There's no need to add something new sort of mentally. The actual fact that what one is doing, what one's contacting, is the subject or the object of vipassana. So in a way all one has to consciously develop is samatha.

S: Hmm, yes. In other words you have to be in a highly skilful positive mental state in all senses of the term, and if you can maintain that throughout your activity, that is sufficient, that is your practice of samatha while acting. If of course in a bodhisattva-like way you can just be so completely into the action that the idea of you doing as the action as something separate from the action itself does not arise, then this would be vipassana. If you are totally into the activity that it becomes completely spontaneous and not associated in a self-conscious way with any idea of yourself being the agent, then this is the equivalent of vipassana or virtually vipassana. See what I mean?

Buddhadasa: I suddenly lost the thread of the argument.

S: Well go back then a bit, to what meditation is or what samatha is at least. Samatha is, one may say, the uninterrupted flow of skilful mental activities or skilful thoughts, the uninterrupted flow of love, peace, joy, compassion, concentration, integration, peace, faith, sensitivity. If you have an absolutely uninterrupted flow of such thoughts - I'm using the word thoughts in a very loose sense - or better still maybe mental states, this uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states is samatha. Obviously the easiest way of coming to experience that is by sitting, and, as it were, meditating and unifying your scattered thoughts with the help of a subject of concentration. And in this way the flow of the skilful mental states is induced more and more powerfully. But the point is, you can be in this state while doing something. This state of there being an uninterrupted flow [388] of skilful mental states in at first usually associated more with the sitting and meditating posture and activity, but not necessarily so. It can be continued, and you can be in that sort of highly positive state when you are performing actions or when you are speaking or when you are sitting down or lying down even. It probably is rather difficult when you are lying down because then drowsiness tends to supervene. But the point is that you can be doing something with just the same sort of flow, uninterrupted flow, of skilful mental states that you experience when you are sitting and meditating.

So this is the experience of samatha or, if you like, practice of samatha while

acting. So that's point one, or stage one, as it were.

I think it's important to realize this and encourage this sort of development: that while acting you can be in the same concentrated and positive, rigorous and peaceful state that you are when you are sitting and meditating, at least up to the first dhyana, possibly sometimes even the second one, you know, if the activity doesn't require any actual mental activity.

But then the question arises, what about the practice of insight? So what I was saying was that if you are into the activity, the skilful activity, experiencing that positive state of mind utterly and completely, so that the activity is going on with full vigour, but the concept of yourself as the doer isn't arising, even though you are vigorously active, if this sort of consciousness of yourself as the doer is not broken off from the action and doesn't become a sort of separate subject of the action, you're simply functioning, as it were, impersonally, you're doing whatever needs to be done - the flow of positive mental states, skilful mental states, but no consciousness: I am doing this - then that is vipassana or the equivalent of vipassana.

Abhaya: Why do you say the equivalent of vipassana?

S: Well, it's putting it in different terms, as it were, and this in a way corresponds to - though I use these sort of comparisons with some caution - what [389] the Bhagavad Gita refers to as nishkama karma yoga, that is to say, the yoga of disinterested action. You are just functioning, as it were, impersonally. There's no 'you' involved in it as a separate agent, neither is the activity for the sake of that agent, it's selfless, one can say. It's just pure impersonal functioning. Do you get the idea of the sort of thing involved?

Buddhadasa: By this then, the subject can never in fact experience vipassana; there's just vipassana.

S: Right, yes, there's never really anything except the action.

Padmapani: But it's not quite on this level of no subject object. I mean this would be a much higher level wouldn't it?

S: It's certainly heading in that direction. It's certainly moving in that direction, yes.

Padmapani: Would it be correct to put this down in notes?

S: Yes, right, because when it says no subject object it doesn't mean just some great big blank. It's much nearer to this impersonal activity. Activity without a subject and without an object, as it were, just impersonal functioning, just on and on sort of uninterruptedly and happily. It's not a sort of blank state where nothing exists. Quite a few people do experience at least a glimpse or a taste of this occasionally when they get really absorbed in something. There's a touch of it at least, maybe not amounting to vipassana but certainly the quite unimpeded and quite free, flowing, positive activity. I think this is very important, and it's

very important to stress this as a very definite aspect or manifestation of the total spiritual life. [390] [Tape 16 Side B]

S: This is equivalent again to meditation. When you're in that state, whether you're washing the dishes or painting a picture, you are virtually meditating or you are doing whatever it is people do when they meditate. You're experiencing this uninterrupted flow of positive mental states, creative mental states, and no idea of a subject of all that as a separate entity is being, as it were, attached to it.

Abhaya: I was thinking that, perhaps although when we get to this level it doesn't matter what we do or what we're doing, I think there is a lot to be said for having some kind of creative outlet or some kind of work which you do regularly, not mechanically, where you cut out all unnecessary, well, what am I going to do with.... You have the tools as it were, and there's a good chance that you're going to be able to approach this kind of, you know, all beyond subject object...

S: Yes, especially if what you are objectively doing can be identified as right livelihood, and that's its objective justification, as it were, that it is livelihood and it's right livelihood and then one's approach to it can be the, as it were, meditative approach.

Abhaya: Because the more you think about it like, with a lot of activity you waste so much time having thoughts about, you know, really having thoughts about whether it is what you should be doing or why you didn't decide to do something else.

S: Hmm.

Padmapani: It seems to fit into the whole idea, you know, of the creative life as opposed to the reactive life.

S: Hmm, yes.

Padmapani: When one gets into, you know, really creative things, then one's ?falsely discursive thought, when one gets into it, almost goes out. One's purely concentrating on what one's done. [391] I even personally forget things like cups of tea. [laughter] It has happened, you know. [inaudible comments and laughter]

S: Well, there are people who forget food, believe it or not.

Ratnapani: I often find actually, almost being under duress rather than of blanking out of the mind, can produce something approaching this where all should or shouldn't, can or can't, has to go because there just isn't the energy to spare for it. It just has to be that it takes everything you've got to do this.

S: This is why it is very good sometimes to be in a very crucial, very demanding situation when there's a sort of total demand on you, and then you're fully energized and fully functioning in response to that demand, and, as you said, no energy to waste for unnecessary thinking. All your energies are absorbed in

the task at hand, or to hand, and you're completely aware of what is happening. This is again a good example of integrated awareness. In this sort of functioning your awareness can only be integrated awareness. You can't function in this way with an alienated awareness. No, that would only have an inhibiting, jarring, interrupting effect.

Ratnapani: I'd say in fact for myself that this sort of thing is, well, I wouldn't say as important, or more, but an extremely important part of my spiritual life, this sort of physical...

S: Well, to come back to more general terms, the Grand Master is saying, as it were, that meditation is good, good to develop samatha, good to develop vipassana. The posture in which you can most easily do this is the sitting one, the sitting practice, but in between you'll have to do other things, adopt other postures, so what I'm saying is that you should be careful to see that you just maintain that same flow of, as it were, creativity, that you can do this, in fact that you should do this, you must do this. Some people may find this more easy than sitting and practising.

So it just isn't a question of improving your practice by prolonging the hours of sitting. That's sort of - a bit - confusing the means with the end. But you just need to be in a sort of creative [392] positive frame of mind, all the time spontaneously functioning, and when you sit to practise, well, in as much as that's the easiest posture in which to do that sort of thing, then you just experience a heightened, an even more heightened, flow of positive mental states and creativity, an even greater spontaneity. It's just an enhancement of what's going on normally, not a rarefied high as contrasted with your usual lowly and negative state. But obviously there's got to be some cooperation from circumstances, from our general way of life, from our means of livelihood, even society and the world at large, except perhaps in the case of the most developed, bodhisattva-like people who are able to go on functioning positively under almost any circumstances, no matter what trials or what obstacles.

Padmapani: I was going to say this question of timelessness comes in at this point.

S: Yes, it certainly does.

Padmapani: One doesn't seem to experience time in the normal sense, it seems to sort of - I don't want to use the word expanding, I just...

sort 7f.

S: Well, you sort of experience what I call organic time, not clock time. Your time is at one with what you're doing. You're not measuring what you're doing against the time external to itself.

Padmapani: It seems like everything seems sort of fresh and young. It's almost as if one's quite surprised at the time, you know, when one tends to come out

of these states, that time's gone by so quickly, or you experience that the sun's gone down and it's dark outside, for instance.

S: But you see the main point? That this constant flow of creative thoughts or skilfulness of states is to be kept up all the time regardless of posture. Some postures make it easier to keep up this flow rather than others, but it really is possible at all times and in all postures, and that should be the real aim of our practice, not just having a good meditation in a narrow sense, however frequently.

Voice: You could say that the activity undertaken by bodhisattvas is not so much something he's decided to do for various reasons [393] but it's in fact not different from meditation.

S: Yes, you could say this sure. But anyway, we're sort of dealing with this general subject of how to practise samatha specifically and vipassana specifically in connection with activities other than formal meditation. So the general idea seems to be that it's the continued flow of skilful states that constitutes the samatha in such cases, and the absence of any sense of I am doing this particular thing, I am responsible for this the particular activity, which constitutes the vipassana side. So this is very much the bodhisattva way of functioning, the bodhisattva activity, because as the Diamond Sutra points out, the Bodhisattva reflects: all these beings of various kinds I shall lead. to nirvana, but on the other hand there are no beings who are led by me. But the bodhisattva has to reflect that he will do all this, but he also reflects that he is not doing it. In other words there's no separate consciousness of himself as doing the action. It's simply the action being done.

Abhaya: You seem to imply by that quotation that the being referred to is in fact the subject in a set of activity, or have I misunderstood it?

S: I'm not quite sure what you mean.

Abhaya: Well, you were talking about the being involved in some activity with no sense of I am doing it, and then you said. . .

S: Oh, this is just because language compels one to speak like that. If somebody wants to communicate, well, he just has to say, well, I'm going to do this for such and such beings. But in his own inner consciousness there's no beings and there's no bodhisattva doing anything for those beings. There's just this flow of bodhisattva activity.

Abhaya: But does the beings refer to the subject as well as the object in normal terms?

S: No, it refers to the beings that he is going to help, the four classes of beings. But again one must emphasize that there are [394] quite a few people who at their best moments experience something like this, or if not something like this at least something so analogous that they can understand what the Buddhist scriptures speak about when they describe the Bodhisattva's mode of functioning:

something quite spontaneous, with your awareness fully integrated with what you're doing, not broken off from it, and with no consciousness of a subject of the action separate from the subject itself. In ordinary language you are completely with what you are doing, you can't really distinguish between what you are doing and yourself as doing it, or yourself as the doer of what you are doing. Does that make it clear?

Sagaramati: I think of somebody like, you know, a telephone operator. [laughter]

S: Well why pick on a telephone operator?

Sagaramati: Well, you know, I mean somebody at a switchboard, you know. They're obviously not thinking about what they're doing, they're completely into it. They're not conscious of, sort of, them actually doing anything. They seem to be integrated into their action but at the same time ...

S: Yes, but it seems here that it is not sort of spontaneous, it's more sort of instinctive, it's gone a bit below the threshold of consciousness. Possibly this is a good thing in view of the fact that the work is boring and repetitive, and that the less conscious part of the mind can take care of it and the conscious mind is occupied with other things, which I believe is usually just chatting with other telephonists, and it's only that makes the work supportable. No doubt the chatter is quite unmindful sometimes and quite unskilful, and the actual work being rather mechanical and ordinary and repetitious is relegated to a less conscious part of the mind. If there's some difficult question or problem arises, then the conscious mind can take over and attend to it. So this wouldn't be really analogous except in so far as the, you know, the instinctual activity is analogous to the higher spontaneous activity.

Abhaya: What's the difference then, Bhante, between this state of mind you're talking about and, say, being absorbed in a book? [395] You may open a book and be very interested in the subject matter, and you don't notice the time passing because you're completely absorbed in that book. One wouldn't say then that you were in this highly spiritual state would you?

S: But again it would depend upon the nature of the book too, wouldn't it? What sort of feelings, emotions, thoughts, the book was giving you.

Abhaya: Well, taking that there were no negative feelings, maybe, say let's take an example of a book about British Railways and you're completely absorbed in it and you're not distracted in any way. You're really interested in British Railways, [but] you wouldn't say in that case that you were in a highly spiritual state?

S: You are concentrated, but concentration is only one of the mental factors required for these higher mental states. There needs also to be intense joy and ecstasy, bliss, peace and so on. You may be very interested in your book on the railways, but you don't quite experience those things. There is just a rather ordinary though quite definite concentration without these other positive mental factors being present. But if you are into meditation, or into some very absorbing

activity in which you really believe, then there's much more possibility of these other positive factors to be there. There's also the question of expenditure of energy, and it does seem that, other factors being equal, that activity is most pleasurable and intense where there is the greatest expenditure of energy.

Ratnapani: And in this case of the book, doesn't the word absorption have connotations of loss of mindfulness?

S: Well, I'm assuming that isn't the case, because Abhaya said assuming there were no negative factors present.

Padmapani: But if you could take the cases, say, of Abhaya looking at this book and one's going into the state of absorption, presumably, you know, one could go through the dhyana states while one is getting into the absorption, and then one would start experiencing very, very powerful experiences and maybe... [396]

S: This is why I said it depended on the nature of the book. Supposing for instance instead of taking up a book on British Railways, Abhaya takes up, say, a pornographic work. He could get quite concentrated. [laughter] Well, in Buddhism there is quite a distinction between unskilful concentration and skilful concentration. Unskilful concentration is concentration which comes about through craving or hatred or confusion. So when it is that sort of confusion, the positive mental factors which are present in skilful concentration cannot arise. So this is the extreme example, his unskilful concentration on the book on pornography with perhaps rather dull unskilful mental states of craving arising. Alright, then he puts aside the work of pornography, turns back to his book on British Railways, and there's a sort of a flicker of a slightly more positive interest. The concentration becomes a bit less unskilful, at least the element of craving that was present in the first instance disappears, and it's more sort of quiet, subdued interest. But suppose he puts that aside and turns to a volume of Shelley, he might get, well, equally concentrated and absorbed, but now the mental factors are a sort of thrill of interest and happiness and maybe joy and be quite carried away. He might be reading about Shelley's Skylark and might start feeling like a skylark himself and really carried away by this and be in a much more concentrated and skilful state. Then of course he might pick up a Buddhist sutra and get really carried away, and in this way be virtually in a dhyana state. But the difference has been made by the addition of more and more positive mental factors. The concentration is only one mental factor and it can be present in skilful and in unskilful mental states.

Padmapani: It seems to denote that if one is using one's concentration it's just one part or factor in meditation ..[unclear].. bypassed, then that's going to be used up. If one is going to continually be in unskilful states, one won't be able to get into the deeper absorptions.

S: That's right. Hence the importance of the in-between practice.

Padmapani: Reading the right books. [laughter]

S: Yes, reading the right books, watching the right telly programmes etc, talking to the right people, meeting the right people. [397]

Padmapani: Keeping in touch with the sangha.

S: Right, yes. Well, I think the general point that I've been trying to make emerges quite clearly, doesn't it? Yes? This is something I've been thinking about quite a bit recently, that there should be more and more emphasis on this constant cultivation of positive mental states whatever one is doing. That one shouldn't think of these as it were dhyana experiences too exclusively in association with sitting and meditating. One should think in terms of a constant flow of these skilful mental states and mental factors going on all the time, whatever one is doing. Not that one can do anything at all and keep up this flow, but that one should be careful to engage only in activities which enable you to keep up the flow, and there are quite a few activities which do. Just avoid those which seem to interrupt the flow or slow it down or obscure it or make it a bit murky.

So this is really what the Grand Master is getting at in a rather cumbersome sort of way with this rather artificial distinction between practising samatha and practising vipassana, practising stopping, practising realizing, in these different situations with regard to these different postures and senses and sense objects.

Alright, let's go onto five then. This is doing things. I don't see how this is different from acting, but let's see.

Buddhadasa: [reads from p.471] "Doing things. When we are prompted to do things we should ask ourselves, why should we do them? If it is an instinctive act, or an evil, selfish act we should not do it. If it is a good act for the welfare of others then we should do it. During the act various vexations and disturbing thoughts will arise both good and bad. To get rid of these thoughts we should practise stopping by means of realizing the emptiness and vanity of all thoughts, by reason of which practice the deluding thoughts will disappear. This is the practice of stopping at the time of doing things."

S: That doesn't seem to add very much to what we've already seen. Right, go on to speaking.

Nagabodhi: Can I?...

S: Yes. [398]

Nagabodhi: Just thinking about the thing that we should be mindful that we are doing things with the hands and the body wholly under command of the mind, it sounds a bit like a basis for that kind of vipassana practice you were talking about.

S: Hmm, that's true, yes.

Sagaramati: Could you say what it means by mind? It mentions there about the mind being located in the brain.

S: I noticed that. I rather think this might not be in the original. You don't usually have this in Buddhists texts. If any particular base is mentioned it's the heart or [the] Chinese source is the stomach. Just where was that? I'll look it up in the other translation.

? It's the second paragraph, section two.

S: Give me the sentence.

Voice: This is from the beginning of the paragraph: "Now what is meant by practising examining or insight under the condition of standing by? It means that the mind, being located in the brain, is the cause of all the following vexations and disturbances both good and bad."

S: No, there's nothing about brain here. "If the practiser knows that because of his staying" - this is the term used here in this translation for standing, "all sorts of trouble (klesa), as well as good and evil things, will result, and if he clearly knows that his mind set on staying and that all things arising therefrom cannot be found anywhere, his perverted thoughts will come to an end." [Luk, p.134] Here it says simply "his mind set on staying"; nothing about brain, so I assume that brain is added by Goddard and the other translator.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.472] "Speaking. While we are speaking we should keep in mind the reason for our speaking. If it is mere arguing, or vexatious discussion, or wild words prompted by instinctive moods, then we should keep silent, but if it is for some good, unselfish purpose, then we may speak."

S: I think there's something definitely to be discussed here or at least understood. The rest seems more or less as before. [399]

It draws attention to the fact that very often our speaking and talking is quite unskilfully motivated. The Grand Master refers to "mere arguing, or vexatious discussion, or wild words prompted by instinctive moods". These sort of things are very common, so rather than indulge in these kinds of speaking we should just remain silent.

We should know why we are speaking. We should know the reason. It's quite easy to forget this. You might have a reason when you started to speak, but then you get sort of worked up and you just go on and on, especially if an argument or discussion develops, and you get quite carried away and you're just letting off steam and letting fly right left and centre, and you sort of forget the meaning and purpose, or you lose sight, of the overall context of the discussion. Or you lose sight of your overall relationship with the people to whom you are speaking and the whole sort of context in which you're coming together and the discussion takes place. We often find this in discussions. People are getting more and more heated about less and less, about issues which are getting further and further away from what you originally started talking about. This is quite noticeable.

So, in principle, the same things apply here as applied to acting. You can go on speaking very positively almost in a sort of dhyana-like way, and also in

non-egoistic way, with no sort of consciousness of self, and this to apply, as it were, samatha and vipassana to your speaking. But I think it's quite careful to distinguish this from just sort of letting go and speaking maybe quite fluently but unmindfully, and the mindfulness must include the total situation, not just what you are saying but who you are speaking to, why you are speaking, and so on, and everything that that implies. I mean you can hear many public speakers who just go on speaking very fluently with great energy and animation and emotion, but in a way it's quite blind, they don't really know what they're doing, they have no awareness of the total effect of their words and the total implications. And political speakers are very much of this sort, you know, mob orators and so on. You get quite a few of them in India.

Padmapani: Does it come down to this question, sometimes, of when one speaks, [400] centring oneself to form a sort of centre. I notice that - I've never delivered a lecture - it seems like a lot of Order members, before they give lectures, they tell their beads, like a mantra, does that sort of have a centring effect?

S: Presumably, yes, so that ...

Padmapani: A sort of mandala quality. Is that right?

Ratnapani: Calming the nerves. [laughter]

S: Sometimes it can be as simple as that.

Padmapani: You can see I haven't given a lecture.

S: Well, you probably won't be saying that this time next year. [laughter] I mean, what does centring mean? It just means stability and integration and poise and so on, so that you speak out of that. Any further point about speaking? Alright, let's go on to the senses then.

Lokamitra: You want to go through the rest of the speaking?

S: Oh sorry, there is another, yes, go through that.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.472] "What is meant by practising of stopping at the time of speaking? If we recall that much vexatious disturbances arises from speaking, be it from good motive or bad motive, and comprehend that the speaking mind and all vexations arising from its activities have no substance that can be grasped, then our delusive thoughts will come to a natural end. This is what is called the practice of stopping at the time of speaking. What is meant by the practice of examining at the time of speaking? In the practice of examining at the time of speaking we are to keep in mind that we are consciously and wilfully giving our thoughts expression by forcing our breath through our throat, tongue, palate, teeth and lips, and that we have different sounding voices and different use of words, and that by our speaking we are giving rise to vexatious and disturbing feelings, both good and bad. We should reflect that the speaking mind has no visible appearance, and that the speaking personality and all the disturbances that arise from speaking, are nothing after all but emptiness

and vanity. This is what is meant by the practice of examining at the time of speaking."

S: It's quite enough if we say that whether we're acting or speaking, or standing, or sitting and so on - it's quite enough to say that if we're engaged in those activities we keep up a positive and uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states, that is samatha. And if we don't think of ourself as the agent, that is vipassana. That is all that really needs to be said. If we are fully unified with our action, that we're not conscious of ourselves apart from the action whatever it may be, that [401] really summarizes this particular section or series of sections.

Sagaramati: What about speaking when maybe you're in an unskilful state? Where you have to speak,...

S: What do you mean by 'have to'?

Sagaramati: Well, say somebody asks you a question, admittedly you don't have to but there are occasions when as it were you can't hide a negative emotion behind your speech...

S: Well it depends very much on the nature of the question. You can give a sort of objective reply which is not affected by your own unskilful state, but it means it's a bit alienated. For instance, somebody might ask you how to practise mindfulness of breathing when you're not at all in a meditative mood, and it really would ideally be best if you didn't have to explain about the mindfulness of breathing to them when you were in that state. But supposing you thought it was unavoidable, then you would have to give a very objective explanation, that is to say without any feeling in it, because the only feeling you had to give would be negative and that wouldn't be appropriate. So your reply would simply have to purvey information which would be quite adequate probably, up to a point - it wouldn't mislead anybody - but how much better would it have been if you'd really been able to put your own positive emotion into what you have said, so that it becomes more than just purveying information - it becomes a real communication about meditation or about mindfulness. So that when we are in an unskilful state in that sense and we are asked a question which means we can't put any emotion into what we are saying, that is if we decide negative emotion is inappropriate, we can only fall back on conveying or imparting information, even about Buddhism, though that isn't obviously the best way of communicating about Buddhism. This is what you feel about some books on Buddhism: they only convey information, and not always correct information at that! There's no skilful mental state behind it all, much less still insight. Alright then, let's go on to seven.

Nagabodhi: [reads from p.473] "We are to practise stopping whenever our eyes notice sights. This means that whenever our eyes catch sight of any object we are to recall that the apparent object has no more reality than the moonlight in the pond. So if it is a pleasing sight we are not to let desire for it arise in the mind, and if it is a repulsive sight we are not to let a feeling of aversion arise, and if it is an indifferent sight we are not to let ignorance of its meaning

disturb the mind. This is what is meant by the practice of stopping at the time of catching sights by the eyes." [402]

S: Well this is very similar to guarding the gates of the senses, isn't it? I don't see how it differs from that. Anyway, carry on.

Nagabodhi: [reads from p.473] "Now, what is meant by practising examining in the act of seeing? We should keep in mind that whatever we see with our eyes is no more than vanity in emptiness. What do we mean by this? It means that if we are to seek for it, we could find no differentiated substance either in the internal organs or if the object, or in space, or in the light. Our consciousness of this opposed object is a phenomena that is dependent upon the reaction of the light upon the eye, a variety of other causes and conditions among which is the mental process that springs up in the mind because of the reaction by which we make distinctions between the various sights we see. Thus from the sights we see we experience all manner of vexations and disturbances, good and bad. We should immediately reflect that our sight mindful thought has no visible appearance, and we should understand, also, that the sight seeing personality and all that arises from sight seeing are nothing after all but vanity and emptiness. This is what is meant by the practice of examining at the time of catching sights by our eyes."

S: Let's go on to eight and go through all of these. We haven't got really much time left. And just see what sort of overall impression the whole series makes and whether there is anything to be said about it in general.

Ratnapani: [reads from p.473-4] "We are to practise stopping and examining at the time of hearing sounds by our ears. That is, just as soon as we are conscious of a sound we are to think of it as of no more value than an echo. If it a pleasing sound we are not to let it awaken any craving desire, and if it is a discordant sound we are not to let it give rise to any fear or hatred, or if it is an indifferent sound we are not to be curious or disturbed. This is what is meant by the practice of stopping under hearing conditions.

"What is meant by the practice of examining the conditions of hearing? We should immediately recall that every sound is an unreality. A sound is only the reaction of the hearing apparatus as it comes into contact with its appropriate field of vibration and the ear mind is stimulated and the mental processes distinguishes differences. By reason of this we have all kinds of vexatious and disturbing thoughts, both good and bad. This is what is involved in hearing. As we reflect that the hearing mind has no visible appearance we should understand that the hearing personality and all that arises from hearing are nothing after all but emptiness and vanity. This is what is meant by the practice of examining under the conditions of hearing."

S: In other words, hearing in these two sections. What is suggested is that we make the occasion of sense experience an opportunity for reflecting upon, or realizing, a conditioned co-production or dependent origination. That here we have the sense organ, there we have the sense object, and when they come

together there's a certain sense experience. So this is another example of the rising of something in dependence on conditions.

So our sense experience itself should be a reminder to us of the.... [403] [Tape 11 Side A] Obviously it isn't something you can stop and think about, because if you stop and think about it, that stopping and thinking will probably inhibit the process of sense perception itself. So it shouldn't be a sort of artificial procedure, otherwise we are back to this rather sort of alienated, analytical examination that we spoke about in connection with the so-called vipassana type of practice. It's probably safer where sense experience is concerned simply to practise mindfulness and awareness and to guard the gates of the senses and perhaps to have a sort of general diffused consciousness of conditionality rather than to sort of be stopping every second and to be analysing particular sense impressions which, as I said, would have quite an inhibiting sort of effect. This probably applies to the other senses too. Let's go on then. Smelling.

Voice: [reads from p.474] "We are to practise stopping and examining at the time of smelling. This is meant, that, whenever a scent is noticed, we are to think of it immediately as a make believe bonfire. If it is a pleasant fragrance we are not to give way to a craving desire for it, if it is a disagreeable smell, we are not to let a feeling of aversion or dislike spring up, and, if it is an indifferent odour, any feeling of disturbance. This is what is meant by the practice of stopping at the time of smelling.

"What is meant by the practice of examining at the time of smelling? We should immediately recollect that what we are smelling is unreal and deluding. Why? Because it is only a phenomena that is involved in the concurrence of the nose, by reason of which we perceive a consciousness of smell and the mind proceeds to differentiate it from other smells. From this there arises all manner of thoughts, vexatious and disturbing, both good and bad. As we reflect that our smelling has no substantial appearance, we should decide that our smelling personality and all that arises from smelling are nothing after all but emptiness and vanity. This is what is meant by the practice of examining at the time of smelling."

S: It's the same sort of pattern, the same sort of procedure, as before. But it does seem to me as though we need to have a sort of separate consideration of conditionality which we carry over into these sort of situations of sense perception rather than be stopping every instant and working it out as it were with regard to a particular sense perception. This would of course be absolutely impossible if you even tried to do it literally, because there are millions of such sense perceptions going on all the time, every hour. On to ten then.

Padmapani: [reads from p.474-5] "We are to practise stopping at the time of tasting. This means that whenever we taste anything we should immediately think of it as having no more substantiality than a dream experience. If it is a pleasing taste we should not crave it; if it is a repulsive taste we should not be troubled by it; if it is an indifferent taste we should ignore it. This is the practice of stopping under the condition of tasting. What is meant is meant by

the practice of examining at the time of tasting? It means that whenever we experience the sensation of taste we are immediately to remember that taste is nothing that has any reality about it. Why has it no reality? Because, although we distinguish six kinds of taste there is no substantial difference between them, they are all alike sensations that involve the tongue and its internal apparatus from which a sense consciousness arises, followed by a consciousness that is dependent upon the mental processes that notices differences from which arise all manner of vexatious and disturbing thoughts, both good and bad. As we reflect that out tasting mind has no substantial appearance we are forced to conclude that our tasting personality and all that arises from tasting are nothing but emptiness and vanity. This is what is meant by the practice of examining at the time of tasting." [404]

S: Exactly the same pattern. You notice that the Grand Master says of the six kinds of taste, there is no substantial difference between them. He means in respect of their being equally dependent upon causal factors, not that one kind of taste is the same as another. Tastes as tastes are different. Tastes as equally arising in dependence on causal factors are the same. And I say this a propos of our discussion about food and taste some time ago, was it this seminar? It was, yes, and the correspondence in Shabda. Right, on to eleven then.

Abhaya: [reads from p.475] "We are to practise stopping and examining at the time of touching things. No matter what the hands or body touches we should think right away that it is unreal and visionary. If we receive pleasing sensations from what we touch we are not to become fond of it, and if the sensations are disagreeable and painful we are not to cherish dislike nor hatred for it, and if the sensations are indifferent we should not try to make distinctions nor carry them in memory. This is what is meant by stopping when in contact with tangibles.

What is meant by the practice of examining at the time of touching things? We should remember at once that all such feelings as heaviness and lightness, warmth and coldness, smoothness and roughness, have no reality except in our thoughts, and that the six parts of our skeleton are only names. As these sensations are known to be shame and visions. . . "

S: Probably dreams and visions. It's probably a misprint. [Later editions have "name and visions", tr.]

Ratnapani: Shapes?

S: Could be shapes.

Abhaya: ". . . so we must recognize that the things and our body that gives rise to the sensations are unreal also. No sooner are causes and conditions blended then there arise sensations, perceptions and consciousness, and from these arise memory and distinctions and discriminations of happiness and suffering.

"This is what is meant by the sensation of touch. At such times we are to reflect that the feeling mind has no visible appearance and from that we should know that the feeling personality and all the arises from tangibles are also empty and

vain. This is what is meant by the practice of examining under the conditions of contact and the sensation of touch."

S: Back to the same pattern again. Right, let's go on then. The last one.

Vessantara: [reads from p.475] "We are to practise stopping and examining at all times when the mind is engaged in thinking, but as this subject has already been fully discussed at the beginning of this treatise, we will not dwell on it further. At the time when we are sitting in Dhyana we may find ourselves hindered by any one of these sense hindrances and should employ the corresponding means of relief, but as these have been now fully explained in the foregoing paragraphs we will not repeat them here. As any one of us becomes capable of applying these teachings to his practice of Dhyana, whether he is acting, standing, sitting, reclining, looking, listening, feeling, or consciousness, he may know that he is practising Mahayana Dhyana truly. It is said in 'The Maha-vagga Sutra:'

"'The lord Buddha said to his disciple Sona, if Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas know how to act at the time of their acting, know how to sit at the time of their sitting, or even know how to wear the robe of a disciple at the time of wearing the robe, and how to enter the practice of Dhyana, at the time of entering, and how to retire at the time of retiring, then they may be rightfully called, Maha-Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas.'

"If we are able to practise the Mahayana at any time and place, as stated above, we are worthy to be known as the highest and supreme one in all the world and that none other is to be compared with us. It is said in 'The Mahayana Shastra:' 'To desire the happiness of the gods, you must retire to the quiet forest, give up all evil ways, free yourself from all lustful desires, and with tranquil mind practise Dhyana.

"Now, you are craving for worldly things, lust, and riches and ambition, but such things cannot give you peace for there would be no satisfying of these desires. But we, the wearers of the mended robes, live in quiet retirement with minds tranquil and concentrated at all times, whether acting or standing or sitting, and by so doing, we are enlightening ourselves with wisdom, observing all things in their true nature.

"As we continue under these conditions, observing all phenomena with equitable and tranquil minds, our minds will gain serenity and understanding, and insight that will transcend the possibilities of this triple world."'

S: So the whole of this chapter six, Right Practices or Main Practice, has related to the application of samatha and vipassana, both while we are actually meditating, to the mind itself, and in between, as it were, when we are not meditating in the technical sense. The main point that is being made throughout is that in some form or [405] other the samatha and vipassana is to be kept up all the time. There are no holidays, no days off, that it's a full time occupation, again, in one form or another. It's not a question of lengthening your sittings indefinitely, but doing at other times as best you can what you are trying to do

at the time of sitting.

Any query or comment on that whole topic before we close?

Of course, in many respects it's easier said than done, and the majority of people, certainly at the beginning, will have a really positive experience. An experience of really skilful mental states, possibly even a glimmer of insight only in connection with the sitting practice, but certainly this sort of experience is to be prolonged outside the sitting practice itself.

Abhaya: Do you think we might have a short period tomorrow on questions about the vipassana practice?

S: You mean the practices we've been doing? Yes, sure. Let me just try and work out how many chapters we've got left and how many days or how many sessions. We're going to have three more sessions and seven, eight, nine, ten... We've got four more chapters, one of which is very short. So we could talk about these vipassana practices either at the beginning or the end of the session tomorrow. I don't mind what we do.

Nagabodhi: I'd rather the end.

S: At the end. Does everyone agree with that? If everyone happy with that? OK. And what about the silence today? What do you feel about that? Anyone got tired of silence or think it's rather over-rated? Anyone like to have more, or a little less, or just the same?

Padmaraja: Let's continue it, maybe after lunch. I'm quite happy to.

Vajradaka: Hmm, I think we should have a little time for talk.

Voice: I'm not sure. [406]

S: Well I have to talk whether I like it or not, because someone is coming to see me. Well, maybe it should be as yesterday, from four o'clock tea? Is that alright? Until ten o'clock discussion and study. That gives enough time for silence and enough time for talking? Yes?

Vajradaka: I think probably a more natural flow of silence is...

Vessantara: Will Michael Waller be staying all afternoon?

S: I've no idea. I only know he's coming at two thirty. How long he wants to stay I just don't know. I assume he wouldn't be in too great a hurry.

Lokamitra: I'd like to talk to him perhaps about fund raising in Hong Kong. Perhaps he might give us some suggestions.

S: That might be a good idea. Well, perhaps we can entertain him to tea, that might be a good idea. It might be a good idea to let him, say, have about a half an hour with me and then you can bring along some tea, and maybe bring along Vessantara too, and perhaps have a more general conversation. I don't think he's got anything very special to say to me but just to make the contact and

have a little chat. So leave him with me for about half an hour, and then trip in with the tea etc. Any other point?

Voice: I didn't get down the Bhagavad Gita. Nish?...

S: Nishkama karma yoga. Nishkama means without desire, i.e. without selfish motivation.

Voice: I seem to feel very tired.

Voice: I feel very tired.

S: I don't. Let's have a little ... who feels a bit tired today? Hands up. [text cut off bottom of page] [407]

[The beginning of Day Eight is a discussion about a reading 'All meet in the Centre.']

S: Alright then, let's go on with Dhyana for Beginners.

Sagaramati: [reads from p.476-7] " 'The Development and Manifestation of Good Qualities'. As we become competent in the practice of stopping and insight, we will first come to an understanding of the emptiness and unreality of phenomena and then we will become able to avoid them as hindrances to our practice; then both our body and mind will become pure and serene. In this condition many kinds of good qualities will develop and manifest themselves. We will now briefly describe two different kinds of development of such good qualities. The first kind is the development of external good qualities, such as the giving of alms, keeping the Precepts, being filial to parents, respectful to elders, making offerings to images, observing the scriptural teachings, and many other good qualities. But as these good outward developments may be confused with similar outward developments of evil qualities, we must be on our guard. The distinction between good external developments and bad developments will not be considered at this time, but should be kept in mind. The second kind is the development of internal good qualities by which we mean the good qualities that develop and manifest themselves in the course of our Dhyana practice. There are three groups of these good qualities:... "

S: Let's consider what we've read first. The Grand Master says that as one practises dhyana, as one becomes more experienced, then various good qualities start manifesting themselves, so he's going to describe two different kinds of development of such good qualities, and the first kind is the development of external good qualities, such as the giving of alms, the keeping of precepts, being filial to parents, respectful to elders, making offerings to images, observing the spiritual teachings and many other good qualities. So this is quite straightforward, this is only to be expected, that as you get more and more into your dhyana, as you have more and more experience, as you start developing a much more positive mind, a much stronger flow of skilful mental states then this will show itself outwardly in these various ways. This seems to be fairly obvious. Does anyone want to comment on that point before we go on to something else?

Has anybody actually noticed this in the course, say, of a meditation retreat? Does one's own experience agree with what the Grand Master says here, or is this some other kind of external manifestation of good qualities? What about giving of alms?

Do people actually feel, or do people actually find, that as they get more into meditation they feel more generous, more inclined to give? Does this actually happen? Or does it remain just a feeling or does one actually give? [laughter] The Grand Master says here, the giving of alms not just to get a sort of mild feeling to give that rather quickly passes away. Hmm? Yes? Good. Anything that the Grand Master doesn't mention that one has noticed? Any good quality that tends to manifest itself externally? [408]

Ratnapani: A general one is just friendliness.

S: Friendliness?

Ratnapani: I mean not particularly to parents or seniors.

Voice: Better communication.

S: Better communication, yes. The being filial to parents is perhaps a slightly Chinese touch. Even the translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese were fond of adding filial piety to the list. Whenever they translated, even when it wasn't in the original, they usually added on filial piety [laughter] to make even the Buddha's word more acceptable to the Chinese, especially to the Confucian literati.

What about making offerings to images? In other words, puja. Does one find the practice of dhyana affecting that?

Voices: [General murmurs of agreement]

S: And many other good qualities.

Lokamitra: What struck me when I first read this was making offerings to images, puja as being an external good quality.

S: Well in as much as it is not so much the feeling of devotion that is being referred to but its external manifestation in concrete actions. In other words it's strong enough to manifest externally. It doesn't remain just something emotional in one's own mind.

But, says the Grand Master, as these good outward developments may be confused with similar outward developments of evil qualities, we must be on our guard. The distinction between good external development and bad development will not be considered at this time but should be kept in mind. Now what's meant by that?

Ratnapani: I really thought it was talking about democracy.

S: That certainly seems to be suggested.

Padmapani: I thought dogmatic ritual. [409]

S: Not only that but doing what are, in a sense, the right things with the wrong motives. Not out of the skilful mental states you've generated through dhyana but through unskilful mental states. For instance, supposing to you keep the precepts, but you're keeping them simply to be able to pass as a respectable member of society, or even so that you may get to heaven after death. This would be, from a higher spiritual point of view, a lower, less skilful motivation. Or you might be filial to your parents because you hope to inherit something from them later on, which would be a rather unskilful motivation. Or you might be giving alms because there are people watching, people seeing what you were doing, and perhaps you want to make a good impression.

Perhaps evil qualities is a bit strong. "But as these good outward developments may be confused with similar outward developments of evil qualities, we must be on our guard." I mean if you experience a steady flow of skilful mental states due to the practice of dhyana then it is to be expected that you will behave in this sort of way. But if you see people behaving in this sort of way, if you yourself behave in this sort of way, it is not necessarily due to the overflow, as it were, of skilful states generated in dhyana. Now any further query or comment about that? Alright, let's go on.

"The second kind is the development of internal good qualities by which we mean the good qualities that develop and manifest themselves in the course of our Dhyana practice. There are three groups of these good qualities. In the first group there are five of these good qualities." [410]

[Tape 17, Side B]

S: Let's go on from there.

Padmaraja: [reads from pp.477-8] "The development of good qualities by right breathing: As we become competent in the practice of stopping and examining, both our body and mind will become regulated and adjusted and the delusions of our minds will cease. As our thinking gradually dies down, our minds will become tranquil and concentrated and the development and manifestation of good qualities will go one as far as they can go on under the conditions of this Karma world of action. But it is not until we begin to advance along the ten stages of bodhisattvahood that our bodies and minds come into a state of perfect tranquillity and our Dhyana mind attains a state of safety and abiding peace. At this earlier stage of Dhyana, we do not at first notice any tangible result either of body or mind, but after one sitting or two sittings, or it may not be until one day or two days, or after one month or two months, we will gradually become conscious that we are being forced to keep on with our practice, being convinced that as long as there is no interruption to our practice there will be a gradual gain even if there are no visible signs of gain. Then suddenly, we will become conscious that certain developments are taking place within our bodies and minds by which we are becoming more sensitive in their reactions to conditions. We will notice slight differences of pain and pleasure, heat and

cold, heaviness and lightness, smoothness and roughness. At the time of feeling these differences, our bodies as well as our minds will become very peaceful and tranquil, very quiet and happy, very joyous and pure. It may be a very faint feeling at first, and wholly indescribable, but it will be real nevertheless. This is what is meant by the development of good qualities going on with right breathing at the time our practice. It is what makes right breathing of such fundamental importance in our practice of Dhyana. Or, under the same conditions of the Karma world before we have begun to advance along the ten Bodhisattva stages, all of a sudden we become conscious of our breathing and notice its peaceful respiration, its extent, and its transmission to all the pores of the body. We will suddenly see with our mental eyes that within the body are thirty-six good things. It is as if the doors of a granary were opened, and we saw within the riches of sesame seeds and beans. It fills our minds with awe and wonder and gladness, as well as peace and tranquillity, and calmness and bliss. Such is the wonderful development and manifestation of good qualities that goes on in our practice of Dhyana coincident with right breathing."

S: What is the principal point being made here? The development of which particular internal good quality as a result of dhyana practice or manifestation of which particular good quality?

Voice: ?Positivity?..[unclear]..

S: In a way, but particularly it seems to be sensitivity that is mentioned. This manifestation of sensitivity is connected by the Grand Master with right breathing. He attaches great importance to right breathing. That is to say, breathing which is deep, calm, steady, peaceful. But before he speaks about an increase of sensitivity he has something else quite interesting to say. He says, "At this earlier stage of Dhyana, we do not at first notice any tangible result either of body or mind, but after one sitting or two sittings, or it may not be until one day or two days, or after one month or two months." There are great variations, you see, "we will gradually become conscious that we are being forced to keep on with our practice, being convinced that as long as there is no interruption to our practice there will be a gradual gain even if there are no visible signs of gain." In other words the tendency to continue with the practice, even if there is no tangible result, either external or internal, this itself is a manifestation of dhyana. Even though it seems that nothing is happening, the mere fact that you carry on means that something is happening.

"Then suddenly, we will become conscious that certain developments are taking place within our bodies and minds by which we are becoming more sensitive in their reactions to conditions." Do you see the sequence? We are practising dhyana, at least, we're practising a particular method of concentration. We may practise for quite [411] a while but nothing seems to be happening, but we carry on, and the fact that we carry on means that in fact something is happening or has started happening, and after a while we begin to be aware that, yes, something is happening even though we can't see any external sign of it, either internally or externally, but we feel, yes, something is happening, and then

perhaps we notice that we have become more sensitive, at least more sensitive to external conditions. We're more sensitive to pleasure and pain, more sensitive to heat and cold, and so on. And with that increase of sensitivity there comes an increase of peace and happiness, bliss, tranquillity, and so on. Obviously, of course, the suggestion is that you are meditating under the comparatively ideal circumstances already described. If you are not, then of course your increased sensitivity may give rise to quite unpleasant or even painful experiences. This is one of the reasons why it is important for a full-time practice of dhyana and even a considerable amount of practice, that conditions should be reasonably good, otherwise your increased sensitivity will make you very susceptible to the adverse conditions and you may get quite irritable and frustrated or even resentful in the end as a result of your practice of dhyana, unfortunately.

Now, any points to be raised in this connection?

Buddhadasa: There's a practical difficulty here. If you take classes and things like that as Order members, because it's about this time when concentration is beginning to set in, increased sensitivity does occur and irritability also occurs because of all the muck around you. Does one step down at those times or carry on?

S: Anyone else got any comment on that or any similar observation?

Padmapani: I would have thought it would have been sensitive if Order members were generally like that, one Order member could take over from another.

S: Hmm.

Vajradaka: I don't think that it's necessary to do that. I think that when you become very sensitive and you're taking classes, all you have to do is to be able to have a place where you can go quietly on [412] your own and just be with yourself and, as it were, kind of really experience your sensitivity and the bliss of it and counteract the negative aspects of being so sensitive.

S: There's also the question of what exactly is it that one is being sensitive to.

Buddhadasa: Your own negativity?

S: Yes, and this may differ from one person and one Order member to another. Is it simply the number of people? Is it for instance that you feel like getting on with your own practice but that you have to stop and explain after a few minutes? Or is it that the people are particularly stupid? Or is it that there are negative vibrations? For instance, in Helsinki, there was quite a bit of discussion about this with Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri and one or two of the regular people. They said, or they maintained, that there were certain people who came along sometimes, to the classes, and gave off such a negative vibration that Bodhishri for instance felt upset for two or three days afterwards. Somebody else couldn't meditate and felt sick and had to go away, and so on, which seemed rather extreme. I've not quite encountered it in this extreme form anywhere else, but this is what they told me so clearly: it can be a difficulty. It may be because

perhaps in Finland people give off, as it were, to use that term, I'm not very happy with it, vibrations of a negative order much more strongly than elsewhere, in as much as anger, resentment, and hatred seem to be very strong in the Finnish character.

Vajradaka: Something that sort of emphasizes this is that an Order member sits at the front and everyone else sits facing him, and any kind of negativity that comes up in a person's mind, well it usually gets projected.

S: Is that in fact so? I think we should be quite sure of that.

Vajradaka: Usually maybe, not always.

S: Even usually? Is that so? [murmurs] You do? What does one mean by 'gets projected'? On to him particularly rather than sort of being disseminated in the group as a whole?

Vajradaka: Well, the way that I notice it happens in Glasgow, if a couple of people [413] are feeling very negative or if they have a particular negative emotion coming up, you know, say in the sense of a particular personal problem with father or mother or whatever ...

S: Yes, but that's a particular kind, see? If it's a problem with father or mother then it might be natural that it gets projected onto the person who is taking the group, but if it's another kind of negativity there seems to be no special reason why it should go to the leader of the group.

Vajradaka: But that kind of negativity comes out quite a lot.

S: That particular kind? In Glasgow?

Vajradaka: Yes.

S: Yes? Hmm. But this need not apply then to all negativity.

Vessantara: My feeling is very different from yours. I don't know whether that's because we go about things in a different way, but I know when I'm taking meditation I'm very aware of being a focus of what's happening in the room. I sometimes feel how people are feeling in different parts of the room. I don't usually feel that anybody is sort of projecting anything on to me, that they're sitting there resenting me taking the class, it's just that, well, people are responsible in some sense for what happening in meditations like you are...

S: You're the determining factor?

Vessantara: Yes.

S: You're the adjuster and regulator?

Vessantara: Right, yes, and so even though they're not thinking about me and not putting anything on to me, I'm still very aware of how people are feeling, which usually doesn't affect me [impossible to hear above hum on recording]

Lokamitra: I just ..[impossible to hear above hum on recording].. right. [414]

S: I must say, looking back to the days when I was taking classes - because I was also taking them in Helsinki quite recently, and in New Zealand before that - I can't say that I remember ever feeling that people were projecting negative feelings onto me particularly. I don't think I ever felt that. As far as I recollect what I used to feel agrees with what Vessantara said: that I'd be aware of the sort of general atmosphere of the room and even be aware of certain things coming from certain people but in a very general way. I don't think I ever remember anything being sort of projected onto me personally just in the course of the meditation. There might have been but I certainly don't remember that, so it can't have been of much importance.

Vajradaka: During the time when it was happening most in Glasgow, people who were actually doing it came and told me that they were doing it, and apologized for it, and, you know, so that they were trying to work with it without me kind of saying anything about it first, but I had noticed it and then they said that. Vairocana has also experienced it.

S: Well, perhaps this is more peculiar to Glasgow then, perhaps on account of the more home-bound position of some people, problems with their parents I mean.

I think also - this is not directly related to what you have been saying - I think Order members who take classes have to be very careful not to get into a sort of martyr-like attitude: that here are people in the class taking it out of me, everything is put onto me, I'm a focus of their projections. I think Order members have to be very careful not to martyrize themselves in that way. That could easily happen if one was not careful.

Voice: ..[something about getting attention]..

S: Perhaps ... you mean negative attention? ... if you want it badly and you want attention badly enough, it's better than no attention at all. But let's get back to this question of sensitivity. If you are, say, an Order member taking a class and you've become very sensitive, and something in the class, or something in that sort of situation is [415] upsetting you. Well, what is it? It's not always that people are projecting something onto you. I don't think that very often happens. What is it usually? Is it the comparative roughness and crudeness of other people? What is it?

Buddhadasa: No, I think mostly it's in you. We are developing as well and it is these situations of stress and effort just sort of churn things up all the more quicker.

S: But we are discussing it in terms of sensitivity: that you, in this case the Order member taking the class, has become more sensitive.

Buddhadasa: You've become more sensitive to your own failings and weaknesses and negativity.

S: Ah, but then that's rather a differ line, isn't it? That's got nothing to do say

with actually taking the class.

Vessantara: Surely this comes back to what we were saying earlier on, a few days ago, about becoming more robust. You know, most of the time when you're taking a class, you might be sensitive to something in the room but you're sufficiently positive, warm. It doesn't make any difference, you're generating something which pushes it back if you like.

S; Right. Resolves it, rather.

Vessantara: Yes. It can only be if you're in a slightly delicate, fragile state that it's really going to affect you.

S: Yes, so you regulate and adjust.

Lokamitra: So if it's a positive sensitivity rather than a negative sensitivity, then it's quite straightforward?

S: But does anybody actually feel or experience this? That they are so sensitive taking a class and it becomes a painful sensitivity due to actually something in the class itself? Because this seems to be what has been suggested as sometimes happening. Is that actually the situation? [416]

Buddhadasa: No, I think I've only experienced that with two people that I can actually definitely say was two people, all the time that I've been doing it anyway. So it's only very minimal.

S: So we have to be aware of being too precious, as it were.

Ratnapani: I think it's not unknown, though. I think there's probably more tendency to preciousness than there are occurrences of this, but I have felt it, not taking a class, but I have just felt it in a room where I've felt sort of really ..[unclear].. and physically unwell, and then I've left the room and then realized just where it came from.

S: I must say in Helsinki I was warned about certain people that their presence was very negative and disturbing, but I must say I never experienced that with them myself. So I just wondered whether anybody wasn't being just a bit precious or sensitive in this very sort of delicate, feeble way. And sometimes of course it's not just your sensitivity to actual present vibrations, but your own reactions, as it were, to your ideas in your own mind about that particular person. Do you see what I mean?

Abhaya: Could you repeat that?

S: Look, I'll give you an example. I was told that one particular person created very bad vibrations in the meditation class, and further I was told in a sort of general way that he was rather crude, and people got a sort of impression of coarseness and brutality off him as though there was something very low and almost sort of animal-like there. So it seems to me that there was a possibility that what they were reacting to, or being sensitive about in the course of the meditation was not any actual vibration coming directly from him, but they were

reacting instead to their own idea about him formed on very general grounds which might have been a sort of reaction or even a slight projection on their part.

Vessantara: As if one reacts to your expectations of ...

S: Almost that, yes.

Vessantara: I remember in the past when I have been working in situations with some disturbed people. You have, you know, a wadge of case-notes on somebody, and I've very [417] often left those aside and not read them and just related to the person and then gone back and looked sometime afterwards and been really surprised at the kind of things written down. If I'd read them on the first day and seen that this person had had a breakdown, and has this difficulty and that difficulty, I would have automatically been relating by that to start with, I wouldn't have...

S: Right .. you might have been rather sort of guarded or even a bit sort of hesitant, certainly less positive perhaps than normal.

Vessantara: I would have misinterpreted quite ordinary things that they did.

S: So I think we must be careful in a sense that a situation doesn't develop whereby - I'm arguing a sort of imaginary possibility now - we happen to meet someone outside the meditation class situation. We don't particularly like them. They seem rather unpleasant to us and not our particular type of person. So when we take the class, we know that they are there and we assume that they aren't very pleasant and that something a bit negative must be coming from them, and then of course we start 'picking it up'. I think we must be careful about that sort of situation arising because then it's almost our projection rather than theirs.

Vajradaka: At the same time I think that when there is an actual, a person who is actually very disturbed, who is coming continually to the class, and is well into the things then ... and they definitely are sort of playing games, then one has to be very strict.

S: A mentally disturbed person, a person who is actually mentally disturbed, is quite another matter. I'm not referring to anything of that sort. I mean, a mentally disturbed person may be simply restless and, you know, disturbing the class in that way, so that one has to do something about it. But we have to be very careful, you know, that we don't give a dog a bad name and then hang him, as the saying goes. Just know from your own experience what somebody actually is like without any projection on one's own part. Have a genuine sensitivity to what is actually there, what is actually happening now in the class. And also it's very important about your own state of mind immediately before the class. If it's all, 'good heavens, another [418] class,' well then you yourself are not in a very positive state of mind. You have to be able to sort of generate a quite positive state of mind even though perhaps you might have - you know, given a completely free choice - have rather done something else that evening. But even

so you must be able to generate a genuinely positive attitude towards the class and your taking of it. If you can't do that then it's best if possible to hand over to somebody else. I think one has to be very careful not to allow the taking of a class to become a routine, and this is one of the reasons why I believe, certainly as regards Archway for instance, that people who take classes and other such things should be changed periodically, that nobody should take the same class week after week for, say, six or eight or ten months or even a year. Four to six months is about the limit. Has anybody got any thoughts on this while we're on the topic? With the best will in the world, you can often lose your basic freshness and become a bit stale.

Buddhadasa: I find it's quite essential to meditate before taking meditation classes, to cool off for about an hour beforehand.

S: Cool off?

Buddhadasa: Yes, from a heavy day's work.

S: I think it's also very important to be rested. I went into this, I think, the other day, in connection with Bethnal Green, you know, you should have a bit of a snack and a rest, or you should have, as Buddhadasa said, a session of meditation yourself. But at least be rested and refreshed and in a positive cheerful anticipatory mood, sort of looking forward to the class, and it's your class as much as their class.

Ratnapani: The horrors of Tuesday nights, when I was living in the caravan, and hoping that nobody would come! [laughter] Then two would come at minute to seven!

Sona: No wonder they didn't come if .. [confused comments]

S: Of course, if one is practising meditation and has become a bit [419] more sensitive, then some aspects of city life are not very helpful, especially noise. Anyway, anything else about this question of sensitivity? But it has its compensations as you see.

Nagabodhi:. I'm still trying to work out in myself, a lot of the time, this whole fainting business that I've been going through.

S: Hmm, are you still going through it?

Nagabodhi: I think I probably am. I still feel tottery in certain circumstances. I haven't done the complete thing for some time. [laughter]

S: You mean you haven't had an opportunity, or it hasn't happened?

Nagabodhi: I've avoided all opportunities.

S: Well, just enlighten those who haven't seen you perform. [laughter] Make sure everybody gets the correct version.

Nagabodhi: Well, there's not much to tell. [laughter]

S: Well that's just it. [laughter]

Nagabodhi: Well twice I've fainted, once without . . . [something about a lecture]. . . and once just before I started a meditation ..[something about giving a talk].. I rang the cymbals and the next thing I knew I was waking up. [laughter] And I was due to take the Tuesday night class at the centre, and just before the puja on my first proper night when ..[unclear].. I sat at the back of the hall and I knew I'd I never make it to the front. Luckily Lokamitra was sitting at the back and tapped me on the shoulder and said, um, you know, I've spent a lot of time and I still am trying to track it down, whether psychologically or just simply by trying to ignore it. Neither way seems to be very effective. One of the things I recall in connection with our conversation now is a sensation of undervaluing myself, you know, very suddenly. I'll go along, say, with the talk prepared, feeling quite confident, knowing really that in any normal circumstance I could acquit myself and do what needed to be done. This sudden sensation of totally undervaluing myself [420] and maybe overvaluing the audience or the people there. A sudden complete reverse round. . .

S: Of course this is only an extreme form of something which happens almost always in those sort of situations with practically everybody. I think there's also another side to it: that part of you, as it were, undervalues yourself but part of you also overvalues yourself. There is that aspect too. I think that overvaluation of oneself is as inhibiting as the undervaluation. But sometimes I think that maybe the overvaluation is the key to the situation or the experience in a way. It's almost as though you feel that the situation cannot contain you, that you have more to express than the situation is capable of receiving.

Nagabodhi: Yes. I don't know whether that's ..[aircraft noise, unclear].. I can relate to that on one level of feeling, that there's more to express like I could talk in terms of myself not of the subject.

S: Also I think it's a feeling, an experience, of one's own energy. That you feel that you're just not going to be able to express that. In a way the situation or the format is limiting, and you're not going to express or be yourself in that situation. So you get totally inhibited. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Nagabodhi: It feels right. I'm not sure how I connect that with overvaluing or with valuing at all.

S: Also there is the question - usually, you see, you've worked on the lecture or whatever it is for a long time a lot of energy has accumulated in connection with it. So it's as though when you stand up on your feet this all comes to the surface all at once, and it knocks you out. I think what is happening is something like that. I don't think it's nervousness in the ordinary sense at all. It's got much more to do with this sudden uprush of energy, which is so violent that it's too much for the poor old brain. It's as though perhaps in a way your blood goes to your head and then you're knocked out.

Nagabodhi: Well, that's what it feels like.

S: It's almost like over preparation. You've accumulated more energy than is necessary and so it knocks you out. It might be an idea [421] to try impromptu talks at very short notice. You know, in a very friendly atmosphere, you know, not a public lecture.

Nagabodhi: I found that what you were saying describes very much the symptoms I'd experienced, but I find that I'll get it in the most ridiculously simple situations, you know. It's become I'd say a neurotic problem because...

S: Well, maybe it is your own spontaneous natural energy coming up against your own persona. You won't let yourself be yourself. You insist on operating through this persona, and the energy behind the persona is getting too much for the persona, so the poor persona just folds up as it were. [laughter] I think it's something like that, I remember another classic case of this sort of thing, I've mentioned it before, it may be new to some of you, that is, shortly after I came back from India in '64, I went along to the Buddhist Society where Carla Robbins, that is Mrs. Carla Robbins, who used to be the editor of the magazine, a very pleasant, middle class, middle-aged English lady, was showing some slides of Tibetan thangkas and other works of art of that kind. So it was all jogging along very pleasantly. She had a sort of pointer and she was pointing to the thangkas, you know, this is Avalokitesvara and he represents compassion and this is Manjushri and this is Wisdom and he's got that lovely sword in his hand and it cuts all your ignorance. And she was warbling and waffling on in this way very pleasantly [laughter] for about forty-five minutes, then suddenly - by some mistake on the part of the person who was putting these slides together and actually showing them for her - a yab-yum thangka appeared, that is to say a male and female Buddha in the act of copulation, so Carla Robbins said, 'Oh, my God!' and fainted. [laughter] She sort of recovered and carried on with her lecture, her commentary, but she afterwards told me herself that she was completely unconscious of what happened afterwards, that is, for the remainder of the session. She was functioning, but she said she had no recollection of it whatever. It was completely blanked out. And Christmas Humphreys hurriedly sent her away for a holiday to the seaside for three weeks to recover. [laughter] But it was quite clear what happened there: here she was, all sort of safe with Avalokitesvara and Manjushri, then up comes this reminder of, you know, something which was apparently just too much for her. It all sort of surged up, as it were; her blood went to her head presumably and she just fainted. So it's a bit like that. She [422] couldn't say anything about it because the feeling which it evoked was just too much for her conscious personality. I think, though, obviously the sexual element doesn't come in here that much. The same sort of thing may be happening in your case. The energy which is there is just too much. But in your case probably the energy has been evoked by the subject, by, you know, the amount of study that you've given it, the way in which you have prepared the lecture, you know, your own sort of enthusiasm and the enthusiasm of the audience etc. So much energy surges up it's too much not just for the brain but for the conscious personality. So you're sort of too good, there's too much there which you can't sort of channel; it just gets blocked.

Nagabodhi: Certainly if I'm trying to create an impression of some kind too, that is limiting...

S: Well that's the conscious personality which is limiting the energy which is available. The energy is not being allowed to find its natural expression. You're predetermining its mode of expression, hence the sort of conflict. But probably you should cultivate much more spontaneity and giving talks at short notice, or be up on your feet without any preparation and saying something even at length and systematically. Anyway, that is a bit of a digression isn't it? Is there anything in that second paragraph there?

There seems to be a reference to the experience of actually seeing the inside of your own physical body. Some meditators do actually have this experience. I can't say that I've ever had it myself but I certainly do know people who in the course of meditation have had the experience of looking inside their own physical bodies and they seem entirely transparent. As the Grand Master says, it's like opening the doors of a granary and seeing all the grains and beans piled up inside quite clearly. Some people do have that experience.

Lokamitra: What are the thirty-six good things?

S: I don't know. I haven't been able to find out. There's nothing [423] corresponding to that in the other translation. No doubt all the different things that make up the physical body.

Abhaya: Is the Karma world the kamaloka or something different?

S: The karma world, if we take this literally - I'll look at the other translation in a minute - the karma world means the whole of conditioned existence, because karma operates on all these planes, the kamaloka, rupaloka, arupaloka. But let's see what Luk says [p.140]. Yes, it's kama world in the sense of K-A-M-A. Luk's translation says the practiser may also, while still in the realm of desire and before attaining the stages of bodhisattva development certainly be conscious etc., etc. So this suggests, before one has even entered on the first dhyana, one can have this experience whilst still in the kamaloka, the world of sensuous desire, as a result of the increased sensitivity developed in the course of meditation and connected especially with the regulation of breath. Right, any further question or comment on...? Right, on to number two then.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.478-9] "(2) The development and manifestation of good qualities by an examination of the essential impurity of that which we most have loved - our bodies. If, in the state of Dhyana under the conditions of the Karma world, preceding an entrance along the Bodhisattva stages we reflect upon the emptiness and transiency of both body and mind, suddenly we will have a vision of bodies lying dead and becoming swollen and decaying, with puss oozing out and maggots fattening on them, and scattered all about the bones of other dead bodies. With this horrible vision of the constitution of the bodies we have loved will come a feeling of sadness and compassion. This is what is meant by the development and manifestation of good qualities from insight into the

impurity of all transient and component things. Or, in the midst of our quiet practice, there will come a recollection of the purity of our own body: we will seem to see our skeleton suspended before us. As we realize the significance of the five sensualities, we are filled with disgust at the thought that we must submit to the death of the body. With this thought we will lose all pride and confidence in our ego self and in the selfhood of others, and will gain a peaceful and quiet mind. This is the way good qualities develop and are manifested by the dissolving of attachments to things that were beloved, as we come to realize their impurity. The same thing is true of attachments to things outside of the body as we come to note their impurity, also. As attachments are dissolved, good qualities are developed."

S: We begin to notice now that the Grand Master is not speaking so much about the manifestation of good qualities as a result of practising dhyana in general but as a result of practising specific methods. Do you see this? He hasn't said much so far about specific methods, but he now is referring to them, and these seem to correspond to our own five basic methods. Do you see that? First of all there is the practice to do with the breath or breathing. He doesn't make it clear that this is a watching the breath practice, but this emerges from the general context. So first of all there is the practice of the mindfulness of breathing, one of the results of which is the breathing becomes deep and calm and peaceful. And the sign of success, as it were, in this particular practice is increase of sensitivity. If that is your particular method of gaining entry to the absorptions, practising dhyana, [424] then the sign that you're practising successfully will be that you become very calm, tranquil and eventually sensitive even to the point of perceiving things that one normally doesn't perceive. And in the same way if you practise the contemplation of impurity presumably as an antidote to craving, then the sign of success will be that you have visions of dead bodies or, and this is the more usual sign which is given, of a skeleton. This isn't a sort of horrific thing. He does mention here "with this horrible vision of the constitution of the bodies we have loved will come a feeling of sadness and compassion." [425]

[Tape 18 Side A]

S: I just wonder whether Luk also renders it like that. Let me just see. Yes, Luk doesn't actually use this phrase "horrible vision". The sign that is usually given of success in this sort of practice, that is, contemplation of the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse, is the vision or the apparition of white bones, but not as something horrific, as a sort of white bony structure, not only white but shining, and one realizes that one's own body is just fundamentally this bony structure and similarly the bodies of others. When one sees that, this is the sign of success in this particular practice, the contemplation of the impure, i.e. the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse. This is where we usually practise the recollection of death or impermanence.

Voice: Going back to number one, the Grand Master says that mindfulness of breathing, or similar to that, gives rise to increase in sensitivity. It sort of occurred to me that if you developed mindfulness of breathing out of proportion

and didn't give much time to the metta, you might develop sensitivity, but if you haven't practised metta you can't sort of counteract...

S: Yes, and you don't have any positive sort of vibration of your own, as it were, yes, that's true. This is one of the reasons why it's good to practise the metta as well as the mindfulness. The metta is much more outward-going.

Padmapani: Is it that if you didn't develop metta you would experience a sort of very negative state and you could sort of...

S: Well, not a negative state, I mean, the recollection of the breathing can make you very sensitive. It's as though it simply makes you sensitive, so you're a bit passive. It's as if you are on the receiving end, you're not sending out anything, you're not counteracting. But when you practise metta you're actually sending out. You're, as it were, taking the offensive in a positive way and this can protect you and you become less passive. You're affecting others, not just them affecting you, and in as much as your mental state is one of metta you're affecting them positively. So it may well be then that the one-sided practice of mindfulness [426] isn't desirable, especially if one is living and practising under somewhat difficult conditions as one is in the city. The practice of metta will give you a certain amount of protection as it were.

One can also say that one of the manifestations of this increased sensitivity is the sort of somewhat telepathic experiences that go on, especially within the group, with people picking up one another's thoughts and also similar moods, you know, sweeping along the whole movement. Has anyone ever noticed this?

Voices: [murmurs of agreement]

S: It is as if there is a sort of network of intercommunication, so you have to be careful of what thoughts you think, especially about the movement, because at once they go whizzing around this network and everybody is sort of touched by them to some slight extent. So obviously the best safeguard against anything negative, you know, going around in this way is simply metta. Anyway, any further points about the results or signs of success as regards this particular practice?

Abhaya: Is this the one we're going to do before the end of the seminar?

S: No. I mentioned that we usually do the recollection of death, or the recollection of impermanence instead of this, which is rather extreme. But the recollection of death and the recollection of impermanence are also antidotes for craving, but milder ones as it were.

Abhaya: So you don't get this white bones... [laughter]

S: No, no. [laughter] Sorry, I don't want you to miss anything, or to feel that you've missed anything, but that sort of practice can be quite a serious shock to the system, as it were. It's bad enough to see meat hanging up in butchers' shops.

Lokamitra: A question occurs to me, none of the Bramhra viharas can lead to insight or can be upeksa?

S: Well, what do you mean [by] leads to? [427]

Lokamitra: Or a vipassana...

S: Well there's quite a discussion about this. The general view, especially say in Theravada circles, is that metta can only lead to a quite low absorption state. I must say that I have my doubts about this, and in having those doubts I am definitely supported by the Mahayana tradition, because it seems to me that if for instance you equalize self, friend, neutral, and enemy, if you really equalize, well to some extent you've got over your ego feelings. So if you've really done that, well, this amounts surely to insight. I think we have to be careful not to put insight too exclusively into conceptual terms. This is what I've said in the Survey discussing the Pure Land School, that for the Pure Land School, especially the true Pure Land School, faith becomes the emotional counterpart of wisdom, the emotional equivalent of wisdom, not just counterpart but equivalent. Insight in conceptual terms is what we call wisdom, insight in emotional terms is what we call faith in that context.

Lokamitra: So insight... Can you just repeat that last line?

S: Insight in conceptual terms is what we call wisdom, but insight in emotional terms is what we call faith in this context, at least or on this level. It's not just mere emotion any more than wisdom is mere thought, but usually, owing to the predominately conceptual tendency of Indian thought, including Buddhist thought in India, we're much more familiar with insight in conceptual terms rather than insight in emotional terms. But it seems to me that sometimes that when the metta is well developed it can amount to an experience of insight, in as much as a narrow identification with self has been transcended.

Ratnapani: The only thing I can describe [of] my own experience of vipassana experience followed on a metta [bhavana], the first good metta ever, and that definitely had a much stronger effect than any meditation I'd ever done.

S: So I think we have to be very careful about this point of ... I don't think the Theravada approach here really, or the Theravada evaluation here, is really justified, not in all cases. [428]

Vajradaka: It's because they haven't really allowed themselves to get enough into that whole feeling side of experience, to experience that equivalent of intellectual wisdom, as it were. [laughter]

S: I don't know, I don't know whether that's correct because many Theravadin bhikkhus are very friendly, kindly, warm people.

Vajradaka: But do they practise?

S: Not much, but if they practise anything they do a bit of metta bhavana mostly. [laughter] And certainly the original Theravadins practised. It may

have something to do just with the general tendency of Indian culture, of Indian thought, it was very heavily conceptual until the late Middle Ages, by which time Buddhism was disappearing from India.

Lokamitra: I was reading about the way upeksa, as it was described in one of those Bodhi Leaf or Wheel series [booklets], and certainly it suggested too if you like contemplations or, one, seeing that everything that happened was a result of your own past actions and, two, into the idea of anatma(?) which seems very much an insight practice.

S: But again one must distinguish between two kinds of upeksa, or usually they are distinguished. There's upeksa as one of the Brahma-viharas and upeksa as a synonym for nirvana, as when upeksa comes at the end of the bodhyangas.

Lokamitra: So the one here is definitely the brahma viharas?

S: I would say upeksa, even as a brahma vihara, in as much as it is an equal love and an equal compassion, to that extent militates against the idea of an ego or the experience of an ego. So to that extent is tantamount to the experience of insight. So it's as though the metta or the upeksa can develop into insight by the intensification of this aspect of equality, by the intensification of its, as it were, ego negating aspect. So not to say that samatha and vipassana are the same thing, but only that a particular practice can help you to develop both, one after the other. And of course to go from the samatha type of metta to the vipassana type of metta, if I can speak in that way, you have to concentrate [429] on this aspect of equality and genuinely feel it and be able to act upon it which would be the real test. It's not just a sentiment, however pious. Alright, let's go on to three, which does deal with metta.

Abhaya: [reads from p.479] "The development and manifestation of the good quality of compassion: if, in the state of Dhyana, under the conditions of the Karma world, preceding an entrance upon the Bodhisattva stages we practise realizing the good qualities of other people, there will come a feeling of great compassion for all sentient life. In this connection we will have visions and recollections of our parents, our close kinsmen, our intimate friends, and our hearts will be filled with inexpressible joy and gratitude. Then there will develop similar visions of compassion for our common acquaintances, even our enemies, and for all sentient beings in the five realms of existence. When we rise from the practice of Dhyana after these experiences, our hearts will be full of joy and happiness and we will greet whoever we meet with kind and peaceful faces. This is the development and manifestation of the good quality of compassion. In like manner, we will come to realize developments and manifestations of other good qualities such as kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity."

S: Hmm, what is translated here as compassion does in fact corresponds to metta, to maitri. So you notice that joy and gratitude are mentioned as manifestations of the successful practice of metta, that is to say the actual experience of metta, and this is pretty obvious.

Vajradaka: It's interesting that it actually mentions parents in connection with the development of metta.

S: Why do you say it's interesting?

Vajradaka: Well, it isn't built in particularly to the metta practice. I mean he could have just said neighbours, kinsmen, everyone around in the neighbourhood, but he sort of particularly says parents there.

S: This is quite [the] usual tradition; especially you get it in Tibetan forms of the practice. It says you should develop the same love and good will towards all living beings as you have towards your own parents, because in fact all living beings are your parents or have been at some time or other in the course of previous existences, so that you should feel the same natural love and affection towards all the people you come in contact with, in fact all living beings whatsoever, as you feel towards your own parents.

Of course, it is suggested here or implied here or assumed here that your relationship with your parents will be a very positive one as it usually is in traditional societies. So the Tibetans make very much of this. It figures very prominently in Tibetan spiritual practice. You notice it was referred to in that reading we had the other evening. Tsongkhapa's three [430] principles of the path. Did you notice that?

Abhaya: It's not just a Tibetan belief though, is it?

S: No, it does come from Indian sources but the Tibetans have emphasized it and made much of it, in a way that is, one could say, very much their own, in a very heartfelt sort of way.

Vajradaka: Like visualizing one sitting on one shoulder and one on the other when you do your practice?

S: This isn't specifically Tibetan, this is Indian and Tantric. A lot that we think of as Tibetan Buddhism is just Indian Buddhism transplanted to Tibet.

Abhaya: But this belief that all beings have been at one stage your fathers and your mothers, is it a poetic idea of expressing about how one should feel close to all beings, or is there some literal sort of thing about it?

S: Well, the Tibetans of course take it quite literally and this is why they are able to feel it so strongly, those who do practise in this way. But if one takes it as, well you should have same attitude to all living beings just as though they had all been your mothers, well, that's quite intelligible but it considerably weakens the thought of it. But, I mean, if people don't have a strong conviction in the truth of rebirth in its very literal sense, then they can do no more than take it as a sort of metaphor, or as a sort of incitement or as a means of indicating the kind of attitude that is required. But many Tibetans take this perfectly literally.

Padmapani: Why do you think it is, in the west, that most people have a certain resentment towards their parents?

S: Well, first of all we have to be very careful not to over-generalize. Do most people in the west experience this do you think? Our experience within our own movement isn't characteristic in many respects, so I just wonder whether it's characteristic in this respect too? Do you think it is?

Abhaya: I don't think it's so characteristic as we sort of thought when [431] you really begin to think about it. We tend to, say, judge the whole of the country by trends in our own movement. I think this is a danger.

S: Trends in central London, eh?

Abhaya: We've got to guard against this.

S: Anybody got any contribution to make from outside London?

Abhaya: Well, when I'd just been up in Lancashire for a holiday with my parents. The general family climate up there seems to be quite a healthy one and relationships between parents and children and vice versa seems to be normally, if one were to take an average, healthy.

Sona: I think it's the same for Londoners actually too, the actual sort of real Londoners. You tend to get a lot of people in London who come from outside and their parents are outside; there tend to be a lot of those people in the movement, but actually sort of Londoners have quite good feelings towards their parents. I think it's quite strong in fact, especially in the more working class areas.

S: Yes, I think also we have to be careful not to think of something as a general phenomenon when it's a class phenomenon to some extent. I think, to some extent at least, it's perhaps a middle class phenomenon, not so much a working class phenomenon, and I think we tend to over-generalize from limited sort of middle class experience.

Padmapani: Why would that be?

S: I think it's [that] the media are dominated by middle-class people. I think it's mainly that. They sort of set the pace and create the norms very often, and we tend to be rather carried away by that. If you go around London and you go to see a few films and look at a few advertisements, you get the impression that the whole population is totally promiscuous. But the total population is not. I mean people, you know, who operate some at least of the various media contrive to give that impression. I think it is very much that the media call the tune or try to call the tune. And it's not just the media; it's - you can almost say - the [432] popular myth makers who are not really representative of what actually is happening and what really are people's attitudes, very often. Very often, ordinary, especially working class, life just goes on regardless, not very much affected or influenced. Just as we say, oh, people aren't getting married these days and marriage is collapsing? Statistics tell a quite different story. More people are getting married and at a younger age than ever before. That's what's happening in England as a whole. It's certainly not happening in our movement, but then we are exceptional.

Padmapani: Do you think we ought to drop sometimes the idea? I know it's sometimes mentioned in the metta bhavana, that [if] one feels hate and one can't think about someone, well think about one's parents.

S: Well, this applies in the group very often, yes.

Padmapani: I mean this is also mentioned to people who come into the Friends who aren't Order members.

S: Probably in some cases the mere fact that they come in contact with a movement like ours means that there's probably something in that in their case too. One certainly shouldn't say [it] indiscriminately. It's more likely to be true in the order I should think than elsewhere. But not sort of lay it down sort of as a gospel truth.

Lokamitra: We've been a very young order up to now, it seems. [laughter]

S: Perhaps there are some people who dislike their children, I mean there are some such people around too.

Lokamitra: It seems to be a stage, it seem to be very common that most people throughout the world go through a stage of reacting to some extent against...

S: Well, no, they don't. That's another over-generalization. They don't. In many cultures they don't at all. They are eager to be like their elders and want to follow in their footsteps and look up to their elders, especially I think in tribal communities. [433]

Nagabodhi: I think our problems, to the extent we have them, is a lot to do with social change and it's a matter of language. Things are changing so quickly, the way we see the world, our basic language and conception is different...

S: Yes, that has a lot to do with it.

Nagabodhi: Whereas in a traditional society this doesn't arise.

S: The fact that the children speak one language and the parents another, the children have certain interests, the parents don't have those interests, the children have a certain outlook, the parents don't share that outlook... That doesn't necessarily lead - even though it strains communication - it doesn't necessarily lead to strong mutual antagonism, much less hatred on either side.

Padmaraja: The difference is very often as big as people would like it to be, as children would like it to be. I think underneath they're still basically very often the same. Maybe that is what their kicking against. They kind of adopt a kind of a surface difference but underneath very similar.

S: Well, very often they end up doing the same things despite their rebellious teens. They settle down in their early twenties just like mum and dad. Well you see this, don't you? Where are the hippies of yesteryear? You don't see them around in their late thirties and early forties. What's happened to them?

Where's their gear all gone? They've settled down, they've changed, they're no longer hippies in many cases. You don't often see an elderly hippie do you? No.

Ratnapani: It's usually rather an elderly phenomenon and usually a rather ill one.

Padmapani: ..[unclear]..

Ratnapani: That's one way out.

Padmapani: But don't you think a lot of it's to do with not enough fuel was given to the youngsters when they were young?

S: No enough what? [434]

Padmapani: Fuel.

S: Fuel? [laughter]

Padmapani: They were always stamping... [lots of confused comments]

S: Were they? Are parents always stamping on their children? Not in my experience.

Padmapani: Not done in a very outward sort of way, but in a very subtle way it can be...

S: But do they? After all, they're little savages, you can't let them get away with everything. There has to be a certain minimum of as it were control. That isn't stamping upon them. Maybe it isn't always done tactfully, maybe you can't always smack a bottom tactfully, but is it really true that parents habitually stamp upon children? It maybe true of some parents sometimes. It maybe worse at certain periods of history, like the Victorian period, than at others, but is it a general thing that everybody has cause to complain about?

Nagabodhi: I know that I've definitely suffered from thinking I must have had an unhappy childhood. [laughter] And it's strange it's so risen, but it just suddenly struck me this morning or yesterday that I had a very happy childhood. [laughter]

S: Well you live up to it then.

Nagabodhi: Yes, that's why I've got problems. [laughter]

S: I'm very suspicious of all these sort of rather smooth and slick assumptions that everybody has trouble with their parents and so on, and nobody gets married these days, and you always hate your parents, and you were always stamped on when young. Even though it's true of every single person within our own movement, it doesn't make it generally true of the country at large, or western civilization or the world at large. You must be very careful about these rash generalizations or over-generalizations, I think. I think some people are almost apologetic about admitting that they do get on well with their parents. Anyway, anything to add to that [before we] [435] have our coffee?

Lokamitra: I read somewhere, I don't know where...

Ratnapani: ...that everybody has horrible parents. [laughter]

Lokamitra: No, it was some Tibetan, it might have been Trungpa writing somewhere, I can't remember where, just about reacting against parents, and I just ... but a stage that people go through ... it didn't make any difference to the Tibetan idea or feeling...

S: If it was Trungpa he must have read it somewhere or got it at second hand. After all, he can't observe every American family at first hand. But he probably felt, and quite rightly, that it wasn't necessarily all that important.

Lokamitra: No, no, no. In Tibet this was. He was talking about Tibet.

S: Ah, oh, I don't remember any such thing.

Lokamitra: I was quite surprised when I read it.

Nagabodhi: I think adolescent rebellion in semi-primitive society is much more legitimized; there are conventional channels to express it through.

Lokamitra: Right.

Buddhadasa: Trungpa wasn't allowed to get away with a thing. He had a tremendously strict upbringing.

S: He was whisked away from home.

Buddhadasa: And he doesn't seem to have any resentment against it apparently. [It was] much tougher than any of us ever had.

S: Well, the equivalent of boarding school from the age of four.

Sagaramati: Really a lot of it is trying to find something to blame for the present state you're in.

S: Ah, that's quite a point. [436]

Vessantara: I think order members have to be very careful not to get into a therapeutic role with people ..[unclear].. I think it's a role that is quite easy to fall into ..[unclear].. It may be why some people project mother and father onto you ..[unclear].. [very unclear recording]

Sagaramati: Maybe it would be good to stress this thing about conditions going back before your birth, you know, going back to beginningless time, because there is a tendency to always blame it on an event that happened in your childhood. It's almost if before that time, you know, you were almost enlightened. [laughter]

S: ..at the moment of birth, as it were, and then your parents sort of spoilt the whole thing. Hmm, the incompetent way they brought you up and their unfeeling and inconsiderate and selfish behaviour and sort of ruthless and unnecessary thwarting of your innocent desires and then stamping you down into the dust, you know, whenever you raised your tiny voice, and then they sent you to school

where teachers did exactly the same thing on a grander scale. [laughter] Well, there is this tendency very often to blame everybody else, whether it takes this form or not. This is avoidance of responsibility for one's own mental state.

Padmaraja: I guess in the Middle Ages you'd blame the king or someone.

S: Your sins, your sins, you're being punished for your sins, even though you weren't conscious of having committed any. You blamed it on old Adam, or blamed it on the devil.

Abhaya: A Thai friend of mine said that a lot of Thais, Theravada Buddhists, good practising ones, they accept their sufferings very simply, with equanimity. They say, well I'm suffering because of some bad karma, you know, for the actions that I committed some time or other, and it may lead sometimes to an unnecessary long-suffering attitude. But on the other hand she seemed to convey that it was much more healthy taking upon oneself: well, it must be the result of something. I don't know I did but I must try and do better.

S: Somewhere or other it must be me that's responsible, which is probably on the whole a much more positive and healthy attitude and leaves the initiative with you ultimately. [437]

Vessantara: I was wasting an idle hour a month or so ago reading a book by somebody who is a therapist and also a hypnotist and he'd been hypnotizing people to go back into their childhood, and then they'd even gone back further, to intra-uterine life and, he claimed, to previous lives, and some of the difficulties they'd had in this life were resolved through reliving these experiences.

Sagaramati:. This idea about reliving and experiencing your childhood ..[then something about 'last seminar', unclear recording].. like it's just cutting the branch, in a sense, not getting at the root of the problem.

S: Because, you see, if you took it literally, and if you believed in rebirth and previous existence, you'd have to go back and back reliving everything, and that means you'd go back and back to infinity. You'd never have done. So I think this whole idea of reliving from a spiritual point of view is quite suspect.

Padmapani: That seems to tie up with your lecture on psychotherapy versus meditation.

S: Hmm, in a general way at least, yes.

Padmapani: Do you not feel, though, there's a certain connection in meditation some experiences, say, like childbirth can come up and be quite traumatic and which shouldn't be rationalized, the energy ought to be allowed to come up to be utilized.

S: I think as a result of the practice of meditation, energy always does come up and is, as it were, drained out of those earlier painful negative experiences. But I think, also, energy can come up in connection with the meditation without there being a conscious recollection of the actual experiences. I don't think

one should think in terms necessarily of a conscious recollection and the living through in that sense. I think your draw upon the energy which was blocked up or blocked in those earlier experiences, as it were, automatically when you get into meditation deeply. So you deprive them of their energy and resolve the blockage not by going back and as it were going through them again, but simply by this process of deeper [438] meditation and tapping all these deeper sources of energy within oneself.

Padmapani: And that would be the difference between meditation and psychotherapy?

S: Well, one of the differences, yes. You could relive the experiences and not very much happen. You could remain on the same basic level as the experiences because you have already experienced and it didn't do you much good; well, even a relatively conscious experience may not do you very much more good.

Nagabodhi: It usually just pulls you back down into some negative mental state, resentment.

S: And you become orientated towards the past rather than orientated towards the future. You know, perhaps this is where we have to remember the words of the gospel, 'Let the dead bury the dead.' You know, you just have to let the past go and not hang on to it even in the form of making it right. Anyway, let's have our tea and coffee.

This is one of the reasons why I think it's good for Order members to go abroad to other countries and visit foreign centres, the few that we have as yet, because they will see that conditions there are quite different from conditions here. It will be a check on this rather hasty sort of generalization that sometimes goes on. Though on the subject we were discussing it does seem that young Finns really do hate older people in general and their parents in particular.

Padmapani: Do you suggest that Order members ought to make their peace with their parents?

S: I have suggested that a number of times, not exactly in those terms, but make sure that within themselves there isn't a resentful attitude towards their parents which is in fact getting in the way of their own development. I'm not thinking of something deeply buried in the past which I think will get resolved through their meditation anyway, but almost a sort of conscious attitude in the present of almost actually cherishing ill will and remaining almost deliberately on bad terms and not doing anything about it. [439]

I think if you were actively on bad terms with your parents but at the same time sort of claimed to be trying to develop spiritually, there wouldn't be really very much in your claim. If there was total lack of comprehension on your parents' side and active hostility even, and if they were trying to dissuade you from living in the way that you wanted, well that's another matter. You would just have to regretfully accept their lack of comprehension but not feel negatively towards them on account of it all the same.

I mean even though one may not be able to have very much contact with them and, no doubt most parents won't be able to understand very much of what their children are doing if they do get into Buddhism and so on, at least keep up what contact one can and let it be as positive as possible so far as one is concerned oneself, and don't be over-worried that, you know, they don't share your enthusiasm for Buddhism. Do what you can just on the ordinary human level as it were.

In the heavenly world, or at least in the higher heavenly world, beings are born without parents you will be pleased to hear. They just appear fully developed. It's called apparitional birth or spontaneous birth sometimes. It's not strictly spontaneous because it's dependent on causes and conditions of course, but you don't have to go through the medium of parents. There's no period spent in the womb. In certain realms you're simply enclosed in a beautiful lotus and the petals of the lotus open and there you are, fully formed in all your glory, nothing to do with parents, no sort of dirty, sticky old womb or anything like that, no painful process of parturition, no being slapped and plunged into hot cold water, you know, depending on the particular culture, no being bound in swaddling bands or having your head compressed or a dummy stuck into your mouth, nothing like that. No infantile helplessness, no having to crawl around on all fours. You have wings which operate immediately and every wish is instantly fulfilled and there's not even any differentiation of sex; that's why you can't have parents anyway. [laughter] There's no men and no women, just beings. It might take a bit of getting used to at first [laughter] just beings, no men, no women, no male, no female. What a wonderful state of affairs. Sometimes the scriptures express it by saying there are no women, but it really means neither men nor women, because if there are no women there are no men either, no sexual differentiation, no [440] difference of gender, no relationships, no love, no marriage, no problems of that kind anyway. What a world. It may be some future state of evolution, who knows.

Sona: Do you find from your experience that a lot of people in the west find it difficult to accept the concept of rebirth? [441]

[Tape 18 Side B]

S: Quite a few people do so. Well, you say in the west, but then again my own experience within the west is very limited, but certainly as regards the Friends, people don't seem all that enthusiastic about rebirth. In some circles of course people are quite enthusiastic about it, the Theosophists, the Spiritualists and so on. Christmas Humphreys did once remark that when he started the Buddhist Society one of the main attractions was the teaching of rebirth, karma and rebirth, but he did comment more recently that comparatively few people seem to have this sort of interest.

It also seems that a few generations ago the question of survival was a very urgent one for people, of personal immortality. They wanted that assurance that they would survive death; they were very afraid that they might not. But people

nowadays just don't seem bothered, which in way seems quite strange because, I mean, life is anxious enough but people don't seem to be particularly bothered about whether they survive bodily death. But the Victorians seemed very much bothered by it, and the Edwardians and so on. And it was this sort of anxiety almost that was behind, you know, the openness to the idea of reincarnation. It was a sort of reassurance that you didn't die, that you went on, in fact that you were reborn, you came back. But this kind of anxiety just doesn't seem to be around much now. Perhaps it's more among older people who are nearer to death. Maybe it's because in the movement we are as yet a young movement. People haven't started bothering very seriously about death in most cases, and therefore not very much worried about the question [of] whether you survive death. Maybe as Order members, you know, grow older they may start taking a more active interest in these questions. They might then seem more real to them as the great day approaches.

Padmapani: Do you think it's because people need to enjoy life a bit more? I mean you mention in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the lecture on that, you quoted from a certain poem, I don't know if it's an Indian poem, 'I know I shall enjoy death because I've enjoyed life.'

S: Yes, that was Tagore. [Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali (Song Offerings), no.95, tr.] [442]

Padmapani: And I thought maybe...

S: No, he didn't say 'enjoy', he said 'love'.

Padmapani: Maybe, sort of, you know, the antiquated, Victorian society then, people were afraid to enjoy themselves, so they used the idea of rebirth as a form of, you know.

S: Again, were they afraid of enjoying themselves? Isn't this again an over-generalization?

Sona: They're the ones that built the piers. [laughter] And when you look back .. [inaudible general comments] you have to be careful you don't just look back on the middle class.

S: Yes, right.

Sona: And the working class; there were a tremendous number of working class.

Lokamitra: Music halls and things.

Buddhadasa: The upper classes have always been able to enjoy themselves.

S: The upper classes always did exactly what they ... they didn't always ..[unclear].. because they didn't want to be censored by the middle classes.

Abhaya: It is one of those questions I feel sort of uneasy about when people ask me, the question about rebirth, because it is something beyond one's experience totally.

S: Well one can only weigh the evidence.

Lokamitra: It's something one seems to get the feeling for, and then if one hasn't got it then there's no point in going into it very much.

Sona: I must say that I have had much more of a feeling quite recently and I remember last night sort of contemplating at one time how one is continually changing. If one looks back to one's early childhood, it's almost unbelievable that you were a child and that you were in certain situations, and you kept changing, and here [443] you are now.

S: It seems like a dream.

Sona: Yes, it seems quite natural in a way for it sort of just to keep continuing only in the sort of wheel of life. I was surprised to hear that. I got the impression from what you said that a lot of people aren't concerned about death. I must say that it's always sort of been a...

S: Well, I hope I'm not over generalizing. I'm talking more about people in our own movement who come along or at least pass through classes. But perhaps one must be careful about making any general statement because there is this sort of English taboo about discussing this kind of subject, and perhaps people wouldn't mention it or bring it up even though it is one of their personal preoccupations.

Lokamitra: I think it might be partly to do, too, with their sort of disbelief in God, disbelief in rebirth, can lead to a sort of dismissal - I don't know - you see lots of very indulgent things happening at the moment, it seems that that's partly behind it.

S: Also of course the belief in reincarnation or rebirth is associated with the whole sort of religious outlook, and to the extent that the religious outlook isn't particularly popular at present, you know, broadly speaking, for the vast masses of the population, you know, rebirth also tends to be discounted, people are not particularly interested.

Again I don't know, this may go more for the so-called educated middle class. I think if you went round among working class people you'd find much more belief in this sort of thing in a rather sort of undeveloped way than one might have thought. So many people believe in fortune telling and astrology.

Voice: I think spiritualism is...

Buddhadasa: I don't think people realize how many people belong to spiritualist groups because this is on a quite different cultural level. There are supposed to be two million people in this country [444] actively involved in spiritualism, attending seances and so on.

Buddhadasa: There's a lot in Brighton, and even a newspaper, Psychic News, isn't it? And that's displayed on the newspaper stands along with the Guardian and the Times and the Morning Star.

S: I wonder if that's because there are so many old people there.

Buddhadasa: There aren't that many old people in Brighton.

Sona: From my own sort of experience of working class background... [interrupted by laughter]. From my own sort of experience of working class people it certainly wasn't the old people who were interested in spiritualism. It was very much the young.

S: And there are various spiritualist churches about, and spiritualist minsters. There's quite a lot.

Buddhadasa: Spiritualism certainly believes in rebirth.

S: Oh yes, very much so.

Buddhadasa: And reincarnation.

S: Yes, but we tend not to be in contact with people on this sort of cultural level. It can be something very naive in a way. [Lot of general chatter, something about a dog.]

Lokamitra: We have a spiritualist living next door to my mother where we used to live who said lots of cats go to heaven: the opposite to the Buddhist tradition.

[There follows lots of chatter about spiritualism, among which S says that he doesn't feel called upon to have an explanation for everything, and it's a drag to be expected to have, and he's satisfied not [445] to know about things that he's not interested in and that's exactly how the transcriber felt about typing out this section....]

... Anyway, let's get on to number four, page 479.

Voice: [reads from p.479-80] "The development of the good quality of insight into causes and conditions. Owing to our practice of stopping and realizing in the state of Dhyana under the conditions of the karma world, preceding an entrance upon the Bodhisattva stages, with both the body and mind tranquil there will suddenly come to us a clear insight into the causes and conditions of our life in the triple aspects of past present and future. At such times we will see clearly that there is no such thing as an ego personality or an ego nature of things, but that everything has arisen from the concatenation of causes and conditions of our own ignorance and activities. Under the conviction of this clear insight we will give up our conceptions of phenomena as having some attributes of reality, we will break away from our old prejudices, and we will attain to a more perfect concentration of mind with a correspondingly deeper peace and sense of mental security. Then there will arise within our deepest consciousness a more comprehensive intelligence, our minds will find a purer joy in the Dharma, we will cease to be worried about our worldly conditions, we will accept with patience that our personality is only the five grasping aggregates of form, sensation, perception, discrimination, and consciousness, we will accept with patience the fact that our external world is wholly made up of the mental reactions between our six senses and their corresponding fields of contact, we will accept with patience the fact that all our physical experience is within the

compass of our physical senses, the objects of sense and our sense minds. This is what is meant by the development and manifestation of the good quality of insight into causes and conditions."

S: This of course corresponds to the contemplation of the nidana chain, except that here it is expressed in more general terms. Do you see that? It's another of the basic methods, this time the vipassana method.

In a general way one can say that one of the positive manifestations, one of the signs of success with this particular type of practice, is that one sees more clearly the operation of the law of cause and effect in one's own life, that is to say, this present life. You see quite clearly how certain things that you have done have given rise to other things, certain consequences. You see this more clearly than you used to. Very often we don't see this at all. We just have a vague recollection of having dome certain things in the past and we have a certain experience in the present, but very often we just don't connect the two at all. We don't see how something that we have done in the past has borne this particular fruit or had this particular effect in the present. But if we contemplate conditionality, and especially the chain of the nidanas, we learn to see things in this sort of way, more clearly. And this of course increases our sense of responsibility and commitment.

Padmapani: These five aggregates, are they the skandhas Bhante?

S: Yes. Form, sensation, perception, discrimination, and consciousness.

Voice: [something about discrimination. too quiet to decipher]

S: For samya, samya is more like sort of identification, recognition. So in that sense discrimination is all right. You recognize that it's this and not that. You're able to discriminate between the [446] two.

Vessantara: Would this be ..[unclear].. samya?

S: Presumably. Perhaps not. If it's meant to stand for samskara(?) then it wouldn't be right at all.

So one could say that the practice of his particular method would lead to a deeper awareness of the workings of the law of cause and effect or, better, conditionality in one's own life and therefore a more definite tendency to regulate one's own life in accordance with this law. If you see very clearly that certain things that you've done in the past are having an effect now, then you'll be much more careful about what you do now in view of future possible effects. Alright, let's go on then.

Voice: [reads from pp.480-1] "The development and manifestation of the good quality of the remembrance of all the Buddhas. In the state of Dhyana, under the conditions of the Karma world preceding an entrance upon the Bodhisattva stages, and owing to our practice of stopping and realizing, when our minds and bodies are quiet and tranquil then all of a sudden there comes into the memory a recollection of the inconceivable merits and purity of all the Buddhas. We

recall their possession of the ten transcendental powers of the four fearlessnesses and the eighteen characteristic marks of a Buddha; there attainment of the Samadhis and emancipations, and their command over all manner of skilful means and powers of transformations, which they use freely for the benefit of all sentient beings. All such kinds of transcendental powers and merits are beyond our human comprehension. As soon we are dwelling on such remembrances of the Buddha's transcending attainments and merits, we feel springing up within our Dhyana minds the development of a spirit of respect for all sentient life and a feeling of fraternity with them; we feel unfolding powers of Samadhi, and a sense of joy and bliss pervades both body and mind that wraps us in a feeling of righteousness and safety. At such times we are never disturbed by the appearance of any bad developments nor evil manifestations. When we retire from our Dhyana practice our body seems light and active and we feel so confident in the possession of good qualities that we expect everyone who we meet will respect us and respond to our good will. This is what is meant by the development and manifestation of good qualities and powers of Samadhi by our remembrance of all the Buddhas. Or, if, on account of our practising stopping and observing at the time of our Dhyana practice we attain this purity of serenity of mind and body, then we will become conscious of the development within our minds of all kinds of ways of manifesting good qualities in the face of suffering, foolishness, pride, impurity, the disgusting things of the world, the impurity of food, death and the desire for survival after the death of the body. We will become conscious of an increasing love for Buddha, Dharma, and the brotherhood, of respect of the Precepts, of equanimity of mind, of a sense of awe for the celestial worlds, of the attainment of the four right viewpoints for our thinking, of the four right diligencies, of the four right powers of self mastery, of the five factors and the five faculties, of the Noble Path, of the six Paramitas that lead to enlightenment, of all wisdoms, and all transcendental powers of transformation, and we shall have powers of mind to distinguish every one of these things rightly and use them properly. The Sutra says that if we know our own mind on any one subject rightly then we can attain anything we will."

S: Hmm, this second paragraph seems to refer to the manifestation of dhyana practice in general, whereas the previous paragraph referred to good qualities manifesting as a result of remembrance of all the Buddhas or recollection of the Buddha: Buddhanu sati.

So we have seen that so far in the course of the chapter, the Grand Master has recommended five different methods of practice, each with its own particular manifestations or signs of success. And so far we've found in the case of the previous four methods that they correspond roughly with four of our own basic methods. But here there seems to be a difference, and why do you think that is?

Voice: It's a Mahayana influence.

S: You could say that, yes. The recollection of the Buddha is also a Theravada practice. It's one of the ten anusatis and it's described in detail by Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga. But [447] it does seem that this kind of anusati does

permeate the Mahayana more deeply and more widely than it does the Theravada. But what about the poison that the metta is supposed to be the antidote to? This isn't mentioned by the Grand Master explicitly but it is implied. So what's the particular poison remaining?

Voice: Conceit.

S: Conceit. So do you see any connection between buddhanusati and getting rid of conceit?

Sagaramati: Well, in a sense it must make you feel quite infinitesimal.

S: Right, because it's connected with the development of reverence and devotion which certainly would tend to militate against any feeling of conceit. So one could say that this buddhanusati has much the same sort of effect as the six element practice. Well, could you go further than that and compare them more definitely or contrast them more definitely? Could you say for instance that one kind of practice, say the six element practice, was meant for one kind of person or one kind of temperament and the buddhanusati for another? Could you say that?

Sagaramati: This one is more for the devotional type of person, whereas the six element practice is more for the intellectually and analytically inclined.

Buddhadasa: Could you spell that practice please?

S: The Pali, that is Buddhanusati. Anusati means calling to mind or recollection, so recollection of the Buddha. There are ten anusatis according to Theravada tradition.

Abhaya: I don't know, I've sort of found this like a sort of poetic touch like the six element practice when you told us about giving back the water to the earth in the form of rain and sea and that sort of, I don't know, it becomes like a sort of expanding magnetic...

S: I must confess though that that poetic touch is not always found in the original [laughter]. But it is more intellectual [448] or at least analytical, isn't it?

Abhaya: But it's not sort of dry.

S: No, you're dissolving yourself rather than forgetting yourself through your remembrance of the Buddha. So probably it would be correct to say that one practice is for the more intellectual, the other for the more devotional. And it also provides one with a very good transition to the definite visualization practice.

So what are the manifestations of recollection of the Buddha? "We feel springing up within our Dhyana minds the development of a spirit of respect for all sentient life". Reverence for life in general, not just for the Buddha, "and a feeling of fraternity with them; we feel unfolding powers of Samadhi, and a sense of joy and bliss pervades both body and mind that wraps us in a feeling of righteousness and safety."

Lokamitra: Well, this is, how do you pronounce it, buddhanusati, this is one of them, yes?

S: Hmm?

Lokamitra: Did you say this was one of them? Or there were others?

S: One of which?

Lokamitra: One of the buddhanusatis.

S: The buddhanusati is one of the ten anusatis.

Lokamitra: Ah, I see.

S: The ten anusatis or ten recollections mentioned in the Pali scriptures. There was the recollection of the Buddha, the recollection of the Dharma, the recollection of the Sangha, recollection of Dana, recollection of Sila, recollection of the Devas, recollection of the breath, recollection of death, have I mentioned that? Recollection of death, and there are two others that I can't remember now. [449]

Abhaya: So what does anu mean?

S: Anu? Anu is more like after, following. Sati is memory, so it's the following memory, in other words recollection, the memory that comes after, or the awareness that comes after, i.e. recollection. Sati or smrti as it would be in Sanskrit, Buddhanusati or Buddhanusmrti.

So it's interesting that each particular method has it's own particular manifestations. Do you notice that? The last paragraph that we read here mentions general manifestations of dhyana practice, but each specific method has its own particular type of manifestation too, indicating success in that particular method.

Abhaya: So within that division that you gave us on the first day, of five basic meditation methods, there are probably hundreds, well you've just mentioned ten anusatis?

S: Hmm, well, these are five basic methods and they're basic in as much as they relate directly to these five basic poisons. You could also say that each of the basic methods enucleates a whole cluster of associated methods as in the case of the element practice. You can't systematize too much, though you can to a certain extent. It would be nice to have everything worked out as a neat little chart with nothing left out and nothing overlapping and nothing inconsistent, but it's often very difficult to do that. If one thinks in terms of five poisons and five basic methods, that's a pretty good start, and if one grounds oneself in these.

Anyway, we'll finish this chapter and then we can have a talk about the meditation. Right, what about these manifestations of dhyana practice in general as they seem to be?

Ratnapani: Well, it just about includes, well, everything I've heard of up to Enlightenment.

S: Love for Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, respect for the precepts, [450] equanimity, sense of awe for the celestial worlds, attainment of the four right viewpoints. In other words the practice of the dhyanas is generally helpful and there are all sorts of manifestations.

Buddhadasa: Well, I was going to ask whether in fact the experience of the dhyanas is essential to gaining insight, you know, sort of it seems to me that from what we've been reading so far is that one could stop at the first dhyana, plunge straight off into insight...

S: No.

Buddhadasa: ...and forget about the attainments of the other...

S: No, because the energy that you generate, as it were, as a result of the experience of the first dhyana, is still quite weak. You could generate some insight, but usually, as I said at the very beginning of the seminar, one is advised to have an experience of all the absorptions, and to as it were, come back to the first. That mustn't be taken too literally, this coming back. It's on the basis of your quite extensive and deep experience of the absorptions just allow this discursive mental activity to arise which provides you with the immediate key, you know, to the development of vipassana. Not that you quite literally come down. Usually this is taken literally and that gives rise to various difficulties, but that isn't the right way to take it at all. You come down, as it were, with the full force of all those dhyanas behind you, and any sort of mental activity that you start off at that time is immensely powerful.

Abhaya: I suppose it would be something you wouldn't have to think about then. The kind of reflection you do would be a spontaneous ...

S: Well, yes and no, not spontaneous in the sense of it happening sort of without any sort of effort, but certainly...

Abhaya: Would you concentrate on one of the accepted vipassana practices?

S: Yes, that is, any of the, as it were, traditional conceptual formulations as I call them. Very often in this connection, a verse that one can repeat to oneself over and over again like a mantra with a conceptual meaning, which is expressive of some insight or other, depending on which aspect... [rest of sentence missing] [451]

[Tape 19 Side A]

Lokamitra: ...this would be what it would be doing?

S: I think you'd better ask the question again. Try and make it a bit clearer. [laughter] It was clear already, but no harm in having it a bit clearer.

Lokamitra: You talked in terms of emotional insights and conceptual insights.

S: I'd prefer not to put it like that; it's more the expression or embodiment of insight, you know, what we are calling insight or a transcendental experience you could call it, or a sort of measure of enlightenment experience, either in conceptual terms or in emotional terms, either as a wisdom-type experience or a faith-type experience, these do add up to the same thing. Faith is not just emotion any more than wisdom is just thinking.

Lokamitra: So to that extent would the mantras be conducive to insight expressed in emotional terms, in terms of...

S: I don't think you could work up very much either in the way of emotion by recitation of the mantra unless you did the visualization too, which doesn't mean of course the literal visualization necessarily but certainly the feeling or the sense of something being there, of the mantra being, as it were, orientated to a definite spiritual reality which was thought of or felt as being personal, or an individual Buddha or Bodhisattva.

Lokamitra: So to that extent any visualization practice on a Bodhisattva with a mantra would be...

S: Well in as much as it developed reverence and devotion, and in as much as that undermined one's habitual self-centredness, this would be a vipassana-type practice and experience. Of course the great test would be whether the effects were permanent.

Lokamitra: Before you mentioned that - you didn't go into it - but you said that [452] some visualization practices were vipassana-type exercise and some were...

S: Yes. What I meant by that was that there were some visualization exercises where one is concerned only with the actual seeing of that particular form, which means to that extent it is a concentration exercise, also with feeling, faith, and devotion which are positive emotions as such, ..[unclear].. to samatha, but then there are also reflections, you know, when you are in that concentrated state. For instance you reflect that, just to give an example, that particular Buddha or Bodhisattva is the embodiment of sunyata, then of course the vipassana element or aspect comes in. Or you may for instance reflect that his six kinds of ornament represent the six paramitas, and then you start developing your insight into what those paramitas actually mean. Then in this way, too, or you reflect that his sixfold tiara represents the five wisdoms and you start reflecting on the significance of those five wisdoms. The actual visualized image holds your attention and keeps your emotions in play, as it were, maintains you at a high state of emotional positiveness, in other words on the samatha level. At the same time you are investigating the meaning of the symbolism of the figure in those sort of terms and in this way giving rise to insight. Or you can sort of visualize the form, the figure, quite vividly and then make it disappear, and in this way reflect that everything that one sees and everything that one experiences is the product ultimately of mind. It comes and it goes, just like that figure. Again it becomes the basis for the experience or practice of vipassana.

Lokamitra: It's unlikely that someone will just plainly visualize a figure of a bodhisattva as a figure without relating to all the symbols and so on involved, so most would be therefore implying some kind of impression.

S: No, it would have to be a quite vigorous investigation of that meaning in that sort of way. Not just a reminiscence from just something you have read. It would mean an actual quite positive, quite powerful investigation into what they actually meant.

Sona: It seems as though unless you've actually sort of been fully initiated and have gone through the practice fully with a teacher, that it would probably be on the level of concentration. [453]

S: Yes, right, yes. And of course some visualization exercises and practices have interspersed, you know, verses to recite in the course of the practice, verses of as it were more philosophical nature, verses designed to function within that sort of general setting or framework of the visualization practice as a basis for the development of insight. This is a very vast field with hundreds of sort of variant practices. It's quite difficult to generalize. This is one of the reasons I want to get the five basic methods clear, at least in the minds of some people, before we go on to other things at all systematically.

But the fact that one can regard the visualization of the Buddha, the buddhanusati or recollection of the Buddha, as an alternative, a more devotional alternative to the six element practice means that one is able to make an immediate transition to the more developed, even specifically Vajrayana type of visualization practice. I would suggest that within this sort of context, if one was thinking in terms of teaching any of these vipassana methods, any of these five methods to relative beginners, then it should be the simple Sakyamuni visualization, not any archetypal Buddha or any Bodhisattva. Just a simple historical teacher which at that stage would be much more acceptable and intelligible.

Lokamitra: What do you feel about that being taught outside the Order generally?

S: I think this is quite alright because - not too generally - but it is the Buddha and one can feel a certain amount of devotion and respect without actually going for refuge, or one can present it as mainly a concentration exercise.

Lokamitra: So we could do that with mitras then?

S: Yes, I think you could, and leave it to the person himself or herself as to what degree of actual devotion they would put into it. Some people would put quite a lot of devotion into it and, you know, it might help them to realize that, well, they did have in fact quite a strong feeling for the Buddha of oral tradition without raising the actual question of formal commitment. And here, of course, one should normally describe the Buddha as seated under the Bodhi tree at the time of the enlightenment. [454] Anything more on this? Alright, on to part two of that chapter then.

Sona: [reads from p.481-2] "The second conception of the internal developments relates to the faculty of distinguishing between trueness and falsity. It manifests itself in two ways.

"a. The first relates to the development and manifestation of false forms of concentration. There is only one right way of practising Dhyana but there are many false ways. According to our wrong ways of practising there will be many different corresponding signs. We may feel a tickling sensation over our bodies, or sometimes a feeling of heaviness, as though our body were under pressure, or sometimes the very contrary, a feeling of lightness as if our body would float away, or sometimes of as though the body were held down by bonds. Sometimes there will be a feeling of unbearable sleepiness, sometimes of coldness, sometimes of heat; sometimes there will be strange changing conditions, now and then the mind will become obscure and again it will be alive with many bad perceptions; or concerned with all kinds of troubles and the complicated affairs of others; or at times we may become light-headed and optimistic, and at other times very pessimistic; we will be filled with such fright that our hair will stand on end, and then again, there will be times of exciting happiness as though we were intoxicated.

"All such kinds of false developments may arise during the course of our practice, but we should pay no attention to them. If we become attached to any of these false developments, we will soon pass under the influence of ninety-five devils who will delude us into madness. When the gods or devils or evil spirits notice our susceptibility to these evil developments, they will sometimes give us increased meditating power so as to lead us on into deeper development of these evil manifestations. Sometimes they give one powers of knowledge and eloquence, sometime magical gifts so that we will be able to stir up people all the more. Under these conditions foolish people think he has attained enlightenment and they give him their faith and obedience, but his deluded mind is in a disturbed condition and is really in the service of evil spirits in their efforts to lead the world into turmoil. Alas to him who yields himself to such evil developments and manifestations! He will decline in his practice of Dhyana and after his death will fall into evil existences. But if we, truehearted followers of Buddha, notice that we are having these wrong developments and sham manifestations, then we should reject them forthwith. How may we reject them? Well, if we recognize them to be false and visionary, and take care not to think of them or grasp them or become attached to them, then they will soon vanish away. If we observe them with right insight, they will quickly pass away."

S: So what do you think is the general characteristic of these wrong manifestations, showing that there is something wrong with our practice or experience of dhyana?

Voice: They're all transitory?

S: No, not just that, because even positive manifestations...

Buddhadasa: They don't result in permanent change?

S: Well neither do the positive dhyanas' manifestations.

Sagaramati: Something like negative parts of yourself feeding off the energy of that state?

S: Hmm, it's just as though the manifestations are, as it were, quite disturbed. They're not sort of peaceful and calm and steady and stable. There's a lot of disturbance and turbulence in them. So they're not, as it were, necessarily evil in themselves, if you just let them pass away, but if you fasten onto them or cherish them or develop them, then, of course, it does become a quite different matter. Sometimes people who seem to wield a lot of, as it were, spiritual influence, or some very popular religious leaders, they get into things of this sort sometimes in a very intense way, and it gives them a sort of negative charisma, and that influences people quite strongly.

Lokamitra: Can you say more about that?

S: Well, here it's put in terms of gods or devils or evil spirits. You can take that literally or you can take it metaphorically, but it is as though if you indulge in certain negativities, including those which come up in connection with meditation, then that is very much [455] reinforced, almost as though from some external reservoir of negativity. But the energies involved are very strong and very powerful and you can do quite a lot with them if you are motivated by them. You are full of energy, very active and can influence people as people feel the power in you, as it were, though it's basically very negative, not to say evil. I sometimes even say one shouldn't talk about it even too much, because even that is establishing sort of contact with it. It's best just to note it and pass on, and not dwell on it particularly. Basically it seems to imply regarding quite incidental manifestations and by-products of one's dhyana practice and experience as being of some significance and importance in themselves, especially when those manifestations are a bit turbulent or disturbed. Something in you that battens on to them and makes much of them and starts thinking, well, this is the real, when it's no more virtually than a symptom of something that you're getting rid of and ought to be glad to see go.

Sagaramati: Could things like that be actually something that you are getting rid of, that you've just left it?

S: Yes indeed, yes. Some of the manifestations are comparatively innocent, like coldness and heat; they become evil and dangerous only when you begin attaching importance to them. Others seem undesirable in themselves like the light-headedness and pseudo optimism.

Ratnapani: Genuine optimism can rise up though, can't it?

S Certainly, yes. You can get a sort of very bubbly sort of experience in connection with meditation. You get sort of quite light but it's in a very superficial, almost slightly hysterical sort of way, and if you indulge in it then it becomes more pronounced and you can start thinking, well, this is the real meditation. I'm experiencing the real divine bliss and I'm enlightened, and you even start dancing

around and other people may be quite impressed and think it really is divine bliss and not you just a bit sort of foolishly optimistic or a bit light headed or a bit hysterical. In some retreats in the past I noticed this sort of hysteria quite a bit. It was more noticeable [456] among women than among men. It was quite unpleasant sometimes. You had people running up and down corridors and sort of shrieking and things like that. It was a sort of bubbly light-headedness. I don't know whether we've had it on retreats recently, that sort of thing, but we did have it four or five years ago quite a bit. You remember that, yes?

Lokamitra: Do any of these correspond to what you call the samapattis in some of your lectures?

S: No samapattis are definitely positive manifestations.

Ratnapani: There's one thing here, that thing about feeling heaviness in particular, I relate to that myself. Do you think a feeling like that would be different from a feeling of solidity? Is that more likely to be a positive thing?

S: Stability. Stability is positive; put it that way. Heaviness is not exactly negative, I mean, if it is just a phase, you carry on with the practice and then it goes. But if you start thinking of this heaviness as a sign of success in meditation, almost cultivating it, then it does become very negative.

Ratnapani: I think that's what I've got into: a particular physical sensation. I now know the signs and I think, ah, we're taking off, we're beginning to get into it.

S: Well, that may be, but heaviness as heaviness isn't very positive. If it is sort of stability and even sort of solidity up to a point, well that's alright, but heaviness isn't a very positive manifestation.

Ratnapani: I think in my particular case I'm talking about a feeling of firmness more than...

S: Well firmness is OK.

Ratnapani: Do you think there's much anger, well, I suppose it can't be avoided but sort of recognizing the signs as concentration builds up? Because I personally feel that I've become attached to those physical signs. [457]

S: Well then one should be careful just to note them and pass on and concentrate on the practice and not bother too much what is happening in that direction. I can't help thinking of some of the symptoms and manifestations that used to come up in connection with people practising that so-called vipassana. Most of their experiences would definitely come under this heading, sort of very turbulent, very strained, very pained sort of experiences. Quite bizarre sometimes and, I mean, there were several of our friends who had a very sort of light headed experience in connection with meditation, who got very high but in a very sort of nebulous way, and sometimes they say the high is all in their head. They don't feel very solid, they feel a bit sort of light but in a negative sense. This is not

uncommon. At least two or three of our friends do have this kind of experience. Alright then, on to number two.

Nagabodhi: [reads from p.482-3]

"The other way of drawing distinctions between falsehood and trueness is the discernment by the practice of development and manifestation of right Dhyana. If we are practising right Dhyana there will come into development and manifestation all kinds of meritorious qualities that will approve themselves to our enlightened consciousness by their benefit to our Dhyana practice. The body will become bright and transparent, fresh and pure; our minds will become happy and joyous, tranquil and serene; hindrances to our practice will disappear and good thoughts will spring up to help us; our respect for the practice will increase and our faith in it will deepen; our powers of understanding and wisdom will become clear and trustworthy; both our body and mind will become sensitive and flexible; our thought will be less superficial and more profound; our body will become tranquil; we will feel an instinctive disgust for the world's lusts. Under these conditions, our minds will become unconditioned and desireless, and both frankness and charm will characterize our daily life. This is the true and right development and manifestation that should follow our practice of Dhyana. These reactions are similar to the reactions we feel when we are with people - if we are with bad people, we feel irritated and annoyed, but if we are with good people, we are mutually benefited and feel at ease.

"Stopping and observing at the time of our practice helps us to discern between the wrongness and rightness of the developments that take place during the practice."

S: This seems quite straightforward.

Padmapani: Is this going back to like not even in the absorptions yet? It seems like one feels irritated and annoyed with people and, you know, sort of go down on...

S: No, there's a comparison. When you are with bad people you feel irritated and annoyed. When you are with good people you feel happy and pleased. In the same way, if your practice of dhyana is going on correctly and your manifestations are the right manifestations, then you feel happy and pleased. It's like being with good people. But if your dhyana practice is not going along correctly and the manifestations are the wrong manifestations, then you feel irritated and annoyed, like being with bad people.

Padmapani: Ah right, I've got it. [458]

S: It's just a comparison. It also suggests that the manifestations which you experience, good and bad manifestations as a result of correct and incorrect practice, have a sort of almost objective existence just like people, sort of tangible forces or energies. It does rather suggest that, as though the meditation is actually producing something as it were. Then you could use the familiar term vibes here, I suppose, if it wasn't so terribly overworked. The word vibes seems

to convey, or have to bear the weight of, half the philosophy of some people! [laughter] If you don't know quite what to say, how to explain things, you just say, oh it's the vibes, and leave it at that.

Sagaramati: It seems like if you're practising, and say you're doing mindfulness and you're sort of concentrating on the breath, it seems as if you have to keep an eye occasionally, as it were, on what's going on.

S: Yes, at least in the long run. Not every five minutes, as it were.

Voice: [inaudible question]

S: Yes, the word instinctive is rather misleading; spontaneous would be better wouldn't it? Alright, let's finish the chapter then with this section three.

Ratnapani: [reads from p.483] "The third conception of the internal developments relates to making more use, in our practice of Dhyana, of stopping and observing as a continuing nourishment for these unfolding good qualities. If we wish to conserve and develop the good qualities, we must continually resort to the practice of stopping and observing. Sometimes it will be the practice of stopping that the situation needs, and at other times it will be observing that is needed. We should consider each situation separately by our enlightened insight and then apply the right remedy."

S: Hmm, yes, the Grand Master doesn't give any detailed guidance, it suggests that by that time you will be able to look after yourself you won't need any guidance. Your own enlightened consciousness will tell you what to do, and that is as it should be. Anyway, any query on this morning's chapter in general, any further point?

Vajradaka: The Grand Master doesn't seem to be as practical as he could be. He seems to be saying quite a lot of what could [459] happen and what does happen, and not quite so much as perhaps he would have done at another time of what to do about it?

S: I think you can be fully specific only when you've got just one particular person practising and you sort of go with him step by step, but when you are, as it were - even though the text as a whole was written for one particular person, unless he's actually started practising you just have to indicate the possibilities, what might happen. You can't think of anything more than that. This is why really you can't have books about meditation.

Alright, let's leave that there and perhaps take up any question that anyone has, I think Abhaya has anyway, about the practices that we've been doing in the evening.

Abhaya: There are two sort of technical points I wanted to ask. The first was in connection with the nidana practice. You said at one point it would be a good idea to recite each introductory verse once round the rosary. Could you just give the details of that?

S: Well, it's not exactly an introductory verse. It's just the formulas for that particular, well, not even nidana. You get a formula for two nidanas at a time, that is, the preceding one and the succeeding one. So what I had in mind was this, that you do, for instance, either a metta bhavana or mindfulness of breathing practice for a little while and then you take up the contemplation of the nidanas saying to yourself, 'In dependence upon suffering arises faith,' tell one bead, 'in dependence upon suffering arises faith, in dependence upon suffering arises faith,' then you'll feel like having a little reflection about it, going into it a bit. So you're going to sort of pause, and then again, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith, in dependence on suffering arises faith,' and do one time round the rosary, and then treat each of the pairs of nidanas in that particular way. So the next one will be 'in dependence on faith arises delight, in dependence on faith arises delight.' And as you say it over and over to yourself you'll also have a corresponding feeling, especially with those earlier nidanas of the series, and as you reflect you will also develop at least an understanding and possibly some insight too. This is what I had in mind. [460]

Abhaya: Applied to the wheel of life nidanas too? When you get on with the wheel?

S: No, I hadn't thought of it as extending to that, partly because it would be a very long practice and partly because I want to emphasize the positive. What one could do - and I did mention this, though I didn't go into it - you go through the sequence of the twelve nidanas, and when you come to knowledge and vision, instead of then going through the nidanas of the wheel of life in forward and reverse order, you could recite some other verse also embodying insight. Well, there are many such verses. You could even reflect for instance on sunyata. You could reflect on the four kinds of sunyata, that is to say, the emptiness of the conditioned, the emptiness of the unconditioned, the great emptiness, and then emptiness of emptiness. In other words, just to elaborate that and give it more content, you could introduce any of the doctrinal formulas which related to wisdom or insight.

This would probably be better than introducing the whole of the nidana chain of the wheel of life in forward and reverse order as we did in fact that evening. But I think certainly the positive nidanas are to be stressed. Or also, I mean, in a way what is the most important formula for insight, certainly according to Theravada sources, is the three characteristics. One could recite there, or repeat there, the appropriate verses of the Dhammapada, that is to say insight into impermanence, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, and anatta. Perhaps it would. be advisable to add the fourth, which we find in the Sanskrit sources, that nirvana is the only calm. I mean, all component things are transitory, all component things are unsatisfactory, all things are devoid of self, and nirvana is the only calm. For the first three of these there are well known verses from the Dhammapada which one can recite. All conditioned things are transitory for whomsoever sees this with wisdom, this is the path of purity. And the same for unsatisfactoriness and selflessness. But any such formula can be introduced at that point and reflected

up on so as to provide a basis for the development of insight. But I think within the context of the positive nidanas that is best. Certainly not just have the nidanas and the wheel of life by themselves, as is of course the usual practice. It also occurred to me that it would be a good idea to introduce the twelve positive nidanas into the puja sometimes, [461] that is to say, immediately before the Heart Sutra. Just chant, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith, in dependence on faith arises delight, in dependence on delight arises rapture, in dependence on rapture arises calm, in dependence on calm arises bliss, in dependence on bliss arises concentration, in dependence on concentration arises knowledge and vision. Recite the whole series because in a way it summarizes the Dharma, especially on the practical side, and then go on to the Heart Sutra. This would be quite good to introduce at least sometimes.

Abhaya: Certainly on full moon puja.

S: Right, yes.

Lokamitra: You don't feel the negative nidanas have much use here?

S: I feel that it's necessary for our formulations and our whole approach and practice to be as positive as possible, and I'm afraid we may have to weed out quite a few of the negative formulations which we find in traditional sources simply because they produce the wrong sort of feeling, and no doubt they did work in ancient India and in maybe ancient China, but they don't seem to work so well for us and, I mean, the positive formulations are there, at least some of them, so why not give them a bit of attention? They have been neglected for centuries.

Lokamitra: They're sometimes a bit more immediate, the negative ones.

S: They are indeed, yes.

Lokamitra: That's the only reason I was thinking of them

S: When I was talking with what's-his-name yesterday, Michael Waller, he was telling me about the experience of the Chinese monks in Hong Kong, how they were reacting to the fact that young people weren't interested in Buddhism and were very materialistic and the Dharma didn't seem to apply, and he was asking, you know, what our attitude was. I said that we hadn't found it necessary to change the Dharma but we had found it useful to resuscitate certain teachings which apparently hadn't been very useful in the [462] past but which are very useful in the present situation. And I mentioned the positive nidanas and I said perhaps we should look at it in this way, that the modern world gives us the opportunity to bring into action aspects of the Dharma which apparently were not needed in earlier times. So it's not that the Dharma is no longer relevant, it was relevant before, certain aspects which were relevant before are no longer relevant, but there are some aspects which are relevant now which weren't relevant before, and those aspects we should bring out. So I think we should look at it in this way, and he thought that a much more positive approach, rather than just blaming the modern world and blaming modern society and

modern civilization and modern materialism and so on. I mean there are aspects of the Dharma completely relevant to this situation but which have not yet been brought out. They are just there in the scriptures, but nobody has done anything about them, so we should just bring them out and use them. So he felt this was a better sort of emphasis and he was quite surprised by it.

Lokamitra: Personally, I can see at first myself relating and getting much more from, say, the reflection on the negative nidanas.

Vessantara: When we were talking about seeing how conditions in the past produced conditions in the present, I found the negative nidanas quite helpful in that way.

S: Right, well usually, unfortunately, one's past has been rather negative. I think the overall emphasis must definitely be positive. I mean, that's why I say contain the negative within the positive, that's alright, but not just the negative, ever.

Ratnapani: Can you tell me - I've wondered about this - just briefly - reading it - the chain of becoming - when going back down it were - surely things don't start from the cessation of death, the cessation of this chain doesn't start from that end as it were, does it? Surely it starts from the cessation of ignorance.

S: No, it starts from the cessation of craving, in a sense.

Ratnapani: I've forgotten what the two things are, but when we started the cessation part of that...

S: Well you go back two at a time, don't you, because suppose you've got a chain, not sort of links in the ordinary sense, but when you've got for instance a piece of string and you make a whole sort of series of loops, you can't go back to the beginning and untie it, you untie it from the end, as it were, or undo from the end. That is the sort of analogy I think.

Ratnapani: What is the first loop, in fact, in the undoing? What are the words?

S: The last one to be tied is the last one to be untied.

Ratnapani: Yes but what are the words about it?

S: That is to say, birth and decay and death. Decay and death is the last, and birth is the last but one, so if there's no birth obviously there's no decay and death.

Ratnapani: It seems funny though, because one doesn't start...

S: Yes but don't forget though that the ancient Indians thought in terms of getting rid of birth and death, that was his original [point of] departure, as in the case of the Four Noble Truths. How am I to get rid of decay and death? So [with] what being absent does decay and death not be present? Well, birth obviously. So what has to be present to ensure that birth is not present, well, becoming. Well what has to be absent to ensure that becoming isn't present? Well, clinging. And in that way you go back.

Ratnapani: I see. I felt like I was going downstairs backwards and waiting to fall over... [laughter] Rather than sort of saying in fact what does happen ... get rid of craving, say, and in dependence on no craving such and such doesn't arise, and so on. I mean culminating in the death doesn't...

S: That's not the traditional way, I think mainly because their original preoccupation, their starting point, was the existence of decay and death which they wanted to transcend. Did anybody else feel they were going downstairs backwards? [463] Hmm. Of course if you're a good visualizer you can just visualize the wheel of life at this point.

Abhaya: I don't want to draw on the negative formulations [but] in the wheel of life is it that on ignorance depends karma formation?

S: Yes, that was what I meant. [464]

[Tape 19 Side B]

S: ... about samskaras.

Abhaya: Could you just say a little bit about them? I've never been quite clear about...

S. The samskaras represent all the driving forces, all the driving energies which precipitate yet another life, yet another birth. You could say that the two links, ignorance and the karma formations, contain a sort of short summary of one's total history before this life. On the static side, as it were, it's ignorance, and on the dynamic side it's these confused blind energies resulting in yet another human existence or yet another sentient existence. One has to be aware of this terminology of links. I mean these two in a way cover exactly the same ground as the eight links of the present existence, and the two of the future cover the same ground from a different point of view. I mean what is summarized in the case of this life in terms of eight links is summarized in terms of all past life as simply two links. So you mustn't take this analogy of links too literally.

Abhaya: Because it applies anywhere on the chain?

S: Yes, that's true, yes. So when it is said that in dependence upon ignorance arises samskaras it means that the whole story of one's previous existence has been blind strivings and energies arising out of a state of bewilderment and confusion and darkness and spiritual ignorance. That's the summary, that's the story so far. Then in dependence upon all that, in dependence on those confused strivings arising against a background of spiritual ignorance, and in dependence upon all that, there arises the initial consciousness in this life.

Sagaramati: Could you associate, say, the negative links with the lower evolution?

S: Certainly you could. You could even if you wanted interpret it in strictly evolutionary terms, that that represented your biological evolution, and if you wanted, though I don't personally do this or [465] believe this, you could interpret it just as biological evolution without bringing in the question of rebirth. Your

animal ancestry has brought you to this point when you emerge in this life as a human being. Some people I believe have interpreted it in that way in modern times, but it's certainly not the traditional view.

Vessantara: [inaudible question]

S: Namarupa? Nama is everything mental and rupa is everything physical. Usually it is said that namarupa corresponds to the five skandhas. In that case nama represents all the skandhas other than the rupa. Rupa of course represents rupa. In other words that's why it's usually the psycho-physical organism. Sometimes of course it is said - this is one of the traditional explanations or exegeses - that namarupa refers to intra-uterine existence when the senses are not fully differentiated, and according to this interpretation the six sense organs refers to the actual time of birth when you emerge fully equipped with your developed faculties and sense organs after which you come into contact with the external world. This is one interpretation traditionally given. Again you could argue that this isn't strictly true because there is some development of the senses even in the womb. There is certainly the development of touch, warmth and so on, perhaps even hearing. Anyway, any further point?

Has it become clear on the whole, this basic distinction of samatha and vipassana? Yes? And samatha practices and vipassana practices, as it were? One can't strictly speak of vipassana practice.

Vessantara: Would it be good? Could we, when we go away, take up one of these?...

S: Yes, I think it would be good if there were from time to time retreats for Order members at which all of these five practices were gone through with perhaps an Order member who had specialized a little in one or another leading for the particular occasion.

Lokamitra: We could do this on the order retreat. [466]

S: Yes, that's true.

Ratnapani: The way things were taught back East, would one be with a teacher who would continually talk you through it in some circumstances? Because I found that much much better.

S: No, I'm afraid this is entirely my own innovation.

Ratnapani: It's brilliant.

S: As far as I know, it's never done. I started this with the metta even in the East. I started this in the East with the metta and I found it worked very well so I continued it when I came this country. I was doing it at Hampstead and the Buddhist Society and then I extended it to the visualizations and so on. This seemed to really help people get started. So I suggest that if it is led, if any of these practices are led, if that sort of leading is appropriate, then it should be

done by the Order member leading the session. To the best of my knowledge this has never been done before. This in non-traditional.

Vessantara: If one were to take up one of these practices one would presumably take up the one one has most affinity for?

S: I think so, yes.

Vessantara: One could argue that the one you found most difficult ... [inaudible]

S: I don't think that applies where certainly vipassana is concerned. Vipassana is vipassana; it doesn't represent any particular aspect. In a sense, any aspect will do. Enter by any gate, it's the same city, as it were.

It might even be a good idea if on order days one or another of these practices was done so that as many Order members as possible are familiar or become familiar with all these five methods, even though they may feel more attracted to one than another; be specializing in one or two or three more than the others; have at least a working knowledge of them all and remember the sequence. First the mindfulness: the mindfulness of breathing helps you to concentrate, get rid of distractions but also apparently makes [467] you more sensitive. And then metta as the positive counterpart or complement of that. And then on to vipassana-type practice in the form of the contemplation of the positive nidanas. That gives a quite nice sort of entry into the sphere of vipassana as it were. And then after that one can take up the six element practice or the recollection of the - I've missed one haven't I? - gone ahead too quickly.

Voice: The nidanas.

S: No, that was the positive nidanas. No, craving and death; that's the one we haven't done yet. And that one can do, as we shall be doing it within the framework of the tradition of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which means again also introducing the visualization.

Lokamitra: Is this a traditional way you're going to...

S: No, this particular sequence isn't traditional though there's no reason why it shouldn't be. The sequence samatha and vipassana is traditional, of course, so that's the basic framework.

Sagaramati: Using the Tibetan Book of the Dead, have you done that before?

S: I think once or twice but more as a sort of reading in the context of the meditation. But I thought it's best to do things in that way, but I think one has to safeguard or be on one's guard against the recollection of death becoming either melancholy or morbid, and the whole sort of approach of the Tibetan Book of the Dead is much more inspiring and positive one could say. It's more like a sort of samatha and vipassana experience at a very high level within the framework of the experience of death, taking death not only literally but also metaphorically and symbolically. I think that sort of approach is much better for most people, anyway. Again that prepares the way to visualization.

Well, I think we'd better leave it there this morning. It's heen quite a long session and it's nearly lunchtime. [468]

S: Alright, Chapter 8 which is entitled 'Beware of Evil Influences' page 483.

Ratnapani: [reads from pp.483-4] "The word used in the title of this chapter in the Sanskrit is Mara, which corresponds with the English 'Satan,' or 'Devil.' "

S: Hmm, that's probably rather an over-statement to begin with.

Ratnapani: "In the Chinese language this word has the meaning of 'killer'. . . "

S: In Sanskrit, too. According to the usual exegesis Mara is connected with marana which means death. It probably isn't a true etymology but that's a popular explanation.

Ratnapani: ". . . because it robs us of our treasure of merit and kills our life of wisdom. In the old days evil was usually personified as the doings of Mara, the King of Evil and his hosts of demons, but in our day we think of it in impersonal terms of evil influences."

S: I don't know whether that helps very much. Anyway, we shall see.

Ratnapani: "Our Lord Buddha accumulates all his store of merits and wisdom by delivering all sentient beings into Nirvana, while evil influences are always destroying the good qualities of sentient beings and keeping them in the dreary rounds of life and death. If we have patience to follow the Buddha's Noble Path we will clearly perceive the influence and danger of all evil things. These evil influences may be classified into four groups: (a) vexation; (b) sensuality; (c) cruelty; and (d) 'personal' evils. The first three are so common in our daily life and correspond so closely with the thoughts of our own minds that we will not make any further reference to them at present. They are to be driven off and kept off by our right thinking. But the evil influences that originate outside our own minds, which we commonly think of as the doings of devils and goblins, require more attention."

S: Just a word about these four Maras. This is a classification which comes from general Indian Buddhism. The translations given here aren't very satisfactory. First of all there's klesha-mara, klesha-mara, which corresponds here to vexation. Klesha is defilement and it also means affliction. The word klesha has these two meanings, and Mara as mental defilements, unskilful mental states in general, and then Mara as death. This also corresponds to Mara as desire. In this form Mara appears as the God of Love, Kamadeva, the cupid of Indian mythology, and he carries a bow with five flowery arrows. But love in this sense is Death. It's just two sides of the same coin. So Mara as Death is also Mara as the God of Love.

Vajradaka: Is this number two? [469]

S: That's number two. Both of those are number two.

Lokamitra: Can you say a little more about that? The two sides of the same coin.

S: Well, love in the ordinary sense leads to birth, and then birth leads to death. And thirdly there's what is called skandha-mara. Mara as the five aggregates. There is the five aggregates that make up conditioned existence. Conditioned existence is always exerting a pull on you, the gravitational pull of the conditioned. This is an evil influence, a Mara in as much as it hinders you from developing spiritually and becoming enlightened. And then fourthly there is devaputra-mara which means Mara the son of a deva, which means Mara as a personal being. So in Indian Buddhism generally, and in Chinese Buddhism, also Tibetan Buddhism, we find this fourfold classification of Maras. Now you could say quite correctly that the first three are allegorical.

So what about the fourth? This still leaves the fourth which is personal, or as it were personal, and it's with this personal Mara that this chapter is dealing, with the disturbances created by this personal Mara. So you can hardly explain away this personal Mara as just an impersonal evil influence because the impersonal evil influences are covered by the first three Maras. So what do you think is meant by this personal Mara? Do you think there is a personal Nara in much the same way that there is a personal Buddha or personal Bodhisattva? What do you think it means? What do you think it represents?

Nagabodhi: You could say there are hundreds of them.

S: Well whether singular or plural is one literally to think of them as objectively existing personalities or intelligences?

Buddhadasa: Sometimes it helps if one does.

S: Sometimes it helps if one does.

Buddhadasa: [Unclear. Something about recognizing that it is internally based]

S: But the internally based ones, aren't they covered by the first three Maras? Is there something coming from outside? [470]

Lokamitra: At times, definitely.

S: So, at times it seems as though there is. The teaching about the devaputramara seems to be intended to take into consideration this fact. Sometimes it does seem as though some sort of diabolical intelligence is working against you. You can't put it down just to something within your own mind. It does seem something personal. It does seem something negative, almost something evil. Whether that is ultimately the explanation that is difficult to say. Ultimately, in any case, personality of any kind including one's own is only relatively existent. But sometimes it does seem that that is the best explanation or the best way of thinking of it or the way which does the greatest justice to the actual facts, to one's actual experience: that there is something, even someone, out there causing trouble for you from other planes as it were, not just impersonal influences or influences coming really from one's own mind, but something mischievous, or

someone mischievous, out there who doesn't want you to get on, who hinders if he can. Has anybody ever had this actual feeling?

Voice: Yes.

S: Something non-human, not just a human being, unless you think in terms of a human being who perhaps has been, you know, taken over by a Mara.

Buddhadasa: I had it early on in the movement, but nothing sort of personal directed at me.

S: But it did seem that some sort of intelligence or some sort of personality was working against you?

Buddhadasa: Working against us.

S: Working against us?

Buddhadasa: That's one ..[unclear]..

S: Or at least one wonders if it couldn't be that, whether there isn't some truth in it. Sometimes it seems a bit too much to say [471] sort of just coincidence or just your own mind or people's minds.

Lokamitra: I had an experience in a meditation once, a group meditation, which was definitely something from outside, but it was from someone else from outside, but it was like a presence coming in me and just being in me for a while, and it was very, very, clear. I don't know whether that could be the same thing. It may not be that.

S: You did say a person outside?

Lokamitra: Well, it was a person, but it could be the negativity or even that they were possessed and something was coming across. . .

S: And you knew it was this person affecting you? It was absolutely clear, yes?

Nagabodhi: I ..[unclear].. .. something quite recently with somebody who was undergoing quite a serious breakdown. In the few weeks before he actually manifested his symptoms outwardly in terms of violent behaviour, I could certainly feel it and I think a couple of other people could but I'm not sure. The whole house seemed to be humming with something very nasty and for a long time I was never sure whether that was coming from him or whether he simply caught it, and I've never really worked out which it was, but I certainly remember not being able to sleep, having very, very strange dreams, even sort of given my usually violent or sometimes violent dreams, they were different in nature to my kind of dreams. There did seem to be some kind of presence.

Buddhadasa: But that seems to be just sort of unconscious negativity on his part if he was undergoing some sort of mental stress. What I was referring to was something consciously aimed at you and not, say, emanating from a particular person, something a bit bigger.

S: Not through anybody directly.

Buddhadasa: Yes.

S: But in what way did you become aware of this? How did it manifest? [472]

Buddhadasa: The difficulties in the early days of the movement, you know, sort of as though every alley one tried to be creative in was just sort of blocked off; people were dropping out like flies and the search for the premises...

S: Right.

Buddhadasa: ...of all the empty properties that are in London, we just couldn't seem to find one. This was sort of not taking into account the effort we were putting into it, by that sort of...

S: It sometimes just does seem like that. I do remember Christmas Humphreys saying many years ago - this was during the war, when we were talking after a meeting when the Buddhist Society was meeting in Great Russell Street in rooms above a restaurant. I think that's where that bookshop is now. But anyway he remarked that as a result of his experience, not only with the Buddhist Society but with other groups, he felt there was a sort of conspiracy to keep money out of the hands of organizations that would use it to good purpose, and that it wasn't just a conspiracy on the human plane, as it were, and he felt this very strongly. I don't know if he still does but this is what he said then. Sometimes it does seem...

Abhaya: Maybe it could work the other way, where everything seems to be going so well that it seems it's something objective and everything falls into place as if it's something non personal.

S: It's very difficult to say. I mean, I used to know missionaries on Kalimpong who professed to believe that whenever they were short of money, they only had to pray and it would be sent along. And some of them did say that it was actually sent along, this is what actually happened. I myself, knowing them, am not inclined to believe that it was the force of prayer. It was just their [473] rather high-powered organization and the fact that they had so many churches back home and the sort of congregation that they could write to and would back them up. For instance, on another occasion when they got together and prayed they were noticeably unsuccessful. A whole group of them got together at Dr Graham's Home, which is the big missionary institution in Kalimpong, to pray, the night before the Dalai Lama was due to visit the institution at the insistence of the Governor of India, to pray that he would be prevented from coming! But he wasn't prevented from coming. But they had an all night prayer meeting to pray that he would be kept away. But on that occasion, apparently, God didn't hear them, and he came. [laughter] Beaming as usual. [laughter] I'm sorry to say they were Scottish Presbyterians. [for more on this, see In the Sign of the Golden Wheel, p.349, tr.]

Padmapani: How did they look on the Dalai Lama? As some sort of evil

influence?

S: Well, as some sort of black magician. You've no idea how the Christians, that is the missionaries, look upon Buddhism and Hinduism. It seems [it's] the worship of devils and your devil priests. If you're a Buddhist monk or anything of that sort, they look upon you with medieval horror. It's really extraordinary. And I've had some contact with missionaries, and some of them, especially the Protestants, are almost afraid to meet you. They shrink from you in the streets as though they're really in contact with the forces of evil. They feel like that.

For instance, when I was first in Kalimpong I met two very nice young ladies straight from missionary college in Devonshire. They'd just arrived out in Kalimpong to convert the heathen, and practically the first person they saw was me. [laughter] And in those days I was very sort of ascetic looking, not like now, and sort of they had really a shock. They lived quite near so one day I invited them to tea, and they evidently considered themselves really brave in venturing to come to the place where I was staying. They were sort of really entering the den of the forces of evil! I gave them tea but they were most uneasy. I got into conversation with them and tried to influence them as best I could. I must say I made some impression on one of them who was tall and thin, but on the other one, who was short and fat, I seemed to make no impression at all. [laughter] And they never came again. But I met one of them some years later, [474] in fact many years later. She was still sort of carrying on the good work in a friend's house and she was relating to this friend and relating it while I was there, an experience that she had had at a Tibetan ceremony. She had attended a Tibetan ceremony conducted I believe by Dudjom Rimpoche on the Dailo Hill, not very far away, where there was a Nyingmapa monastery, a temple, and she said that she had a brother in England who was very interested in oriental things. So what had happened was that in the course of the celebration the monks were chanting, and they were chanting from certain books or little printed texts, and one page happened to be blown by the wind, it was all in the open air, and she just picked it up and she thought, well, my brother my might like this as a souvenir of something Tibetan. So she thought no more about it, she put it in her bag or whatever, and eventually went home. But she reported that night she had the most awful dreams. She said it was actually as though some weird devil-like figure was lying on top of her and trying to do something absolutely unspeakable to her, and she said at once it occurred to her that she had that paper, the text of a devil worshipper, in her bag. So with great difficulty she freed herself from the embrace of this figure by shouting 'Jesus!' and got out of bed, took this out of her bag and burned it. After that she was alright. So then she turned to me and said, what do you think of that? What have you got to say? So I said, I think Freud would have had something to say about that. [laughter] She was bit nonplussed, and this other friend of mine who was a Buddhist also, a European Buddhist, chuckled and we didn't discuss it any further. [for more, see Facing Mount Kanchenjunga, chapter 17, tr.] But this really was typical of the attitude; they really feel that Buddhists are devil worshippers and so on and so forth, that they're really up against the devil in those areas. And they write

about this in their missionary magazine. Things like that when one lives in a place like Kalimpong, that [one] really is up against the forces of evil, one knows what evil really is, it's all around you, people worshipping evil spirits and so on. This is their attitude. Anyway, that's a bit of a digression.

Sona: It seems that if you have a sort of fear of evil forces, as you sort of discussed yesterday, the disturbances that arise in you can sort of ..[unclear].. them and they become more powerful. [475]

S: Right, yes. Well, this is what I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that Mara doesn't really correspond to Satan or the Devil at all. Mara is mischievous rather than wicked, he's naughty rather than evil. Even if one thinks of Mara as a being, a personality out there, he's just troublesome, he can't do any real harm, and - I've pointed quite often before - in the Pali scriptures Mara cuts a rather pitiable figure. He's always being detected, he's always being exposed, he's always being mocked by the monks, he's always having to slink off in disgrace. In this way he's rather a pitiable figure. So the Buddhist attitude seems to be to laugh at Mara. Poor Mara, he's trying once again his silly tricks. This is the Buddhist attitude: not to give evil, as it were, too much importance. Whereas the Christian attitude: oh it's the Devil! If we are not careful we shall be in his power! And in the end they erect the Devil into an evil power almost as powerful as God. Hardly less powerful, you sometimes feel. They really do build him up. But in Buddhism it isn't like that at all. There's a completely different attitude, a completely different approach. Also one can say that for Christianity the Devil often represents so many natural powers and natural forces which have just been violently suppressed. Especially, the Devil stands for sex, which is not quite the same thing in Buddhism.

Sona: You did say in the last seminar that if someone is possessed by a Mara through unskilful mental states, then it's a serious matter, it's very difficult to get rid of. It seems as though it becomes serious because Mara has been made such a serious thing, that you can't just laugh it off, you have to be serious yourself to try and get rid of it.

S: The only way in which a Mara can really - that is assuming there is an objective personality called a Mara - the only way in which he can do any serious damage is if you allow yourself to get into really negative states, especially of craving, fear, hatred and doubt. Only when these states become really chronic, really serious, can Mara in the sense of a personal being, have any sort of foothold in you, otherwise not, otherwise he is quite powerless [and] disappears as soon as he is seen through. So the Buddhist attitude is very much to laugh at Mara, to laugh him away, to laugh him out of [476] existence, to see through him, not to be taken in by him. This is why you find in the Pali Canon the monks represented as saying, ah, 'tis Mara, and as soon as he is seen, as soon as he is detected, he has to go away, he can't do anything more.

Sona: Do the Theravada Buddhists believe that someone can be possessed by Mara?

S: This is at least a probable belief, yes.

Vajradaka: Something happened about six months ago at the Glasgow Centre, where a man came to the Thursday class and I didn't even see him. He walked in the door, I was in the sitting room and I just got this feeling and all my hackles rose up at the back of my neck and I thought, aha, and everything switched on, and this fellow walked into the room and I just knew that he had something in him, you know, and that he was going to be mischievous. So I said, right, let's go into the meditation. And during the meditation I was just opening my eyes and looking around and I could just feel him, and he was just sitting there and he couldn't do much in the meditation. So after the meditation, as soon as we went into the meeting room, he immediately began asking questions in a very mischievous way and, well, because I sort of seen it, wouldn't stand for it, and after about ten minutes he just got up and walked out and I followed him out. I just felt sure I had to see him right out of the premises and not let him be anywhere in the Centre alone, you know, or with anyone who may talk to him. So I saw him outside and we got into conversation, and he told me within about five minutes that a week before a priest had tried to exorcise him, and he gave a sort of smile, and at that time I could see that if the priest had tried to exorcise him it didn't do him any good. And then he left.

S: It is rather interesting that there has been quite a bit of talk about exorcism recently, hasn't there?

Buddhadasa: It's usually one of the questions I get asked about in Brighton.

S: Is it so?

Buddhadasa: It seems to be a popular, you know, there is something in the [477] population, let's say, that is very interested in this subject.

S: Well Brighton is supposed to be the great centre of black magic in Great Britain. [laughter] Oh yes, quite a few covens there linking up those in London with those in France, so I've been told. So it's natural you should get questions like this in Brighton. I think one has to be very careful, especially with new people, beginners around, not to allow too much discussion of subjects of this sort, otherwise a very negative atmosphere can be created just by talking about it sort of loosely. What do you usually say?

Buddhadasa: A lot of this stemmed from the newspaper. I would say as far I know. I'm not particularly knowledgeable about these matters. There is exorcism within Buddhism but that it's very very seldom that it's required. Things of this nature are based on psychological facts.

S: I think the best sort of thing to say is that the best exorcism is meditation, in as much as these evil entities, if one wants to use that expression, can only gain a hold on you, or influence over you, if your own mental state is negative. So the best safeguard, the best protection, is to have a positive mental state such as you get through meditation. Also to gently suggest that even the interest in these things is not very positive, and it's a great pity they're splashed in the

newspapers in that sensational sort of way and say it's not even very positive that we should talk about these things too much, and that gives you the chance to pass on to something else. And one can perhaps say that the rather dualistic attitude of Christianity has if anything enforced this sort of attitude or even sort of reinforced as it were the powers of evil, by repressing much that is simply natural.

Vajradaka: It might be worth mentioning here something that I've noticed and something that actually happened one time. I was doing some massage healing on somebody, with Ann, and a certain power, a certain influence, came up within that person and Ann thought that it was the devil, of course, she's got quite a strong Catholic...

S: She was in a convent for many years, but on sort of talking about it with Bhante and with the person, we sort of came to the conclusion that this power, this influence, had been a very [478] infantile, repressed anger and resentment that had taken on this very devil-like quality. And I've seen it since then and I've noticed it a couple of times, this baby-like devil or anger, being repressed, comes out physically in what would appear to be an evil devil-like form, just like the pictures on Dennis Wheatley paperbacks.

S: I think I can say that I've noticed this myself on one or two occasions that the infantile, or rather the repressed, frustrated, unsatisfied, infantile, aspect, as it were, when it does come up, does seem to assume an almost sort of diabolical form, which simply means it is very, very extreme and very intense and completely possessive, as it were. Do you know what I mean by this? It's almost as if one can say the infantile itself is the diabolical. So I notice with a few people who have very strong infantile traits and who seem to demand infantile sort of satisfactions or attention in an infantile way, that when they are thwarted their rage or their resentment comes out in an almost diabolical manner, far in excess of ordinary, as it were human, anger. [479]

[Tape 20 Side A]

S: This suggests to me an interesting speculation, though it is only a speculation, and then I think after that we'd better get back to the text. We were talking the other day about poltergeists, do you remember? And I mentioned that poltergeist phenomena, the phenomena of the so-called mischievous spirit, were associated with - hmm, I'm just thinking how best to put it - with, as it were, mentally disturbed adolescents. Not only adolescents but young people at the stage of pubescence, that is to say when the sexual energies are coming up particularly strongly and also when there is a certain degree of frustration. It's as though chunks of that energy get sort of broken off or split off and assume a sort of independent existence, and bring about even certain objective happenings or phenomena as though someone very mischievous was around. This is apparently now the agreed explanation for poltergeists. It therefore occurs to me whether Maras might be sort of broken off chunks of infantile resentment and anger and so on of a very intense and powerful kind. There does seem to be a sort of

analogy doesn't there? Especially in view of what we know about the general nature or character of this infantile anger and hatred. It's very, very strong, absolutely no restraint or limit whatever.

Padmapani: What would be the best way to deal with the situation where this would arise in a person, say, comes into a centre and starts emanating that sort of energy? What would be the best way to deal with that? Obviously you couldn't sort of stimulate it.

S: Well, first of all, as Vajradaka did, just keep a sharp eye on them and take steps to neutralize any effects that they may have, and see them out. I don't think one can do much more than that unless they come to you privately just by themselves and want to have a talk, and then perhaps you can go into things.

Vajradaka: I think if you're aware of it, it will touch something in you that just won't tolerate it sort of playing about, and you'll act spontaneously, if you really do see it.

S: Anyway, let's go on. [480]

Padmapani: [reads from p.484] "There are three classes of these 'personal' devils: (1) the first class are the evil influences that awaken fear. There are twelve of these and they seem to come during the different periods of the day and night. They make all sorts of transformations so that simple and innocent things take on the appearance of frightful things, or harmless women or girls appear as witches, or they are wholly imaginary. In the early morning from three to five things look like tigers; from five to seven they take on harmless forms as deer or rabbits but they frighten us just the same. From seven to nine they are horrible things like dragons and turtles; from nine to eleven they look like snakes; from eleven to one they take on the appearance of horses and mules and camels; from one to three they are sheep; from three to five they are monkeys; five to seven in the twilight they are vultures and crows; from seven to nine in the shadows of night they look like dogs and wolves; from nine to eleven they take on the appearance of pigs and disgusting things; from eleven to one they are scurrying rats and mice; from one to three they are big cows that frighten us. When we are tempted by these goblins or frightful things we must recall the hour of night and the day and dismiss them from our thoughts. Just as soon as we see them as they truly are and call them by their right name, they will vanish away."

S: Well, what do you think this all means?

Sagaramati: About the Chinese astrology.

S: Yes, hmm, that's right.

Sagaramati: . . . who just divided the day up into twelve animals.

S: Right. These are the twelve animals symbols which in combination with the four main elements go to make up the Chinese cycle. No, is it four? No.

Sagaramati: Six.

S: Six, yes. It's sixty-four, it's a sixty-four year cycle. So what do you think the significance of that is here? There definitely is a significance.

Padmapani: Certain years have certain aspects of a particular time of day.

S: Yes, yes.

Padmapani: And are sort of governed over by a particular sort of archetype.

S: Hmm, for instance if you take the symbol, say, of the tiger, well, the tiger or the force or the energy symbolized by the tiger, governs a particular year. But also it governs a particular time of day. But anyway what is the purpose or what is the basis of that distribution throughout the day according from this point of view?

Ratnapani: Well, it depends at any given time of the day, depending on the sort of predominant influence, things will take varying forms.

S: Are likely to take on a particular form. We're also concerned with fear, or one could even say a sort of mild paranoia. So the overall purpose is that you should reassure yourself and get rid [481] of the fear. So if at a certain hour of the day you have a strange sort of uncanny feeling or you experience fear or things seem a bit weird, you can say to yourself, well, the reason for that is it's such and such an hour of the day, and that is governed by such and such an animal or such and such a symbol, and that is why I'm seeing things in this particular way. So thinking like that and thinking that it's natural as it were to see things in that particular way because it's that particular hour of the day, you don't think anything more about it and the fear disappears. This seems to be the reason why this is introduced here, the sort of classification. I must also say that I remember reading somewhere in a Sufi work, a modern Sufi work, a very elaborate account of the different influences predominant at different times of the day and the different forms that they took. The symbolism was quite different from this. It was Muslim and Sufi symbolism, but the general idea was very much the same: that there are different influences, even different evil influences if you like, or non-human influences, predominating at different hours of the day.

Padmapani: That seems to reflect in actual fact that these things might not apply here in this country, because it seems to have a certain geographic and cultural significance.

S: Hmm, it could be. This is very definitely Chinese, just as the Sufi account that I have mentioned was very definitely Islamic and probably Persian.

Sagaramati: In this country it would probably be things like fairies and goblins and gnomes and elves.

S: Hmm, yes, right. I don't know whether there is any indigenous tradition of beings of this sort appearing at different hours of the day according to their particular species. I don't remember reading anything of this sort or hearing anything of this sort. But the main purpose of bringing this all in here seems to

be that you should reassure yourself by thinking that this is only to be expected: It's such and such hour of the day, it is known that such and such forces are about at such and such hour of the day. When you reflect like this, realizing that it's only natural and to be expected, you cease to bother about it and it goes away. [482]

Vajradaka: This thing of calling their right name seems to crop up quite a lot.

S: Well it means you know who or what it is. You see through it just as the monks say, 'Ah 'tis Mara.' So you say, ah, it is the tiger spirit, it is the rabbit spirit. Never mind, I know all about them, they don't really matter very much. They aren't very dangerous. It's just because it's their hour of the day. It's their turn. That's why they're around. And then you just forget all about them and go on with your meditation.

Has anybody ever had any such experience of actually sort of seeing or thinking they saw rather fearsome things? [You] probably haven't been meditating out in the jungle enough.

Vessantara: I've certainly never seen anything, but when I've been on solitary retreat I've certainly gone through periods of very intense fear of - I'm not quite sure what. It just appeared from nowhere at certain times of the day. It was quite difficult to deal with.

S: So one could say, well, that's Mara. It's not coming from me. Very likely it's coming from outside. So there's no need to bother about it. Now that I know it's Mara, well he can't fool me any more and he'll go away.

Sona: I think what you said before about Mara being rather mischievous, sort of teasing and things. If you look at it in that way, it's very healthy and it hasn't got really any power at all, and the positive person is much more powerful.

S: Right. This is very strongly stressed throughout Buddhism, that positive and skilful mental states and positive emotions put all the Maras to rout immediately. The idea of a saint wrestling and struggling with an evil spirit as you get in Christianity is just unknown in Buddhism. The evil spirits just don't have a chance. [laughter] There's no question of a monk having to wrestle with them or frighten them, he doesn't get that at all, especially when you get pictures of poor old Saint Anthony being hauled up and down by his beard by evil spirits, and they go on tormenting him for years and years, decade after decade. This isn't Buddhistic at all. In Buddhist myth and legend Mara makes a brief [483] appearance, is rather naughty, and then a monk just opens one eye, or even half an eye, interrupts his meditation just for a few seconds, and then says, that's Mara. And as soon as he's seen, Mara whisks off. He doesn't dare to stay around any more. There's a quite different sort of attitude.

I remember seeing a film of Saint Anthony. Anyone see that? A Bunuel film. No, not Saint Anthony, Saint Simeon, Saint Simeon Stylites, that was very good. [Simon of the Desert, 1965, tr.] And the devil appeared in female form, I'm sorry to say, and eventually whisked him off, probably the worst thing that he

or she could have done, whisked Saint Simeon off from the third century or whenever it was, right into twentieth century. And you find him at the end of the film just sitting with the devil in a nightclub, having a drink, looking really miserable and bored. [laughter] But the way in which he's tempted, you know, being whisked away in the ..[unclear].. is very, very interesting. Again, you just couldn't do that with any Buddhist theme or Buddhist story. It would be totally inappropriate. At one stage the female devil sticks a large hat pin into Saint Simeon and he winces. It's the devil at it again. But he knows it's the devil even though she originally comes disguised as a little girl in a short frilly frock. But when she starts showing her legs to Saint Simeon, then of course he gets really suspicious, and of course it is the devil. But even though he sees through it, the devil doesn't go away as the devil would in Buddhism. There's too much in you that is reinforcing the devil.

Padmapani: So in that sense one could say in actual fact these negative influences don't really have any sort of power themselves, is that so? I mean they don't actually have an inert power in them, it's just worked upon...

S: If you take Maras literally as personalities, they are personalities, but all they are in themselves is something a bit mischievous, something a bit irritating, something a bit annoying, not something really evil. They can build up only into that with your cooperation as it were. And the Christians seem to extend that cooperation fully. Buddhist don't. They simply laugh at it all. The idea of Buddhists developing something corresponding to the Black Mass or anything of that sort is [484] totally ridiculous. Just as I mentioned the other day, that in Buddhism there's no such thing as blasphemy, similarly there's no such thing as sacrilege, there's no such thing as the Black Mass, there's no such thing as black magic except in the most ordinary sort of village style. Just because the whole Buddhist attitude towards all these things is so much more healthy and sane. Anyway, let's go on. No need to linger over all this.

Vajradaka: [reads from p.484-5] "The second class are the evil influences that awaken anger. They also employ transformations to gain their evil ends. They take on the form of worms and bugs creeping over our face or back and making sharp stings, or they tickle us, or suddenly they grab us, or make disturbing sounds, or jump out at us." [laughter]

S: This is while we're trying to meditate. These are all little Maras and they're just trying to make you angry because if you're angry then your meditation is spoiled.

Vajradaka: "At such times we should keep control of our minds and refuse to be annoyed, saying to ourselves, 'I know who you are; you are only the little discomforts of life; you are only the annoying differences of opinion that try our patience and irritate us. But we are followers of the Buddha, we keep the Precepts, you cannot make us angry, you cannot disturb us. Sometimes it will be necessary, in order to keep control of our minds, to repeat a Sutra if we are monks, or repeat the Precepts if we are laymen. But these evil influences have

no real power; they can only influence us as we let them. Careful reading of the scriptures will make this plain to us."

S: This is pretty clear, isn't it?

Nagabodhi: Why the distinction? Sutra if monks and precepts if laymen?

S: Well you could say that the Maras are more likely to make a determined attack upon the monks as they're the more important enemy, or it may be that the lay people don't usually know the sutras by heart, they just know the refuges or the precepts. Alright, let's go on.

Voice: [reads from pp.485-6] "The third class are the evil influences of illusion that bolster up our imaginary egotistic pride and self-complacency. They generally work through the conditions of our five sense objects, for the purpose of disturbing and breaking off our good and right thoughts. Their transformations may be divided into three groups. The first group are transformations of repulsive things, making them appear to be desirable. The second group are transformations of pleasing things, making them to appear as undesirable. The third group are transformations of indifferent things, making them to appear different from what they are and by so doing serving to confuse and bewilder the mind.

"All these transformations that serve to confuse and bewilder and deceive the mind are the work of demons and devils if anything is, because their arrows are sent against our highest thoughts and sentiments. They do not make a frontal attack, they attack from behind and underneath; they transform pleasing conditions, such as, forms for our parents and brothers and friends; the conditions of simple and quiet living, the beautiful thoughts of Buddha, alluring us into imaginary conditions that have no substantial basis and which lead to suffering. They transform harmless things into an appearance of frightful beasts in order to deceive us and frighten us; or they transform indifferent conditions such as are usual and commonplace, in order to forestall and disturb our practice of Dhyana. They transform all kinds of pleasing and repulsive sights, all kinds of agreeable and distressing sounds, all kinds of fragrant and horrid odours, all kinds of delicious and distasteful flavours, all kinds of good and evil thoughts and conditions that make up the routine life of everyone, and thereby delude us and hinder us from following the Noble Path. These transformations are too numerous to take up in detail, but we will group them under five heads. Anything, which serves to transform he five objects of sense and the thoughts of the mind is the work of Mara's army of demons and goblins. The purpose of their activities is to annoy us, to delude us, to destroy our good qualities, to disturb our equanimity, to raise up hindrances against our practice of Dhyana. This is explained in the sutra:

"'Be advised that sensual desires are the first army of your enemy; that discouragement and sadness are the second army; that hunger and thirst is the third army; that attachments are the fourth army; that laziness and sleepiness are the fifth army; that fear and fright are the sixth army; that doubt and remorse are the seventh army; that hate is the eighth army; that selfish love of comfort and

praise are the ninth army; that egotistic pride and complacency are the tenth army. All of these armies of evil beset the follower of the Buddha.

"But you will say: 'I will defeat all of these armies by the power of my Dhyana practice, and when I have attained enlightenment I will deliver all mankind.' "

S: Stop there for a moment. This whole section seems to be a bit as it were allegorical. To give an example, supposing in the course of our meditation we think of our parents - that's an example given here. We might even see our parents standing before us quite vividly. But what are we to think? [485] That this is Mara. This is Mara transforming himself into the form of our parents so that we may start thinking of home, start feeling homesick, want to go back to the worldly life and give up meditation. So if we think when we see this image of our parents floating before us it's only Mara. This is not really our parents. It's only Mara assuming this particular pleasing form to stimulate craving and attachment, then it will go away.

Sona: It's useful also, just at ordinary times when you're actually sitting in dhyana, when you become angry with someone and instead of thinking of that person as making you angry...

S: It's Mara trying to make you angry, yes, especially if it's something impersonal, like noise, it's Mara trying to upset you, not simply to disturb you with the noise, but trying to make you angry, because you can meditate even if there's a noise, but you can't meditate if you're angry.

So this whole passage, as I said, seems to be a bit allegorical, especially we see that from the quotation from the sutra. Right, any query on that?

Padmapani: Do you think that this text coming, as it is, so late in the passage here, do you think this denotes, I mean I don't know, but a certain quality of one is getting into the absorptions, forces are becoming a bit more apparent, when one's walking around in a field or something?

S: It could be, it could be, hmm, yes, because these sort of trials are not likely to arise if you're not making an effort. It's only when you're making quite a strong effort that the obstacles start arising. So you could say the more obstacles, well the more progress you're probably making, at least the more effort you're probably making. So in that sense it is perhaps significant that the chapter on Mara comes towards the end of the whole work, by which time presumably the practitioner is getting on pretty well, at least he's making an effort, and perhaps has even achieved something quite tangible or begun to achieve. It's only then that Mara starts taking an interest, as you may remember. [486]

Padmapani: It has sort of parallels with the Buddha sitting under the...

S: Yes, right. You may remember also in the lecture on the path of regular steps and the path of irregular steps, it was only when John started getting on really well with his meditation that Mara started taking a real interest in him. Before

that it hadn't been necessary. [laughter] I hope everybody's heard the lecture. Anyone not heard it? You haven't? Have you got a copy up in Glasgow?

Vajradaka: We've heard it.

S: Then you'll get another chance no doubt. If you don't, well that must be Mara's doing. Don't let Mara get away with it though. [laughter] Don't let him hide the tapes or keep you away next time.

Padmapani: Do you feel this could be a good way of, like, a spur for getting into greater practice, by externalizing this idea?

S: I think probably it would be much more useful and helpful and cut the whole matter short if instead of going into a lengthy psychological analysis you just say, oh that's Mara and leave it at that and get on with your practice. Rather than having a long soul-searching or rather psyche-searching session with a few friends maybe over a period of several weeks. [laughter] You just say, it's Mara, it's simple, that's all you need to think really. It certainly does save a lot of bother if you attribute it to Mara.

Ratnapani: The bother itself could well be Mara anyway.

S: Yes indeed, yes, quite.

Padmapani: It seems like though what we have gone through in the beginning seems to be absolutely necessary, the thing about negative emotions and things, then, you know, things become more simplified in a way as one progresses. At the beginning it would be [487] very ridiculous to sort of suggest that everything was sort of just Mara. You have to have a foundation...

S: Yes, you have to suggest that it's only when people have got fed up with all these psychological explanations, you know, digging up of muck from the past, have got really fed up with it, and also into the Buddhist scriptures a bit and a bit familiar with the Buddhist approach, and then it comes as a positive relief to say, well, it's just Mara. [laughter] A very short and very simple explanation that saves such a lot of trouble and bother. [laughter] Especially when you can say, it wasn't me after all. It wasn't my parents. It was just Mara at it again.

Nagabodhi: It ties in with what we were saying yesterday. One has to have at least some experience of meditation alone to resolve these blockages. As we were saying yesterday, you don't have to kind of relive the past or whatever it was that was built up. It's resolved, maybe without even a memory arising.

S: Right.

Nagabodhi: If you trust that that will happen then you're not dependent on that approach, the psychological explanation.

S: Well, on we go then. Straight after that quite from the sutra.

Sona: [reads from p.486] "Now that we, the followers of the Buddha, have become aware of all these evil influences, we must resist them with all determination.

There are two ways of resisting them: the first way is by the practice of stopping. Just as soon as we become aware of any of these evil influences besetting us, we are to recall that each and every one of them is falsehood and delusion. If we do this, there will be no fear nor sadness, no aversion nor fondness, no discrimination nor rationalizing. If we practise stopping of thoughts the mind will become tranquil and the hosts of Mara will vanish away. The second way of resisting evil influences is by the practice of insight and examination. If we constantly reflect that our perceiving and discriminating mind has no objective existence and that there is nothing for these evil influences to annoy and delude. If the evil thoughts still linger about, if we practise insight and right mindfulness we will, at least, not be vexed of them nor afraid of them. We should determine to keep the mind tranquil and steady even if we have to sacrifice our life to do so."

S: Alright, that seems quite clear. Again a rather free use of the terms samatha and vipassana or stopping and realizing. If you just reflect that these Maras that are troubling you are unreal, just empty thoughts, that's one way of dealing with them, or you can even reflect, as it were, more philosophically that the very mind that they are supposed to be attacking, your individual mind, your ego mind if you like, doesn't really exist. They're attacking something which isn't really there. So in that way too you become free from them.

Ratnapani: It gets quite complicated. [488]

S: Right, let's go on. There's something more important now.

Vessantara: [reads from pp.486-7] "In our practice of right mindfulness we realize that the conception of Mara as the embodiment of evil and the conception of Buddha as the embodiment of goodness and truth is really one conception - the conception of manifestation - but that in ultimate reality they balance each other and there remains only the conception of Dharmakaya, the Ultimate Essence that abides in emptiness and silence. In this sense there is no Mara to resist and no Buddha to take refuge in. But inasmuch as Mara is only the transformation of the true nature of Dharmakaya, the transformations of Mara disappear, and the manifestations of the Buddha-Dharma are realized by us, all in the same moment."

S: This is quite important because it shows that in Buddhism there's no, as it were, ultimate metaphysical duality of good and evil. The Buddha does not embody good as against evil. The Buddha embodies the good, the spiritual good, as it were, which is above and beyond the antithesis of good and evil in the purely ethical or moral sense.

Vajradaka: Purely a relative comparison.

S: You can say there is the unskilful, there is the skilful, and there is the transcendental. Mara embodies the unskilful, the Buddha conceived as the opposite of Mara embodies the skilful, but in reality the Buddha embodies the transcendental, which is beyond the skilful as well as the unskilful.

Sagaramati: Wouldn't sort of like the Buddha as the embodiment of skilful, wouldn't that be equivalent to the Dharma?

S: One could say that.

Vajradaka: It seems to be saying something else than you said earlier on in the seminar. Earlier I think you said that skilful and unskilful were two aspects of the same relative mundane consciousness, and in itself a skilful mental state wasn't a reflection or an expression of an enlightened mind.

S: Ah, it's the skilful mental state that provides the basis for the development of the enlightened mind, not the unskilful. In that sense the skilful is closer to the enlightened than the unskilful. But the unskilful by itself, the unskilful indefinitely, the skilful by itself or the skilful indefinitely prolonged, is not going to lead to the transcendental. It'll only lead to heaven, as it were, in the traditional Buddhist terminology.

Vajradaka: Well that's how I... [489]

S: In other words you can say there were two forms of the skilful. One is the skilful which is still rooted in ignorance. That is what we usually mean by the skilful. That is to say you perform good actions, you meditate, you experience positive emotions, but there is still this sort of ego sense to which all these actions and experiences are attached. But the truly skilful is when even that sense of selfhood or ego is lost or is dissolved and you've got the skilful functioning as it were purely spontaneously, and that is the truly skilful which is the transcendental.

Vajradaka: Have you ever said that before?

S: Oh, yes. Not maybe in those very words but I've explained this point, I'm sure, many a time.

Padmapani: Can the transcendental be equated with the Dharmakaya?

S: Yes. All these terms are more or less synonymous or ultimately synonymous: Buddhahood, Enlightenment, Dharmakaya, Nirvana, Buddha, Tathagata, Dharmadhatu, Sunyata. They all indicate the same thing from different points of view. So what we may describe as ethical goodness or moral goodness is still rooted in a subtle ego sense and has only a conditioned result, that is to say a result within conditioned existence, within the wheel of life. Maybe higher in a happier world, in a heaven, but still within the scope of the wheel of life. But it does provide a foundation for that higher development which is the transcendental path. You can fall away from the skilful. You can go from the skilful to the unskilful and back again. In this sense the skilful and the unskilful are inseparable. But so long as insight has not developed there's no guarantee that the skilful will not be transformed into the unskilful.

Sagaramati: Is this difference say between a ..[unclear].. of an arhant described as akriya?

S: Akriya?

Sagaramati: Akriya as opposed to a klesha, skilful. [490]

S: They don't have even any positive results, that is to say, within the samsara. Sometimes it's translated as spontaneous, akiriya, but literally it means non-active, not of the nature of action rather, in the sense of productive of results. In other words, not karma creating or karma producing, are not actions. The actions of the arahant are not actions, they're akiriya. In other words they produce no results within the sphere of conditioned existence. They do not result in any further rebirth, not even a good one. So one of the reasons why in Christianity Satan or the Devil takes on so much significance and draws to himself as it were much strength is because he is regarded as the opposite of God very often, at least in popular Christianity. Almost as though God and the Devil are equal, that God is good, the Devil is evil, and that duality is never transcended.

Padmapani: Is the Devil also the antithesis of the anti-Christ? Is that the Devil? This is the Jewish way of seeing Christ isn't it?

S: No, anti-Christ is a quite complex medieval conception. Anti-Christ is the false Christ who appears immediately before the Last Judgement and deceives people and misleads them. He proclaims himself as Christ, but it isn't really Christ, it's the devil in disguise. And according to the Protestants, of course, at the time of the Reformation, the Pope was the anti-Christ. Apparently there are some Protestants who still believe it. Apparently Ian Paisley [founder of the Democratic Unionist Party and MP for North Antrim, tr.] still believes this and he's up in arms at the moment, you know, in connection with the Common Market: we'll have the Virgin Mary flooding into Great Britain and Popery and all the rest, and he preached a very powerful sermon about this in his church quite recently.

Padmapani: He's not in actual fact a vicar is he? He's self-styled...

S: I believe he has some kind of ordination.

Padmapani: In America.

S: In some branches of the Protestant Church ordination has become rather tenuous.

Sagaramati: Isn't there something in Buddhism about ... a counterfeit Dharma [491] in the case of the disappearance of the Dharma?

S: This is true, yes. There are no details given about this but there are passages I remember where the Buddha says, 'The true Dharma will not disappear until a counterfeit Dharma has made its appearance. What that counterfeit Dharma is is not expressed. It's like the bad money that drives the good money out of circulation. What could be a counterfeit Dharma? I think the most likely and most subtle form of the counterfeit Dharma it that it looks exactly like the old traditional Dharma but the spirit of it has completely changed.

Padmapani: You mean counterfeit teachers of the Dharma?

S: The whole thing, the whole set-up. Not just teachers, disciples too.

Padmapani: I suppose that fits in with the idea of disciples following teachers but teachers being under the influence of these things we were talking about yesterday, these very powerful forces. It's as though everything external will be exactly the same. You'll have the same robes, the same images, the same chanting, but the spirit of the whole thing will have become different. And one really does see this, at least to some extent, in many parts of the Buddhist world just as one sees with regard to real Christianity in many parts of the Christian world. Everything is kept up as before, the externals are all absolutely intact, but the spirit has changed. And sometimes people claim that the spirit is there because the letter hasn't been changed. The external form hasn't been changed... [492]

[Tape 20 Side B]

...therefore the spirit must be there. It must be the true Dharma. This is why I say this is the most subtle form of the counterfeit teaching. You keep the letter the same but you change the spirit. I think this is what the Theravada has done to a great extent. Not to the extent of being positively evil certainly, but certainly in many cases to the extent of being not spiritually very helpful. But this is what the Theravadins will often tell you: we represent the Dharma exactly as it was in the Buddha's day, not an iota has been changed, it's all exactly the same. It's been handed down without any change at all for two thousand five hundred years, therefore this is the true Dharma. It hasn't changed in any respect. The Dharma that you're following is exactly the same as the Dharma preached by the Buddha in all respects. This is the extreme orthodox Theravadin view. And it may be so, but the only difference is the spirit's no longer there.

Padmapani: It's almost as though the people have changed.

S: Mmm, yes, right, yes. It's the same robes but a quite different sort of person wearing them. It's not anything living any more. It's just like a museum.

Nagabodhi: There's a sect in Japan apparently which is growing very big. I think they follow the White Lotus Sutra. So they more or less pressgang people into the movement. It's a very hysterical movement...

S: I think it's Soka Gakkai, isn't it?

Nagabodhi: Yes, that's the name. Yes.

Padmapani: I thought they were the Mafia [laughter] ..[unclear]..

S: No, I think you've got a bit mixed up. [various inaudible comments]

Vajradaka: I went to the Soka Gakkai temple when I was in [unclear] [493] a very, very, large, huge hall, quite plain. And the feeling in there was very edged. It had like this hard metallic edge, that's the only way I can describe it. It

didn't have the kind of emotional fullness of the little temples where I was sitting frequently. It didn't have any richness. It had this kind of, like the edge of a knife.

S: Anyway, let's go on.

Sagaramati: [reads from p.487] "Moreover we need not be troubled if the transformed conditions of Mara do not vanish away, nor should we be pleased if they do vanish. Why? Because these evil influences that come to trouble us during our practice of Dhyana are not real wolves and tigers, neither is Mara a reality. As to our ignorance and foolishness and delusion by reason of which we become frightened or fond of unseen things, it is only our mind in state of illusion, diffusion, non-concentration and dementation. (Insanity) Thus our troubles, which we ascribe to evil influences, are only due to wrong states of our own minds. Our slowness in attaining enlightenment is not because of Mara's doings, but because of our own slackness in the practice of Dhyana."

S: Even if there are such beings as Mara, if we don't make progress with our meditation it's really our own fault. [laughter and inaudible comment]

Sagaramati: [continues] "Should these disturbing conditions persist through many months, and even years, we must patiently continue to seek to control the states of our own minds; we must do so with the determination that knows neither fear nor pain. Falsehood must sooner or later yield to truth; the transformations that arise from evil influences must yield as surely yield to an earnest purpose and steadfast effort.

"But we are not to look lightly upon these disturbing influences, because the deeper they are and the stronger effort we make to uproot them, the greater will be the danger from them. We must learn to distinguish them clearly and fight them separately, or they will drive us mad. These morbid states of alternate happiness and gloomy discouragement are the cause of sickness and even death. Every follower of Buddha should have a competent Master or a wise and noble hearted friend, for sooner or later he will encounter these evil influences.

"Worse than sickness and madness, these besetting influences and transformed conditions, if not overcome, may change a follower of Buddha into a heretic and enemy of Buddha. It sometimes seems as though Mara were training a follower of Buddha to become his own servant, by leading him into false kinds of concentration, false intelligence, false intuition, false supernatural powers, and magical spells, so that he may preach the Dharma with power and win many converts."

S: This seems a little bit like the Christian idea of the anti-Christ.

Sagaramati: [continues] "And then later Mara seems to take delight in exposing his falsity and ruining his pseudo converts."

S: You find this happening quite a lot in Medieval European history. There's quite a bit of that in a book Lokamitra recently lent me called 'The Pursuit of

the Millennium'.

Sagaramati: [continues] "The whiles of Mara and his hosts are innumerable and inexplicable. We have referred only to a few of them in order to warn the followers of Buddha to be on their guard against them constantly, and especially against this danger of heresy. The fundamental heresy of the reality of all phenomena is not of Mara's doing, that is basic, but all the rest belong to Mara. The sutra says:

" 'As soon as you speculate discursively, you are already caught in Mara's net. A follower of Buddha should neither yield to evil influences nor to the temptation of discursive discussion. This is the true Mudra that will protect him from all evil.' "

S: In this particular book we've mentioned there was this recurrent pattern as it were of some teacher or leader arises and he seems to have a sort of strange charisma, he can even work miracles, he attracts many people, and he becomes more and more extreme, and there's a great movement, a vast following, sometimes it lasts a few weeks, sometimes a few months, and even sometimes one or two years, but eventually, after he has proclaimed himself as emperor, the new Christ, and so on, it all collapses, and at [494] the end of a year or so there's absolutely nothing left at all. And there were dozens and even scores of these sorts of movements and masters in Europe, especially apparently in Germany and the Low Countries, all through the Middle Ages , especially the Late Middle Ages. The author of the book relates all this to various economic and social developments. We see much the same sort of thing in modern times. They're all sorts of leaders and - not exactly teachers, they're more like leaders than teachers you can say - leaders making certain claims, attracting a vast following, but sooner or later it's exploded. You know, I couldn't help thinking in this connection of Guru Maharaja. [Prem Rawat, at that time the 18-year-old leader of the controversial Divine Light Mission, tr.] You see? His great success and his great adulation and so on and so forth and being denounced by his own mother. This is really extraordinary if you think of it. I mean what is going on?

Vessantara: I hadn't heard. He was denounced by his mother?

S: Yes, and not to speak of his brother or brothers, and another brother has been installed as the Perfect Master, and there are now legal battles going on. So it's a very similar pattern. Reading through that book I couldn't help feeling I was on very familiar ground. It all had a very familiar ring indeed.

Padmapani: Were the conditions at the time of the Middle Ages a bit different from now in the sense that there was a greater split between the scholar and the peasant and therefore there was a tendency for certain people to have the upper hand because they had more just general knowledge?

S: No, according to the author of this book - and I'm only now reproducing what he says, I'm not sure whether it's the total situation - according to him there was a development of capitalism in the Middle Ages, especially the Late

Middle Ages. At first it centred in the Low Countries, then it moved to Germany, even parts of France, and there was capitalist type manufacture with crowds of poor peasants swarming into the cities where the manufacture - especially the manufacture of cloth - was carried out under factory conditions. So in all the big cities you got a proletariat virtually of people [495] who were in a very vulnerable insecure position away from their villages, away from their traditional folk culture, seeing all around them the tremendous and growing wealth of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and living very often on the verge of starvation. It was a sort of floating pool of labour which the capitalists were exploiting, and it was these people who were very susceptible about the millennium being at hand and a certain leader was going to lead you to that. He was Christ come back, or he was Frederick the Great come back, or, you know, he was some other marvellous figure who was going to lead you to prosperity and perfection and a new state of affairs, a new world, a new life. You just had to believe in him and give everything to him. This was the sort of pattern and the sort of background.

So we're getting very much today just like that. Lots of uprooted people, people who feel very insecure. And these leaders, these figures, appear and make all these sort of marvellous promises: well, I'm God, just believe in me, give me everything, and everything will be alright. It's the same sort of appeal basically. Of course there is a lot that is wrong, and something must be done about it but in a sensible, constructive, positive way, which means slow steady work. But there are too many people who want it the easy way, just want to believe in someone who is going to do it all for them and put it all right for them, and it seems now as though in the West that these sort of leaders or figures are not being thrown up in the West itself but being sort of imported in the form of exotic gurus. But they aren't gurus in the sense of teachers. They're not really teaching anything, they're making claims and making promises just like these figures in the Middle Ages. It seems to be that sort of pattern, not the traditional Eastern pattern of the spiritual teacher.

Abhaya: Sorry, how did that arise?

S: Hmm?

Abhaya: What was the connection, talking about these gurus?

S: Well, because I felt that while Sagaramati was reading that bit about Mara, I couldn't help thinking of Guru Maharaja [496] and then later Mara seems to take delight in exposing his falsity and ruining his pseudo converts. Mara builds you up and then he pulls you down.

Lokamitra: It's quite something to think of all the people who have followed Guru Naharaja.

S: And also there is at the beginning, at least very often, something positive in it all. But then it's as though the person's head gets turned, or Mara turns his head, and he starts thinking too much of himself, making very grandiose claims, and then the trouble starts, or sooner or later the trouble starts.

Padmapani: I think I remember hearing about, in The Bodhisattva Ideal [lecture series] you talking about the seventh, eighth and ninth bhumi, where in actual fact you see visions of yourself as a Buddha or teaching to these people. And I can't remember if you said it because we had a discussion on this retreat about it. There was a very, very dangerous period because if one actually saw oneself that they were just forces of one's mind but in actual fact you took them to be yours that you would get [a] sort of distorted and inflated idea about one's own being, that one had in actual fact become a Buddha or one had in actual fact traversed the gulf so to speak and was...

S: Yes ... one had only done it mentally or imaginatively but not in reality.

Padmapani: I picked this up with Zengo. [A guest teacher at FWBO classes until he claimed to be the Buddha Maitreya, tr.]

S: Ah yes.

Padmapani: A sort of inflated thing. I mean for a certain period of time, because I had a very very powerful experience at Aryatara Community. I went along with that for a period of time until I realized that, you know, Zengo was sort of deluding himself.

S: And I mean he's - in a way there's the same sort of thing on a very small and comparatively harmless scale, but he's also passed his peak as it were. So I think one sees, you know, that there are these influences [497] as it were around. It's almost as though, you know, Mara as it were thought: oh ho, you see, Buddhism is now going to the West, all these spiritual teachings are now being spread about, alright I'll take a hand; I'll raise up a few of these very big, phony figures and get everybody following them. It seems almost sometimes as though that was happening because the bigger and the phonier they are, the bigger the following, the bigger the publicity. Whereas, you know, those few who are comparatively genuine are just hardly known. If you think of someone say in America like Geshe Wangyal, who I've met, who I know personally, who is thoroughly genuine, who produced that book 'The Door of Liberation', he's hardly known, he's got no big following, just got a few quite sincere students. But some others whom one could mention from the East, not nearly so genuine but much more sort of publicity minded, and making very personal claims very explicitly, get very big followings.

And one must also say with regard to the Theravada, they may be rather dry and rather sort of desiccated, but this sort of thing doesn't happen with them. You seem to get it much more with the Zen people and the Tibetans, at least when they come West. The Theravada is a bit resistant to this sort of thing. So it may not carry you very far, but it won't carry you in the wrong direction at least. Unless of course, it's vipassana, which is something a bit sort of odd even within the Theravada framework and, you know, not accepted as I explained the other day, even by all Theravadins. But it seems such a shame, you know, when we thought, you know, twenty or thirty years ago, how wonderful it would be if there was more of Buddhism in the West, or more of Eastern teaching

in the West, more of Vedanta and more of Sufism, but then, you know, what are we finding nowadays? That for every ounce of genuine teaching, there's a ton of false teaching. So you almost begin to wish, you know, Buddhism and Vedanta and whatnot hadn't become so popular, that it had been confined to a much smaller circle and communicated only to really genuine people. Otherwise, you know, if you read about some people who are going around these days, you feel almost ashamed to be mixed up with anything oriental. That's how it is in Helsinki, you know, oriental is almost a dirty word. In the FWBO there we have to almost apologize for having our origins in the East. [498]

Padmapani: Did you explain this to them when you were out there? You know, the sort of background?

S: A bit, but at least the FWBO now has got quite a good small scale reputation, I mean, due to the very careful way in which Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri have been doing everything. So we are hopeful, sooner or later, to be regarded as an exception to the general rule, as it were. I mean, there's been a lot of criticism in the newspapers about Guru Maharaja, the Maharishi, A ..[unclear].. and practically all the oriental cult.

Ratnapani: Do they genuinely seem to see through them though? Do they genuinely seem. . .

S: They see through them, but not from a spiritual point of view. Usually from a purely materialistic point of view, unfortunately. One sometimes feels really sorry, not as regards only Finland but this country and the West in general, that so many people are I being misled and there are really so many sort of fake movements around - these are the only words for them - not so much in Europe, but certainly in America. And in certain circles anything oriental, oriental teaching or spiritual tradition, is getting quite a bad name. This is a great pity.

Nagabodhi: There's a very good example of someone who is conditioned in this way against oriental movements, an old friend of mine from university. I eventually managed to get him to the Centre after about two years of trying on, I think, a Wesak a year or - no, about two years ago - and he looked round - you know, this was Archway - for a little while. He sort of walked around and looked around and then he came up to me and said, 'There's a lot of money here isn't there?' [laughter] How anybody could say that about Archway must be utterly blind! He just so wanted to find fault.

S: Right. Well, Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri have had this. There they are struggling to make both ends meet, and Vajrabodhi putting practically all his own money in it, and apparently quite a few people who are in contact with the FWBO are under the impression it's all financed by some very wealthy body somewhere, mysteriously in the background. Anyway, those who come along regularly now know better. Anyway, let's close there and have our tea or coffee. [499]

Padmapani: I've noticed that so far up to now, just today, here seems to be a

certain light atmosphere when it comes to things about Mara.

S: That's probably quite good, quite appropriate.

Padmapani: Yes, I was just thinking, I don't know if it's just me, I don't think it is, there seems to be a much lighter atmosphere, it's not as if we're wading through the text so much.

S: We're on familiar ground maybe. [laughter] People are feeling more at home [laughter] a bit more with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Arahants all the time, you know. When it comes to Mara, well, more like old friends. Or why do you think it is? Maybe it is Mara...

Padmapani: I suppose there's a certain - I mean when I look upon it it's no joke in a way, there's a certain attraction to the supernatural.

S: Hmm, yes, well the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are supernatural, super supernatural.

Padmapani: Yes, but with, like you say, maybe we get fed up talking about the Bodhisattvas.

S: Hmm, but, you know, the Grand Master mentions it here, what does he say?

Padmapani: Maybe...

S: No, he says - just a minute - "As to our ignorance and foolishness and delusion by reason of which we become frightened or fond of unseen things." Hmm, eh? Perhaps it's just that.

Padmapani: You would see chasing after things like that a bit of a miccha ditto, would you?

S: You're using your miccha ditthi too loosely here. A miccha ditthi is an opinion or a rationalization, or pseudo philosophical presentation, of an attitude that is basically inimical to [500] enlightenment. It's not just a sort of wrong or unskilful tendency. It's a much more sort of highly elaborate form of the same thing expressed in conceptual terms and justified.

Padmapani: Oh I see, yes, it would be just more a straightforward, um...

S: Temptation.

Padmapani: ...Distraction.

S: Distraction, right. If you were to argue for instance that an interest in spirits was definitely preferable to studying about Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and that attending seances was much more helpful than meditating, and if you were to maintain this systematically and give reasons for it, then all that would be miccha ditthi. But just being distracted by these things momentarily - that could not be described as a miccha ditthi. But obviously the possibility of a miccha ditthi is there. Otherwise if you call everything a miccha ditthi, sort of using a steam roller to crack a nut. [laughter]

Padmapani: Then basically maybe the term will sort of lose its real, umm...

S: Lose its real significance. If someone says, oh, I'm going to have the afternoon off and someone else says, oh, that's a miccha ditthi, well it isn't, that's far too strong.

Padmapani: Do you think there's a great danger of - a lot of Zen teachers who come over to the West and get into this, you know, these teachings of Zen that they either get into a form of sort of eternalism or nihilism, you know, they don't sort of take a middle way...?

S: It's very very difficult to say.

Padmapani: I mean in the context of people sort of starting off on the right way and then somehow it goes wrong and then this sort of influence takes over. I think of it more specifically about Zengo.

S: I don't know. There's been no other Zen teacher stayed [501] here for any real length of time, to the best of my knowledge. I think anyone who has been properly trained in a traditional manner will realize the danger of these things. But even so there's the danger that he will not have an adequate command of English and not realize the way which some of the things he is saying may be taken by English people or by Western people. Probably that is the greater danger.

Vajradaka: In ..[unclear].. the temple where I was, the Master was training two monks to go to America, and although there probably isn't much chance that they would have very miccha ditthis because he was famous as a good scholar, the people themselves were quite likely to make quite a few boobs just on a kind of a personal level, just not understanding western mentality.

S: For instance, going through that little book of Irmgard [Schloegl]'s, I went through the introduction; her language at least is suggestive of the eternalistic stream.

Vajradaka: Which book is that?

S: Her Little Book of Sayings of Zen Master. [Possibly 'Wisdom of the Zen Masters', 1975, tr.]

Vajradaka: Oh I never saw that.

S: So I'm sure if you asked her she would say, oh no, I didn't meant that. But it could certainly be taken in that way; in fact the wording is such.

Vajradaka: The way she talks about the Dharma is mind blowing, a kind of reified thing. She never used to talk like that to me when I first came to Japan, you know. When she was in Japan her approach was in a sense far more kind of practical. But it was only when she came to London and started this, you know: the Dharma will look after everything...

S: Ah, yes, it wasn't that I was referring to, she doesn't actually say this kind of thing, but it's as it were reifying the Buddha nature, saying it's there and it has only to be uncovered. This sort of language, which can really be misunderstood.

Vajradaka: I think the two things are connected. [502]

S: Hmm, very likely, yes. In a way, probably not with Irmgard but with some people I've known. It's a sort of pseudo piety: the Dharma will look after everything, just like God will look after everything. But again when I had my last meeting with Christmas Humphreys in which she was also present we had quite a discussion, among other things, whether truth always did prevail. We were talking about something - I forget what it was - and Christmas Humphreys said, 'Ah well, truth will prevail, it always prevails.' And I disagreed with that, and she agreed with me that there were circumstances, or there were times, when truth didn't prevail, and that error did prevail, and therefore we had constantly to fight for the truth. We couldn't sit back and take the attitude of, ah well, truth will prevail. And she strongly agreed with me over this mostly - it seems on her part - inadvertence of language, not any sort of routed wrong view.

Vajradaka: I don't think she's very kind of scholarly or even a very deep thinker, but intuitively goes along usually quite well but [she] perhaps doesn't ..[unclear].. much.

S: In Christmas Humphreys' case it almost seemed a pseudo-optimism, but in her case you could see she'd been up against it, and she had quite a bit of experience of life, and she knew that truth didn't always prevail, you know, and this is what I felt too. But he seemed to suggest that because it was truth it would automatically prevail, as it were.

Padmaraja: Sort of thing you'd expect a high court judge to say, probably.

S: Yes, perhaps you're right, yes. He has been in hot water again lately, yes, he was too lenient, he's been criticized for being too lenient which is hardly fair as he was criticized before for being too severe. You can't have it both ways. He gave somebody who was found guilty in a rape case a suspended sentence instead of sending him to prison, but he was only seventeen, the chap who was accused. But it's nice to find Christmas Humphreys erring on the side of leniency if he erred at all, but apparently he was prevented from hearing another such case. [503]

Vajradaka: Right. What he said, you know, was quite good, in his defence.

S: I didn't see that, his defence.

Vajradaka: It was actually what he said in court.

S: Ah, this I didn't see.

Vajradaka: That obviously he had to think about what the police, parents, the community, social scene, political scene, would think of me doing an action like

this, you know, being very lenient, but on the other hand he could see that the boy really wasn't going to do it again.

S: Ah, well, that's quite a point if he was convinced, and also under the law he was not going beyond his rights in giving that leniency. He had that discretion.

Vajradaka: It did say in the report I read that he is one of the chief Buddhists or...

S: In other words he was taking the view that the sentence should not be punitive.

Vajradaka: What does punitive mean?

S: Of the nature of a punishment. If a prison sentence is required to correct you and reform you, well, fair enough, but not just to punish you even if you have done something wrong. So if he felt that the boy was not going to commit the offence again, there was no point in merely punishing him and he didn't need to be corrected, he had already corrected himself, as it were, so he could well give a suspended sentence and not send him to prison. That seems quite logical. And as a judge presumably he must have that discretionary power. You know, you can't let someone have that power and then ..[unclear].. for using it. Even if he made a mistake, well any judge may make a mistake in any case.

Vajradaka: He was criticized for being too old to be a judge to people. [504]

S: We've had justices in the past, eighty, eighty-five. This is a quite recent thing, you know. The last time I met him he seemed to have more of a grip on things than when I'd met him about a year previously. His mind wasn't wandering at all.

Nagabodhi: Bert has remarked that he found it increasingly difficult to deal with him.

S: Ah, hmm.

Vessantara: The last time I saw him was when he introduced your lecture. There were two slips...

S: He doddered a bit there.

Vessantara: [inaudible]

S: The other thing was when he gave my biographical sketch, he gave it down to the year 67, but for some inexplicable fashion he had me back in India instead of back in England, so Vajrakumara said he thought that was a Freudian slip. [laughter]

Padmaraja: It's funny, at the end when he was standing up and talking about you I felt there was a real fondness for you.

S: I think that is there. I think that is quite true, actually.

Padmaraja: It was quite touching to see it.

S: Even though he hasn't shown it in, you know, very concrete form for quite a few years but I think it actually is there, strange as it may sound.

Padmapani: Subhuti's always saying he's always ..[unclear].. different case, this quality of father in him, fatherly quality, taking him aside and saying how are you doing.

S: Of course he hasn't any children of his own, never has had, and he's a very sort of isolated person, doesn't have many friends or any friends. But he always has said this, I mean, even when he was behaving in quite unfriendly way he was always assuring everybody [505] that he considered himself my friend. I think he's quite relieved now that he can be a bit friendly. I think he definitely prefers it that way. I think he was rather pressured by other people in the past, that's my impression.

Padmapani: What's his feeling towards the movement?

S: It's very good, completely in favour, very pleased about it. He doesn't fully understand it, but he's most interested and every time we meet he asks how things are organized. For instance he's very keen on knowing what exactly happens at study seminars, what we studied and why. He's very, very interested in this, and how the order is organized, he's especially interested in the Order. He's not so much interested in the FWBO and its lectures and classes and whatnot. He's especially interested in the Order and he has at last seen that this is the way to do things in the West, because he doesn't like the orthodox or so-called orthodox Theravada sangha at all. He's completely opposed to that. But so far he hasn't seen any alternative, but he sees now that we're the alternative and he sees it quite clearly.

Voice: Do you think there's a possibility of him ever joining the order?

S: I doubt that very much. I think he regards himself as outside all such categories. [laughter] But he's quite happy about Bert, quite happy.

Lokamitra: He knows that Bert is a mitra?

S: Oh yes, oh yes.

Vajradaka: Does Bert have much contact?

S: With?

Vajradaka: Does Bert have much contact with us?

S: Not enough really, perhaps because he's so very busy and he's so busy in fact during the week at the Buddhist Society, he feels the need to spend the weekend recovering. We're not completely happy about that. I gather he isn't anywhere near ready for ordination. [506]

Nagabodhi: We have to ..[unclear].. to him really.

Lokamitra: Thinking of inviting him to live at Bethnal Green.

S: That's quite a good idea though I don't think he would like it very much.

Lokamitra: Going off to work at the Buddhist Society every day.

S: I don't know what poor old Christmas Humphreys is going to do eventually because Irmgard stays with him and sort of keeps an eye on things. She's not at all happy about that and she did leave once.

Voice: Did she?

S: Oh yes, this is some months ago, she left but Bert told me that every weekend regularly ..[unclear].. would fall ill and she had to go and look after him, so she thought, in the end, it's obvious I just have to move back again, and so she did. And then there's the cook he's had for about twelve years, an Italian woman, and that's his sort of household, and he sort of just about manages. It can't be very easy.

Buddhadasa: Irmgard Schloegl lives with him?

S: Yes. I think that's quite a good arrangement from his point of view, but she's not at all happy about it because he's very demanding and needs a lot of attention. There's a slightly childish streak there, actually, strange as it may seem. But she's very patient and very forbearing and she's quite fond of him also, just doesn't like to leave him without anyone to look after him.

Vajradaka: She could be doing quite a lot of other things in a dharmic kind of way if she didn't have to be involved...

S: She's sort of virtually housekeeper. She's also getting on in years herself. She's decidedly elderly, I thought.

Vajradaka: She's about fifty-three.

S: She seems older than that to me. [507] I mean, if you think, say, that Sanghamitta is almost fifty-five, well, Irmgard seems about sixty in comparison with her. The way she moves, she's a bit stiff and heavy. [Irmgard Schloegl was born in 1921, tr.]

Voice: She didn't used to be.

S: She had her arm all bandaged up with arthritis. She's also very interested in the Friends and the Order. We had quite a talk. You didn't know that I'd met her and Toby together?

Voice: Yes, I knew that.

S: We had quite an interesting talk.

Voice: Do you think anything more will come out of that?

I don't know. I don't think anything specific. It just seems to help in a general way and he's certainly quite pleased to see me, he seems to have no sort of old friends at all, and he seems to like to talk about the old days and reminisce a

bit and discuss a few things and denounce a few people. [laughter] He seems quite open with Subhuti and talks to him quite freely, [508]

[Tape 21. Side A]

even about his own sort of personal difficulty, going on about money troubles and what's going to happen when he has to leave the bench and saying that he won't be able to make both ends meet and so on. I think it's made quite a difference having...

[break in tape here and goes straight on to the text]

Lokamitra: [reads from p.488] "Treatment of Sickness. As sickness rises from wrong conditions or maladjustments of good conditions, the followers of Buddha, by observing the Precepts, following the Noble Path and practising Dhyana, should be largely if not wholly free from sickness. Wise control of the mind is the best preventative of sickness and is the best method of cure. If our body, mind and breathing are well regulated and our circumstances are in harmony with the teachings of Buddha, we should be able to throw off most sicknesses and heal most wounds. We should do everything we can to keep well because sickness is a discredit to our enlightenment besides being a hindrance to our practice of Dhyana."

S: Hmm, so what do we make of that? Is that to be taken quite literally do you think? [comment and laughter]

Nagabodhi: Don't look at me. [more laughter]

Buddhadasa: Oh dear, it's unjust. [more laughter] I agree with every word.

S: "Wise control of the mind is the best preventative of sickness and is the best method of cure." It's almost like Christian Science isn't it? It's almost like Mary Baker Eddy. So what do you think of that?

Ratnapani: I think there's sort of a certain degree of truth in it, that mental harmony will tend to lead to physical harmony, and care and attention will tend to keep the body healthy. But the implications are that perhaps if you are ill, you're not what you should be spiritually and that just isn't so.

S: Are you sure of that? [lots of muttered comments]

S: Or can one even discriminate between different kinds of illness in this respect?

Nagabodhi: Psychosomatic illness. [509]

S: Psychosomatic illness, certainly, but then the tendency nowadays seems to be from what I've gathered just by reading the odd newspaper or magazine article, the tendency seems to be to regard more and more illnesses as psychosomatic. So one is even left wondering whether there will be a psychosomatic illnesses left eventually the way things are going at the present.

Buddhadasa: Well probably make it up to the four Maras and the fourth classification where there is an external source of illness, bugs going around.

S: But there again, you see, the external Mara can only do real damage if you are in a very negative state. So the external source of illness, as it were, can only seriously affect you if there is something wrong within already. Otherwise you just throw it off rather easily and quickly, though it does affect you to a slight extent.

Padmapani: It seems like to me like certain illnesses, and they don't have to be necessarily psychosomatic, can be a gateway to a real transforming. One can really transform oneself through an illness by having a really positive attitude towards the illness.

S: Hmm, but that doesn't mean it's a good thing for you to have the illness.

Padmapani: Not necessarily, but it also doesn't denote the other either, that it's necessarily bad.

S: But the fact that you do turn, as it were, evil into good, doesn't mean that the evil wasn't evil. Suppose your child is run over. That can give you a sort of awakening, or a sort of insight. [But] it would have been better if that hadn't happened.

Vessantara: I think often it's not that the illness provides you with the opportunity for the transformation, it's like you reach a point where you are going through some kind of change and that partly expresses itself in the illness.

Padmapani: Oh I see, yes, that really seems to fit in better with what I... [510]

S: Otherwise taking what you say literally it almost amounts to a miccha ditthi as though it's good to have problems because you learn a lot from them. It's almost this sort of line of thought. Whereas the fact is you ought not to have the problems.

Padmapani: I don't know about that. I mean we were doing the reading last night and it explained that sort of thing that it's good to have enemies.

S: Yes, it's good to have enemies in the sense that, well, you're going to have enemies anyway if you live in this world, so develop the right sort of attitude towards them.

Padmapani: Oh yes, well I agree with that.

S: But this here is something that depends upon you, allegedly at least, that you shouldn't allow yourself to get ill through your wrong mental attitude, whereas enemies are not something created by your own mental attitude, they do exist externally in the world, so the best thing you can do is to have a positive attitude towards them because they're unavoidable. But illness is not unavoidable according to this at least.

Padmapani: This is psychosomatic is it, or is it...?

S: Well, apparently the Grand Master is saying or suggesting that all illness is psychosomatic and it's this I'm trying to go into. Is this so?

Padmaraja: Wasn't that the nature of Chinese medicine? I'm not too sure about that. Don't they believe that, well, they see the body very much as a psycho-physical organism.

Vajradaka: Yes, but in a sense they also see it in that sense that the Buddhist sees it: in terms of the five conditionalities. You know, there's organic, inorganic, psycho-physical and so on kind of conditioning, and that in the body there are kind of organic floods, organic conditioning and there's also a point in which the mind and body merge. [511]

Padmaraja: Does what he is saying here contradict that? I don't think it does, does it?

Lokamitra: It says, "Why is the control of the mind the best preventative?" He also says, "If our body, mind and breathing are well regulated and our circumstances are regulated and in harmony."

S: Which suggests a whole right way of living, the complete way of life which is healthy and balanced, not just the mental state. When he says that health and disease are within our own control not just by the mind, as it were, but by the regulation of our whole way of life including the practice of meditation.

Voice: The thing is, you bear in mind the context in which this is written and also that it's a sort of a long term view rather than a short term view and not take it to extremes is perfectly sensible and acceptable, but I think if in some instance we'll say that somebody tried to control some sickness and overcome it by some kind of mental effort, well, that would be sort of just being immodest about your spiritual attainment ..[rest of sentence impossible to hear]..

S: Quite a lot of illness can be, if not cured, certainly alleviated just by a sort of sensible treatment on one's own, just by resting, stopping work, taking things easy for a few days or being sensible about diet and sleep.

Sona: You could perhaps say that as it's possible in the fourth dhyana to develop psychic powers, that at another level it would seem quite feasible that you could control illnesses by sort of psychic energy and, well, I'm quite open to the fact that illness is psychosomatic. I often find that there seems to be, with a lot of people, a tendency not to accept that.

S: Well, what about thing like spiritual healing? Spiritual healers, as far as I know, they never try to heal themselves just because they don't want to use their powers as it were egoistically or selfishly, but there does seem to be no doubt that there is such a thing as spiritual healing, which is not the same thing as faith healing of course. They themselves make this distinction [512] very sharply because spiritual healing can be given even without the person to whom it is being directed knowing anything about it.

Vajradaka: This is quite a big distinction, between healers who don't try and heal themselves and healers who have the attitude that the healing energy or the healing feeling, as it is sometimes being called, is absorbed so much by them,

that they are in it so much that they are healing themselves and they heal everything in which they come into contact or concentrate on.

S: They are healthy people.

Vajradaka: Right, yes, right.

S: Of course there are healers and healers. I think I've mentioned an experience of my own in this connection before when I was in Calcutta. Has anyone heard this? I met a healer from America.

Voice: Yes. [laughter]

S: Well this raises a general question about the nature of healing and the sort of healing force. Prior to this experience I had no contact personally with any spiritual healer. Well what happened was this. About twenty years ago I happened to be down in Calcutta staying at the Maha Bodhi Society headquarters, and I was in the sitting room and I think one of the monks had said there's an American Buddhist, perhaps he said, or maybe he just said an American would like to see you and talk about Buddhism. So I said, alright I'll see him. So I was just waiting in the sitting room downstairs and this man suddenly came in. He must have been about thirty-five. He was short and a bit sort of stout. And as soon as he saw me he said, 'Ah you need energy!' So he seized hold of my two hands and closed his eyes and was apparently pumping energy into me. And I actually felt a sort of force passing into me, but the sensation was most unpleasant. I felt exactly as though a lot of very dirty, greasy, washing-up water had been poured into me. That's exactly how I felt. A very, low grade, coarse, polluted energy. And he himself I got the same sort of impression off of. He was very shortish, thickset, rather hairy and sweaty and didn't give off a pleasing sort of emanation at all. That was [513] my first experience. I certainly experienced it as something very tangible and I can assume that other healers will have more refined and more pure energies and that they will have quite a different effect, but the basic principle seems to be the same.

Ratnapani: Well, I seem to have jumped in with both feet about - because - I met a spiritualist and she seemed to be a very good woman.

S: Do you mean a spiritualist in the strict sense?

Ratnapani: I believe so, yes, in the context of the church. She seemed to be an extremely good woman with the qualities of a bodhisattva almost. Her life was dedicated to other people but she definitely equated an ability to perceive and to cure illness, physical illness, with spiritual development, you know, she didn't say in so many words but that was implicit, and there's this here - sickness is a discredit to our enlightenment - I was just coming down against this sort of thing which I had come across. I don't think that's necessarily so.

S: The healing power seems to be a natural power. It doesn't seem to be anything particularly spiritual, and it seems to be even a sort of gift. I mean, even many well known healers say that they just realized one day that they had this gift.

It just came to them. They didn't do anything to develop it. Some of course believe that it's a gift from God. Others just believe that it's just a gift, a natural power. They just leave it at that.

Vajradaka: Western medicine now believes that everyone has it.

S: Oh yes, a sort of basic recuperative power of the system or of nature itself. But I don't know whether it's worth going into - what should be our own attitude within the movement, within the Order, towards sort of sickness and disease and health and cures. One obviously doesn't want to be cranky or faddish, but is there any definite line here indicated by our overall approach and our overall philosophy and way of life?

Buddhadasa: I think, if I may be allowed to say something, [laughter] is [514] that don't worry about sickness unless you're sick. I feel an awful lot of people worry about sickness when they're not sick.

S: Well, there's no point in worrying about it but what about sensible precautions and preventive measures?

Lokamitra: A lot of people are prone to bad health.

Buddhadasa: That will come automatically within right livelihood.

S: Ah, but then it means also looking at right livelihood in these terms as well. Because right livelihood which is right from the moral point of view may not conceivably be right in certain cases from the health point of view. Presumably there could be such instances.

Vessantara: I think it's a bit of a false dichotomy to say, well, certain people are ill and other people aren't until they actually break down and have a pain oh well because you can see a lot of people who as yet are still functioning OK or you can see them laying up trouble for themselves or before long might develop something.

Vajradaka: Then if you get a hint that there is an imbalance in your body which is going to escalate and you ignore that imbalance with the knowledge that in the future, maybe in twenty or thirty years time, it's really going to give you bother, then you could also logically conclude that it will severely handicap you in your spiritual work, so if you ignore that, yes, then you are in a sense being your own enemy.

Lokamitra: Surely the only approach we can take is setting up the right conditions and Buddhadasa said it comes in right livelihood really. A very sensible approach but being careful...

Vajradaka: It's more than just right livelihood. I mean, you know,..

S: It's sort of where you live for instance, I mean most of us have to sort of breathe in polluted air which can't be good for us.

Lokamitra: But it's not where we live because some of us don't have - I don't like to say choice [515] but some people have to be in the city, some people have to be in polluted areas, so that's...

S: Well, it's a question of taking all these factors into consideration and, you know, coming to a general conclusion which is the best possible in the total circumstances. Sometimes one may even have to disregard one's health in very crucial circumstances, but one does it knowingly and deliberately with a positive motive and not just out of carelessness or indifference.

Vajradaka: Right, I think that's very important because it's very easy to do that even if you know that you could be quite ill. I've been told a number of times that by the time I'm forty I shall be very very ill if I don't do it now, and it's so easy to see this kind of indifference arise: oh well, forty years is forty years...

S: Not all that far away. [laughter]

Vajradaka: Right, exactly. [laughter]

S: Really. [laughter]

Buddhadasa: What basis have they got for saying that?

Vajradaka: What basis have they got for saying that?

Buddhadasa: What basis have you got for believing it?

Vajradaka: Well, natural kind of cycles that happen in my body that have been happening for years, you know, I can recognize, periodically my lungs begin to break down a bit and just can't cope, you know, they get congested, and my liver can't cope, and I get a lot of impurities in my blood. Just occasionally they just can't cope ..[unclear].. the whole situation.

Lokamitra: What are you doing for that?

Vajradaka: Hmm, well, I'm going to go...

Lokamitra: I mean, are you doing anything for it? [516]

Vajradaka: Yes.

Lokamitra: You are? Because this is what I mean about conditionality. We can't know exactly, we can't really think in terms of cause and effect here, it's a waste of time in a way, in that we have to think in terms of laying out the general conditions. So, you know, you might be prone to something so you have to take general precautionary measures.

S: Or do you mean specific precautionary measures?

Lokamitra: Well, specific perhaps, but also general ones from a general health point of view, so that there are no weaknesses in which it gets through.

Vajradaka: The general ones are easier to look after. The specific ones are the harder ones. I mean, you have to take distasteful medicine every night for a year. That's specific.

S: It's pretty simple and straightforward, though.

Sona: Of course there is another way of looking at it: that is all illnesses are psychosomatic, if you sort of work on the mind as it were, with one's practice of dhyana, then maybe one won't be physically sick.

S: Well, what do you think is the general level of health within the movement? Within the Order?

Vessantara: I don't think it's very high at all.

S: You don't?

Buddhadasa: Well I see a very healthy order, but I'm told it's not. I see people coming on retreat glowing with health and happiness, vigour, lively, bouncy, joyful, yet they say there's no health.

S: Well, I tend to think that if anything, the movement is a bit healthier than the people outside. That is my general impression, I would say. And I think it is not unconnected with our overall positive attitude. I mean I'm not [517] saying that we're all sort of glowing with perfect health or that we couldn't be healthier, I think on the whole people in the movement are more healthy than people out of it.

Vajradaka: And some people are healthier than others.

S: Oh, of course, yes. That goes without saying. I must say my own personal instinct from childhood has always been to keep as far away from doctors as possible and have absolutely nothing to do with them, because when I was a child I was quite seriously ill, supposedly, with heart disease, and I had four doctors altogether, and two gave one diagnosis and two gave a completely opposite diagnosis, and two said if he's allowed to do this he'll die, and the other two said if he isn't allowed to do that he'll be a permanent invalid all his life. So there was this clash of medical opinion. So in my infant mind, profound scepticism arose about doctors. So all during my adult life I've kept as far away from them as possible and hope I can continue to do that.

Vessantara: I think if one is ill, on the whole conventional medicine is to be avoided. I had some stomach trouble about three months ago and went to a doctor. I was just treated as a kind of walking stomach, you know, if I'd been sitting there at the desk and my right leg had not been there, he wouldn't have noticed. And so if one does have to seek some kind of advice it's probably best to go to someone who will at least have some kind of understanding of you as a total person.

S: I must say when I was in India I did have several friends who were doctors, whom I know personally, and it was only with them that I ever discussed anything

to do with my health or mention anything to them. I never went to a doctor in the ordinary sense. I think it wouldn't be a bad idea - I've been thinking this for some time - if we had in the movement one or two people with medical knowledge.

Vajradaka: We do.

S: Do we? [518]

Vajradaka: Up in Scotland there's quite a noted doctor.

S: Ah, good. Coming along regularly?

Vajradaka: Yes.

S: Good. Because for instance another factor is that in this country, the practice of medicine is very limited and restricted compared with the continent, especially Germany. For instance, when I was in India, I knew two German Buddhists who were doctors as well as their young son who was training to be a doctor. He is now the head of the Arya Maitreya Mandala in Germany and keeps up regular correspondence with me and has invited me to go and stay with him any time I like. This is Armin Gottmann. So I had quite a few talks with him and his parents in India. He stayed with me about two months in Kalimpong, and he took up the practice of meditation with me at that time. And they told me rather to my surprise at the time that in Germany they trained in all three main schools of medicine, allopathy, homoeopathy, and naturopathy. And they are equally well versed in all three and practise or apply remedies of the one or the other according to the need of the patient. Whereas in this country, at least until recently, it has been completely rigid allopathy and nothing else. Everything else is outlawed as quackery. It's only quite recently that the fringe-type practices as they're called have, you know, got any recognition at all or that it's even become legal to practise them. I mean osteopathy was quite illegal until fairly recently. But on the continent it's not been like that, and of course this is another aspect of our joining the Common Market. It may well be that British medical practice begins to be affected. It's very, very conservative with a real sort of entrenched sort of establishment. But in this country we've been kept very much in the dark by the BMA and the medical powers that be about many developments in the field of medicine and healing in the broader sense. This is perhaps why we have become, or some people have become, a bit as it were over-suspicious about medical treatment: just because we come up against one particular kind of treatment only and that in a very narrow and rigid and [519] almost inhuman form. So I feel that if there could be a few people in the movement, and especially within the order, with full medical knowledge and training, so that if any say Order member fell sick and did need medical treatment then that could be given by someone who completely understood the whole spiritual life and meditation and maybe had studied something about the interrelationship between all these things. Otherwise we have to go to completely ignorant medical practitioners who know nothing about Buddhism or meditation and don't take these factors into consideration while treating us, and this could be quite harmful. And

perhaps we have to know a little more about these unorthodox methods of healing and create a little sort of pool of knowledge. I mean, Malini for instance is very interested in herbal treatment and she wants to study this and this would be a good thing for somebody to know.

Vessantara: Did you find generally in the East if you were quite advanced spiritually or had been practising meditation ..[unclear].. [something about being healthy]

S: No. [laughter]

Vessantara: Why do you think that was?

S: Well, they sit on their bottoms most of the day. They don't take enough exercise, sometimes they don't take any exercise at all. They eat far too much white rice, white sugar, sweetmeats. They stuff themselves and so on. They don't seem to apply any spiritual principles in this field except in a purely sort of superstitious way. Of course, they are vegetarians but in some cases, from a health point of view, they might be better off as meat eaters. You know, stuffing themselves with vast quantities of rice and ghee and sweetmeats made out of sugar and milk, which is supposed to be [a] very sattvic, i.e. spiritual, diet. The Indians are very much at fault here. The same in Japan, you know, you hear about macrobiotics and all that but what do they actually eat in Zen monasteries? White rice, milk, and all that. They do don't they?

Vajradaka: Most of them. In most of the Soto temples they eat brown. [520]

S: Yes. The Tibetans too, you know, they've got their beautiful wholesome barley flour but whenever they can get hold of white rice this is what they take. In the monasteries on special occasions, high days and holidays, it's white rice with a little ghee and sugar, white sugar, on top of it. So the East is absolutely no model in this respect.

Vessantara: I've had some contact with Bill ..[unclear].. macrobiotics ..[unclear].. in London. He's set up a centre and he's about to move to a larger place and he wants to start meditation classes ..[unclear].. He wants more contact with the Friends.

S: Well, it's up to him. Is he likely to come along?

Vessantara: He may well do.

S: Good.

Vajradaka: American?

Vessantara: Yes.

Vajradaka: Is he from (?)Harmony?

Vessantara: I'm not sure. ..[unclear]..

S: But some people have actually questioned very much why for instance Ramakrishna died of cancer, Ramana Maharshi died of cancer, and so on. The disciples usually say it's because they took upon themselves the sins of their disciples etc. etc. Well I can't help wondering, it might have been so, on the other hand it might not. And certainly most so-called religious people in the East - and this applies to Buddhists as well as to Hindus - they have a very unwise diet and they usually suffer from flatulence, obesity and so on.

Lokamitra: Iyengar's diet is no model.

S: That's quite interesting, isn't it? [521]

Padmapani: What is his diet?

Lokamitra: He just eats the generally accepted Indian food, strictly vegetarian. He has two sugars with hie coffee, he eats white rice all the time and spices...

S: Why do you think that this is so?

Lokamitra: I don't know. He's incredibly healthy and he's had these sort of tests just in Geneva and so on to western medical whatever to... [confused overlapping comments]..

Buddhadasa: The more active you are the more rubbish you can take in, the less active you are you've got to be careful.

S: There is that.

Lokamitra: His insides are absolutely perfectly clean.

S: Perhaps it doesn't matter what he does eat.

Lokamitra: I think that's probably true.

S: [There was] a very famous saint in the Middle Ages called Denis the Carthusian. [laughter] He deliberately ate rubbish and rejected and rotten food, and he lived in a state of great health until he was eighty odd. But he was tremendously active and he wrote apparently forty-six folios of works on theology and mysticism and had a constant stream of visitors from all over Europe whom he saw for hours and hours every day just sitting in his cell. Kings and emperors and merchants and peasants and pilgrims. He lived somewhere in the Low Countries. And this is how he was functioning. He lived entirely on rotten food. One's overall mental state and one's overall constitution certainly make a tremendous difference. [522]

Sona: Something I was thinking about the other day actually, in connection with this: you mentioned in one of your lectures about a test that was carried out by an American, I think, making someone angry and shoving a bag over his head and actually taking poison, but it occurred to me that people going around craving, angry, and all these unskilful mental states, they must be getting into a terrible state too.

S: Right yes. They're introducing poisons into their own system, especially fear and anger and craving.

Ratnapani: I was just hitching down from Norfolk to Brighton and I had a really dreadful day and got into a very bad mental state feeling sort of anxious and worried and fed up. By the time I got here, my face was all spotty and sore, and it had been like a baby's bottom all the months in Norfolk [laughter] and that was in four or five hours as it happened, my face was all spotty and sore and...

S: A strange thing is in Helsinki I noticed just the opposite thing with someone. There was a young man came along and he was terribly spotty and had terrible rashes in fact on his cheek and on his neck, and each time he came he looked happier and brighter and also started dressing better and the spots were gradually clearing up, and I didn't say anything but I think it was related to his overall mental state and the way that that had improved.

Lokamitra: I think after a meditation and so on you feel so clear, I'm sure that's not just mind; it is partly physical and...

S: I thought you were going to say it's not just you, or it isn't you either; you could say it's the Dharma too.

Lokamitra: And the way negative emotions can just poison you and make you, you know, you don't know whether you are physically ill or it's just the mood you're going through.

S: Anyway, let's go on. We haven't really settled very much [523] but at least we've explored a few things, thrown out a few suggestions.

Padmaraja: [reads from pp.488-9] "There are two divisions of this subject that should be kept in mind. First, the nature of the sickness, its development and its symptoms. Second, methods of treatment. Under the first head we should distinguish between sickness caused by external conditions and sickness caused by irregularities within our own minds. In either case we should notice the beginning of sickness and try to prevent its becoming serious by remedying the conditions both external and internal as early as possible. What are the best remedies? The best remedy is the practice of stopping and insight. Stopping means removing dangerous conditions and ending bad habits. Insight means an examination of and reflection on the emptiness aspect of all phenomena. If we cease to let the mind dwell upon symptoms and hold it to a reflection upon the unreality of both body and ideas concerning its state, then the mind will speedily become tranquil and the symptoms will disappear. The reason for this is that most of our sicknesses come from irritations within the mind and if these can be controlled by right mindfulness, then the mind will become kind and tranquil and the sickness will disappear. Medicines made up of either minerals or herbs or both may be used if they have some correspondence with the sickness. The same thing is true, also, in the application of ways and means for practising insight - each practice must have correspondence with its mental sickness."

S: I think there's quite a bit left out of this chapter. I think the translators have omitted some purely Chinese material about the elements and so on. Anyway, "stopping and insight. Stopping means removing dangerous conditions and ending

bad habits" which are producing which are producing ill health. "Insight means an examination of and reflection on the emptiness aspect of all phenomena." But the Grand Master doesn't preclude actual medical treatment because he says, "Medicines made up of either minerals or herbs or both may be used if they have some correspondence with the sickness." Earlier on he does say, "Under the first head we should distinguish between sickness caused by external conditions." Presumably he means conditions in general including our whole way of life, where we live and what we do, and sickness caused by irregularities within our own minds. And in both cases we should adopt the principle of nipping things in the bud, not allow them to become too serious before we take action. Right, any query or comment on that?

Padmaraja: Do you think in the original text he would have said much more about the kinds of medicines we use? The different kinds of medicines and what treatment...

S: No, there is a bit more translation in Luk's version, but nothing very specific is mentioned. Alright, let's go on then.

Abhaya: [reads from p.489] "'In the treatment of sickness by some process of Insight, it is necessary for us to do so in ten ways, if we are to expect good results. The ten ways are:

"(1) Faith. We must believe that the remedy is going to help us.

"(2) Application. We must make use of the remedy in the right way and the right time.

"(3) Diligence. It means to apply the remedy wholeheartedly without relaxation until the sickness is cured.

"(4) Permanent conditions. This means that we are to keep the mind concentrated upon the Dharma.

"(5) Discernment of causes.

"(6) Expedient means. This means that we are to keep our right breathing, right practice, and right use of our thoughts in good adjustment and balance.

"(7) Long practice. This means that if we are benefited by the means of practice, we are to continue it faithfully without regard to the passing of time.

"(8) Choice of means. This means that we are to use observation to note whether a remedy is useful or harmful and be governed as to its continues use accordingly.

"(9) Maintenance and protection. This means that we are to protect the body by the best use of our mind.

"(10) Hindrances. This means that if we are benefited by our practice of Dhyana we shall not boast of it to others, and if we are unsuccessful in getting rid of hindrances we must not give rise to doubts and slanders. If we treat our sickness in these ways, no doubt we will have good results." [524]

S: This doesn't represent all that the Grand Master has to say on the subject but as much as Draught Dotard and his colleague thought would be useful to people in the West.

Padmapani: I don't understand number six actually Bhante, expedient means. It goes on to say, "This means that we are to keep our right breathing, right practice and right use of our thoughts in good adjustment and balance." But presumably one's treating the sickness that has already arisen and therefore if it was psychosomatic one would already be unbalanced.

S: Let's see what Luk says, which one is it? Number six. Yes, Luk says, "What is expediency? Expediency in proper breathing and in skilful visualization for recovery." [Luk, p.151] So this suggests using breathing exercises and visualization exercises as a means of treating disease.

Abhaya: Do you go along with that, Bhante?

S: Some breathing exercises do seem to help, but it seems a quite specialized field. I don't think it's gone into very much in India today. I have heard of some Burmese meditation teachers using meditation in general and some breathing exercises to cure various diseases. They were very interested in curing T.B. and cancer in this way, and claimed some cures, but I don't think it was ever properly investigated and checked up.

Sona: Did the Tibetans use mantra recitation?

S: They do, though the Tibetans follow Chinese medicine to a great extent, but they've also got very great faith in what they call ribus, which are sort of pills made by great masters, and then the masters hold the pills and meditate and recite mantras, and then the people are given these pills to swallow. Tibetans have great faith in these things which we would call faith healing or possibly spiritual healing.

Sona: I did hear once on the radio a programme about Tibetan chanting. I just heard briefly this short extract [525] that some of the mantras were used to cure rheumatism and things like that because of the low vibrations and frequency, and they corresponded with the ..[unclear]..

S: Could be, but I can't say that I heard about this specifically.

Ratnapani: ..[unclear].. was talking to me about breathing and visualization where the sort of visualization that we were talking about the other day, Vajradaka said something in connection with breathing through all the pores of the body, that's more ..[unclear].. Do you know of anything, any sort of figure, which is visualized which is associated with healing and so on?

S: Well there are medicine Buddhas, but the visualization and so on is a sort of spiritual practice like any other. As far as I know the visualization of the medicine Buddhas themselves isn't regarded as having a particularly healing effect.

Voice: [inaudible question]

S: Well there is a particular Buddha who is mentioned in the scriptures called Bhaisajyaraja, the king of healing, and it seems to be a development of the analogy between the Buddha and a physician. And the Buddha is as it were a physician, so the Buddha has this healing aspect on the spiritual plane and the medicine Buddha seems to be a more specific form of that, and then he developed into seven healing Buddhas, and then in Tibet and in China there was a whole cult of these healing Buddhas or medicine Buddhas, and then people started actually praying to them at least for the cure of various illnesses. But this more like a popular cult, and they became the sort of patrons of medicine in general.

Sona: Getting back to these low frequency sounds, I remember reading, I think it was in Lyall Watson's book Supernature [526]

[Tape 21 Side B]

. . . there were some experiments carried out removing rats from a building by setting up a machine that grave out certain frequencies that were unharmonious to good conditions. It occurred to me that if one could perhaps, but only perhaps, I don't really know, but apply that principle to certain germs and things that were inside us, you know, that if it was made uncomfortable for them then they may go.

S: Right.

Vajradaka: Are you talking about radionics?

Sona: I don't think so.

Vajradaka: Because the radionics wave, they actually did that with pests. Did you hear about that?

Sona: Well, I heard that it could [be] set it up for different frequencies with different angles ..[unclear].. supposedly curing people.

S: Well, should suggest that Devamitra chants a mantra to get rid of his moles instead of digging them up. [laughter] There's no doubt that certain sounds have a sort of positive and others a sort of negative effect and even some music. For instance they've tried experiments with cows in the States and they've found that the music which has the most soothing and agreeable effect on them is the music of Bach, and sometimes the modern music has a very disturbing effect and they start kicking the bucket.

Ratnapani: I heard somewhere or read somewhere about plants; they tried the same thing with them and they found sitar music was the most popular and plants would actually lean towards the speakers.

S: I imagine rock music was very upsetting. [527]

Sona: It's very upsetting if you try to meditate. I've had some experience of that.

S: There is this whole question of the effect of sound and regular music upon you, because this effects your state of mind and in a way even your health.

Sona: Also seems to be taken ..[unclear].. applied to frequencies in general ..[unclear].. I think there's been sort of research into accidents caused by people driving along and the lights flashing ..[unclear].. at a certain frequency. It can have a hypnotic effect on you. You feel uncomfortable at certain speeds and at other speeds you feel comfortable. It seems at certain times there were certain frequencies that come into harmony with you and at others they seem to oppose you and sound and light and most forms of energy which is sort of vibration.

Sagaramati: Plato did this in the Republic about the various forms of music and the effects it has on you.

S: Confucius goes into it, doesn't he? But Plato would encourage Dorian music and discourage the Lydian for instance.

Sagaramati: Confucian?

S: No these are the classical Greek. The Dorian mood or Dorian mode is the heroic, noble, firm, austere, determined, like the Doric architecture. The Lydian is very lethargic and languorous and voluptuous. And then there's the Phrygian, which is very wild and emotional and unrestrained. And what's the others?

Voice: The Ionic?

S: I don't know whether there was an Ionic. In architecture yes, but I don't know about music.

Voice: ..[inaudible].. [528]

S: No.

Abhaya: Dionysian?

S: That was the Phrygian. [laughter] I think these were the three main ones at least, the Dorian, the Lydian, and the Phrygian.

Vajradaka: I think there is an Ionic actually.

S: Do you?

Vajradaka: There is in harmony.

Abhaya: What about the Aeolian?

S: Ah, the Aeolian, yes, there was, yes. The Aeolian was sort of wild and warbling but in a rather pleasant way. It wasn't frenzied like the Phrygian. So I mean all these things have to be borne in mind because all they all affect our state of mind. They all affect even our health. For instance I read not so long ago somewhere that the members of a certain orchestra in the States that playing

modern music, that is, avant garde modern music for any length of time, was a very serious mental strain and some of them even became on the verge of mental breakdown, and they never had this however much they played ordinary classical music. So it really makes one think, doesn't it?

Padmaraja: I think they felt like that probably about Wagner when he was composing, that a lot of people probably couldn't come to grips with it and new conceptions in music.

S: I think we should be very careful here, you see, otherwise we can excuse anything on the grounds that it's something new, people don't understand it, they'll get used to it. All the great music of the past was unfamiliar at first. I think Wagner, in a way you couldn't have cited a worse example. [laughter] There are some very strange things in Wagner, I [529] mean the whole atmosphere generated by Wagner's music is very odd, very heavy, very thick.

Voice: [inaudible ... something about effect of quarter tones on western ears.]

S: This is something we talked about once in Auckland quite vigorously after listening to the lecture on Buddhism and art. It's not called 'Buddhism and Art'. What's it called? In the Bodhisattva series, no the Higher Evolution series. This is something that I went into at some length, we mustn't use this argument that everything new requires a bit of time and patience to appreciate, and apply this to every modern production that goes under the name of art, because very often this sort of argument is used. If you just find something completely unacceptable your judgement is invalidated, so people sometimes think by the remark. Well this is what happened to all the great artists in the past. Their work wasn't appreciated at first. So your non-appreciation is held to be invalidated by this sort of argument, and this is really nonsense.

Voice: If you apply that to art, there's no reason why you shouldn't apply that to everything else as well.

Padmapani: It does seem to have been the case, though.

S: Well, actually it doesn't because in the field of music all the great musicians here appreciated in their lifetime and were even very, very popular. Haydn was immensely popular, Mozart was very popular, Bach was widely known and acclaimed. Handel was very famous. Beethoven after some initial difficulty became very well known in his lifetime.

Padmaraja: Quite considerable initial difficulty, And Mozart towards the end.

S: Partly because he was a very difficult person, not just because of difficult music. [530]

Padmaraja: I think probably both.

S: Maybe Beethoven is a little bit of an exception but on the whole all the great musicians seem to have enjoyed very great reputations during their lifetimes.

Padmaraja: But then again you take somebody like, you know, - obviously we're talking in very general terms - but you could also talk about painting, and I could quote a lot of painters...

S: But again most painters were really appreciated. Michelangelo was appreciated, Leonardo was appreciated, Raphael was appreciated. There were very few it seems who weren't appreciated.

Padmaraja: Coming up to more modern times...

S: Ah, but then what is happening in more modern times? That is the great point.

Padmaraja: You know, I mean, just from the eighteenth century on, nineteenth century onwards, the whole Impressionists even, something as palatable as that today, they were considered to be revolutionary, nobody could stand...

S: I think we have to be aware of cliches here, I mean what happens when, as is were, what is being produced by the artist it completely, as it were, as far as we can see, out of step with current taste, which wasn't the case before? What has happened to make the artist, as it were, out of touch with his audience or the audience out of touch with the artist? I think this is probably due not so much to purely aesthetic reasons as to a whole sort of complex of social and even economic reasons and general cultural reasons. Because if someone I mean like Bach was generally regarded as the greatest western composer, but his music was appreciated in his own time. People seemed to have no difficulty.

Padmaraja: I don't see how you would apply that to say somebody like Van Gogh to take another extreme. [531]

S: Well, I think that what very often happens in the case of some modern artists is that you get coming in what I call the clinical element. It's not that there's a sort of technique which people can't appreciate. It's not that there's some wonderful vision that they're not capable of perceiving, there's something very individual and idiosyncratic in almost a clinical sense which very many people are not in harmony with. In other words a sort of sickness, that you have to be a bit sick yourself to feel in harmony with. Whereas you don't find that with the great classical painters and musicians, in most cases anyway.

Padmaraja: What I wonder, Bhante, is whether in fact the great classical musicians or painters were really truly appreciated as, you know, their work was really experienced as art, maybe it was familiar, there was a certain kind of mild aesthetic pleasure to be gained from it, but with the more radical changes in art, this kind of thing, art became much less appreciateable on those terms, on that kind of level. I mean you couldn't kind of - like the kind of academicians of the nineteenth century - probably leading up to Delacroix - at least you could look at it and you could say, I recognize a horse, yes, beautifully painted, yes, it looks just like a horse...

Voice: [inaudible again, plus aircraft noise]

Abhaya: Could you speak up please?

Voice: . . . don't know what the public at that time thought, don't know what individual people thought.

Padmaraja: You do know what they thought?

Voice: You know what individual critics thought.

Padmaraja: And just the general, you know, the way their exhibitions were received, you know.

Voice: They were probably packed out.

Padmaraja: No. [532]

S: Anyway, can we get back to my main point, I mean, I think of it in terms of Goethe's aphorism, which is quite famous. Goethe said, and this is of course very extreme, as we properly understood, he said, 'The classical is health, the romantic is disease.' [laughter] Now what did he mean by that? What did he mean by saying the classical is health? He didn't mean the classical in the academic sense, you know, the frozen classical, he meant the balanced, the harmonious, where there was the perfection of form and also the fullness of spirit and meaning and energy both together. But the romantic, according to him, was disease, so what did he mean by saying that the romantic was disease? Because all the art we've been talking about, you know, since that is romantic art in his sense of the term, there's nothing classical. So what did he mean by saying the romantic is disease?

Nagabodhi: Imbalance, probably towards the emotions.

S: Yes, there's an imbalance in the individual, perhaps usually, where the emotions are concerned, and he's not a whole and healthy creative human being. This is reflected in his art. So the art is not just something of artistic value, it has what I call this sort of clinical significance. A lot of [it] exhibits the artist's non-health, and some people can't appreciate it, either because they are healthy or that is not their particular sickness, or they can appreciate it because they have a corresponding sickness. And I think this factor has to be taken into consideration in evaluating modern art and modern music. When I say modern I mean probably from the eighteenth century onwards, maybe even a bit earlier than that. So the situation is a bit different here.

Nagabodhi: Maybe the very giving of a label to schools of art, like especially expressionism, it makes it manageable, it allows people who are relatively healthy to keep their distance and appreciate its merits on its own level. But I think people needed to give Van Gogh's work that kind of label so that they could find a way of relating to it, but safely rather than just. . . [533]

Padmaraja: I don't think you can relate to it safely. If you're really relating to it then that involves quite a risk.

S: A risk of what sort? A risk in the sense that your ego is threatened by the art as it is threatened, say, by meditation, or is it a risk of sickness?

Padmaraja: I'd say it's the former, although possibly in some of them they blend so much, you know.

S: I think this is the new element that we have to take into consideration, you know, when dealing with modern art and modern music.

Sagaramati: I used to like sort of pretty far out jazz, that sort of stuff. And I'd say in the last year, if I listen to it now I find it quite disturbing, you know, I really find it sort of - I don't know - somehow like childish in a sense.

Nagabodhi: I think the contact with, say, Van Gogh's paintings or Expressionism or whatever the term is...

Padmaraja: Well, there's quite a difference between Post-Impressionism and Expressionism.

Nagabodhi: Yes, that's just the point. I think just because something might give you an experience, OK you take the risk, you give yourself to the experience of appreciating that art form. It might give you an added dimension of sensitivity to colour, to possibilities in perceiving the world, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's a higher level of consciousness. I think that just because something adds a little that doesn't mean that it should be venerated unconditionally.

Padmaraja: I think there's always a danger of doing that.

Nagabodhi: Yes, there is.

Abhaya: But this doesn't mean to say you can't look at it, does it? [534]

Voice: Sure.

Abhaya: Why is there all this dicey thing ..[unclear].. painting, be careful sort of thing?

Voice: [several inaudible comments all together]

Vessantara: [First part of sentence inaudible].. if you're really trying to get into a meditative state then inaction is the norm rather than feeling: look there's a lot of pressure put on us in this society to kind of dare, you know, can you look at this, this is art, and in a sense why should one unless one really feels it's going to have some kind of positive effect.

Abhaya: Ah, but there seems to be some sort of particular emphasis on paintings by Van Gogh, or that's the drift...

S: Well that's just because that was the example cited, not because it's just Van Gogh in particular.

Voice: ... seems sort of implications of really getting into paintings by people like Van Gogh and the Cubists, and some people who are a bit sort of sharp and a bit sort of strong.

S: I think there's no harm in looking at paintings provided one just looks. . .

Voice: ..[unclear]..

S: No, just a minute, but if there's something sort of sick in you sort of latching onto something sick in the painting, then you're not just looking, and it isn't just an aesthetic experience as it were.

Padmaraja: I don't think people know how to look at paintings.

S: Well they don't, and mostly it's just their sickness latching on to the sickness of the painter, you know, with regard to a lot of modern art. [535]

? There's no sort of way of looking at a painting.

Padmaraja: Exactly, that's exactly what I am saying.

Voice: It's the sort of thing that the more you are ignorant about the more you get out of the painting.

Padmaraja: Exactly, or what you think the painting's supposed to be about or what the content means . . .

Voice: Yes, but at the same time if you do look at the painting you can come to some conclusion about it, and if you say that such and such a painting you don't like because you think it's a bit disturbed, that's quite reasonable. I wouldn't agree that if you have an opinion about the painting which you put into words then it's inevitable that you're going to let your opinion get in the way of your appreciation. Quite the opposite in fact.

S: I must say that in the last year or two, I mean, the impression has been growing on me that the greater part of modern art and culture is an expression of sickness, and this is a very insidious element in our whole environment.

Buddhadasa: In other words you've got a sort of situation where we are having a reactive art.

S Yes and always we're - in some case - almost made to feel guilty for not appreciating it and not being into it. I'm not saying that all modern art is like this or all art produced in the last one hundred and fifty years is like this, it clearly isn't, but this is more characteristic. You can see some beautiful little paintings that no one takes any particular notice of, and by comparatively unknown people and produced quite recently, but, you know, really to appreciated but they don't usually draw the attention. It's for instance some of the more extreme works of Francis Bacon that draw the attention. I was quite pleased to see not long ago that film about David Hockney, because his work seems so healthy compared with much [536] that one might have seen. One couldn't feel that it was the greatest art, but it was certainly good art and healthy art and classical in Goethe's sense. And also the disease of which Goethe speaks is connected with a sort of hyper-individualism which developed about that time and which was the weaker side of the romantic movement, certainly on the continent, probably not so much in this country. But we're still in this, we're still in this . . . dregs

of the romantic period, it's the disintegration of something. It isn't anything new. This is what I've been saying quite a bit lately. Much that we think of as new and modern is just the extreme disintegration of the old. This is one of the reasons I think we need a completely new start in many respects, a new art, a new culture and so on, born of spiritual values. Not just old values or traditional values but spiritual values actually experienced. As I said in the course of this discussion in Auckland, you know, which became quite heated at one stage, you know, I just refused to be intimidated by the argument, you know: this has been the fate of great artists in the past, they weren't appreciated at first, this isn't appreciated, therefore it must be great art. This is the way the argument often goes and I think we have to be quite careful of that. One can appreciate and still condemn or reject.

Ratnapani: What in general constitutes the classical in the sense of Goethe's? Is it sort of harmony and balance, integration, or what?

S: Well, it's the complete adequacy of form to content, but not implying thereby any sort of forcing of content into form. [laughter] Not any restriction on content so that form may accommodate it but the complete adequacy of form to content.

Padmaraja: But that would be such a beautiful definition of so much so-called modern art.

S: Well OK. If it isn't sick art, fair enough.

Padmaraja: It's just that it seems to me...

S: Of course here, perhaps one would add, knowing more than Goethe knew in those days, with the [text chopped off] [537] as it were, that the content itself should be a balanced and natural and healthy content. By the classical is not meant the Neoclassical or pseudo-classical or the cold sort of rigid perfection; nothing like that. I mean, the Greek dramatists, they were not classical in that sense. I just feel quite indignant sometimes when I see all this pseudo-criticism and pseudo-appreciation, people just don't know what they're appreciating. They're just appreciating disease much of the time, and holding it up to other people to admire. This is a symptom of a sick society, much of it. The sooner we cure ourselves of that sort of sickness the better. I mean maybe it helps some people to express it, but we shouldn't idealize it. This is what I call clinical art. This is more of interest to the clinician than the artist.

Padmaraja: Would you apply that to Van Gogh?

S: To some of Van Gogh. I certainly wouldn't like to say to all, but to some, yes. One has after all to look at individual pictures and not to speak about an artist as though he'd only painted one kind of picture. I mean no doubt some artists have their moods of health and moods of sickness. I get the impression on the whole that with regard to the Impressionists that they're rather healthy than otherwise. Their very sort of sensitivity to colour and their very sort of alert response to colour. Many of them seem very healthy, I mean in my...

Abhaya: What about Renoir and Cezanne and those sort of painters?

S: I'm not so sure about them. I tend to feel more about the lesser known Impressionists. They seem better in some ways, sometimes anyway. When I was in Helsinki I was taken to the Art Gallery and there was quite a lot of, well I'd never known them before, and really good paintings and very positive. I don't remember the names, I just hadn't heard of them before. They were certainly Impressionists, but just not known to the general public, at least not known to me, and I think I've heard the names of most of them, the better known ones, but it was good work and I felt very positive. But this is what happens with this clinical [538] art and all these distortions when there are no norms and no spiritual basis and no spiritual tradition. Nothing to relate to fundamentally. I mean you're at the mercy of anyone who comes along and wants to write something up, which usually means someone wants to sell it, and, you know, it becomes the rage and all that kind of thing, and it sells, and another name in the sort of history of modern art.

Padmaraja: Do you really feel that?

S: Oh yes, very strongly. [laughter]

Padmaraja: Could you ... maybe we're taking up too much time on this?

S: Well maybe, well we are actually, but never mind because we've come to the end of the chapter.

Padmaraja: Well, could you give me an example of...

S: Well, you'll have to take me round an art gallery and ask me what do you think of this one and what do you think of that one. [laughter]

Abhaya: It would be much more meaningful that way.

Padmaraja: Yes, maybe this is a bit...

Voice: Also, another thing, you have to consider that arts been going since about 1200 or so, and there's a lot of not really good art ... [laughter]

S: 1200 or so? 30,000 BC I thought.

? No I'm talking about sort of painting. There aren't actually all that many people when you think of ..[unclear].. about eight hundred years who sort of good, so if you're thinking about modern art it's only a very short period, the last ten or fifteen years.

Padmaraja: I was talking about the period we were discussing, the so called romantic period. [539]

Lokamitra: Clinical art doesn't necessarily mean, though, that it won't be able to be appreciated. The fact that it may be clinical doesn't mean to say that it won't have appreciation.

Buddhadasa: Yes, but appreciation doesn't amount to art.

Lokamitra: Right.

S: Appreciation doesn't make it art.

Padmaraja: But to the extent that it is art, it will be wholesome and rooted in classical values, classical in the sense that Goethe was meaning.

S: Yes, of course some people would disagree with me that art could be limited in that way, but obviously my limitation of art in that way just depends on my whole outlook and my whole philosophy, which might not be shared by those people. But then I would think that they were wrong, not sharing that outlook and philosophy, and therefore that definition of art not being possible for them.

Padmaraja: I think that's a very good definition of art.

Ratnapani: Would you say then that if someone was looking at a picture which had signs of sickness, this is presuming you're right, and this person was looking at it and picking up things without a trace of the sickness, picking up delights and other such things, would they be getting off on some peculiar illegitimate response? In other words their sickness responding to it. Or could that be merely bypassed and something else appreciated despite it? Unconsciously despite it?

S: I think also one has to make clear what one sort of means by sickness in art. For instance, there can be a sick subject but the painting is not necessarily itself sick, and even a negative emotion can find expression in a work of art but be as it were contained and almost sort of sublimated. But if you're as it were using the pretext of painting a picture actually for expressing something negative in you without [540] being aware of it or perhaps being sometimes aware of it, well this is then what I call sick art. So the artist might have put something negative into a painting but not in a negative way but you might latch on to that because you were negative even though there's no negativity in the painting as such. But in as much as there was something that could be interpreted negatively, like death, you could latch on to it or something negative in you could latch on to it, even though it wasn't a negative expression on the part of the artist. I mean just as the famous classical example during the Middle Ages that certain painters painted very beautiful Madonnas and the church obviously commissioned them for purposes of worship and put them up, but some of them were so beautiful that some unworthy worshippers started getting erotic feelings about them to such an extent that some of them had to be taken down. So you could argue that supposing the painter had not had any such intention or feeling but had painted the Madonnas with a purely spiritual motivation, then in that case people would have been reading into them paintings something that actually wasn't there. So this can happen too.

Ratnapani: Still, though, if in the situation where somebody is disturbed and this has been expressed in the picture - I'm not sure of my ground, I'm thinking this is entirely academic to me - I haven't looked at a picture since I was about fifteen I don't think seriously...

S: Fifty?

Ratnapani: Fifteen - I think I ought to go to the Tate, I must do so. [laughter] This is purely psychological interest really - If a painter has a negative state of mind and this has been expressed in his work, either consciously or unconsciously, is it possible to bypass this? You've talked about it being in there and you picking it up without knowing it. Is it possible to do the other and bypass this and still appreciate the rest as it were?

S: I think you can, but then you will be aware that you are doing this. [541]

Ratnapani: You will definitely be aware.

S: Yes, I think if you're really looking at the picture and are a very aware person and know quite a bit about art perhaps, or otherwise if you are very very innocent.

Abhaya: Well, take for example, if we could bring it onto writing, the Thief's Journal, by Genet, which is about a thief and a rapist and a seducer. The objective content of the book is very unskilful...

S: Pretty horrible, in fact.

Abhaya:. Yes, but it's the expression of a person's mind in a very positive way, so of course you bring your mind to the reading of that book and then it's up to you, isn't it?

S: Yes, you could latch on to the content in a negative way.

Abhaya: You could latch on to certain details and become completely degenerated and start doing the same thing yourself. On the other hand another person may get something extremely positive from it. So that's why I took up your point as if one's got to go into the Tate Gallery with like sort of washing your hands afterwards, or washing your eyes afterwards, just in case you, you know, you've got to be sort of...

Vessantara: You're picking up my point.

Abhaya: I picked up something slightly wrong about it.

Vessantara: I was just very concerned about what Bhante described as the way in which people almost make you feel guilty for not appreciating things which do seem to be quite sick.

Abhaya: Oh, I see.

S: They almost want to rub your nose in it, and if you don't enjoy having your nose rubbed in it and inhaling all the stink, there's something wrong with [542] you. You know? This is almost the impression, well it is the impression that one is given sometimes. Really we're in a state very often where the negative and unskilful, and sick is really glorified and one's very much exposed to this in a place like London. I mean just read the reviews and that will give you some idea, reading between the lines. Anyway, well, I think we actually were talking about treatment of sickness, so this was well within the scope of our chapter,

you know, sickness manifesting in so-called art and culture and even our whole civilization to some extent nowadays. Maybe that too is Mara to some extent, in some cases anyway. Anyway: lunch time. [general discussion about when to have a silent period]

S: Anyway we're getting through our text quite well and we've got a chapter left for tomorrow, and it's quite an important chapter. And then that'll be that.

Vessantara: I didn't really understand the verses on the dream state last night. I picked up that it was suggesting that one should be conscious of one's dreams or try to be conscious of one's dreams. Was that what it was saying?

S: Yes.

Nagabodhi: Conscious that you are dreaming when you are dreaming.

S: Well, not only that but that the dream state and what it represents blending with the conscious state.

Vessantara: In what way blending?

S: Well, in the sense that your waking state should be more alive and creative and more colourful. The waking state is sometimes awake, yes, but a bit arid and dry, and the dream state is very active, very colourful, but chaotic. So you should bring the two together. [543]

S: Alright. Page 490. Tenth and last chapter.

Buddhadasa: [reads from pp.490-1] "Realization of Supreme Attainment (Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi). If we, followers of the Buddha, in practising stopping and insight as given in the preceding chapters, could see that all phenomena arise from our own minds, and that causes and conditions are merely Pseudo-Visions, then we would know, also, that all phenomena are nothing but emptiness. As we see that they are nothing but emptiness, then it will be impossible for us to retain the common conception of phenomena. By this new conception of phenomena as emptiness, it can be said; we have realized 'The true viewpoint of reality.' But from this viewpoint we are unable to see either the Supreme Perfect Attainment of the Buddha to whom we are devoted, nor are we able to see any sentient being that we can emancipate. This means the insight of emptiness attained by practising the unreality of all phenomena and it also means 'The Insight of Ultimate Truth' both by the eyes of intelligence and the heart of realization. But if we come to a standstill in the practice of insight we soon descend into the state of a Pratyekabuddha, who is content with his own enlightenment. As is said in the sutra:

" 'All the Arhats sighed and said: 'When we listen to the preaching of our lord Buddha, whether it be about the Pure Land or about our duty toward all sentient beings, why is it we are not interested and fail to enjoy it?" What does this verse signify? It signifies that to the Arhats all phenomena are nothing but emptiness and silence, neither birth nor death, neither greatness nor littleness, neither purity nor unconditionality. As they fix their minds on these negative conceptions,

how can interest and enjoyment arise? You should clearly understand that if you attain concentration solely by fixing the mind on the unconditionality of emptiness, you will never be able to develop the highest wisdom. It means that your attainment is one-sided, inasmuch as it is leaving out of focus the conception of Buddha. If the Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas keep all the Buddha Dharmas in mind and keep them in mind for the sake of all sentient beings, they will not fall into over fondness for the unconditionality of emptiness and thus become satisfied with Nirvana for themselves."

S: What do you think the Grand Master is fundamentally saying here?

Vessantara: He's stressing that the Bodhisattva is in danger of developing wisdom or insight without compassion.

S: Basically he's saying that, but sunyata, emptiness, or voidness is what he is, as it were, intuited by wisdom, but it's not yet apparently wisdom in the full sense. It's still a rather one-sided wisdom, a wisdom that is, as it were, more intellectual, so there is a danger of developing just this sort of wisdom. It's a true wisdom but it is one-sided and there's a danger of becoming absorbed in sunyata, the voidness, the unconditioned in a one-sided sort of way. In other words, it's the old danger of looking too much on the negative side of things, and there is that side, and here that side seems to be existing on a very high, spiritual sort of plane, but even though it is a high spiritual plane, the one-sidedness is one-sided. And it is interesting that the Grand Master says, referring to those arahants mentioned in one of the sutras, "As they fix their minds on these negative conceptions, how can interest and enjoyment arise?"

"'All the Arhats sighed and said: 'When we listen to the preaching of our lord Buddha, whether it be about the Pure Land" which is a very positive conception "or about our duty toward all sentient beings," which of course involves compassion, "why is it we are not interested and fail to enjoy it?"'

It's because they are one-sidedly absorbed, as it were, in the unconditioned. Not the unconditioned in the ultimate sense, they've seen only one side of the unconditioned, its negative almost abstract side. So certainly insight into sunyata should be developed, certainly wisdom is to be developed, but one shouldn't allow them to be developed in a too one-sided sort of way to the exclusion of compassion, [544] to the exclusion of the Bodhisattva ideal, to the exclusion of the Buddha himself. So if the Mahasattva Bodhisattvas keep all the Buddha Dharmas in mind, and keep them in mind for the sake of all sentient beings, they will not fall into over-fondness for the unconditionality of emptiness. Buddha Dharmas here I think probably means the special qualities of the Buddha. If they keep the Buddha himself as an ideal in mind, not just the abstract voidness, and keep the Buddha's qualities in mind for the sake of sentient beings, in other words thinking 'may I develop those qualities so that I can help other living beings.'

Ratnapani: I seem to remember on the Hui Neng seminar, he was talking along these lines and you pointed out that this was the arahant from the Mahayana

point of view, using it more as an analogy in fact, rather than that people could actually come to an almost one-sided enlightenment because at that level there wasn't really one-sidedness.

S: Yes, if one speaks in terms of enlightenment itself obviously there can be no one-sidedness otherwise it isn't enlightenment, but as one practises when one is still on the path, there is this sort of possibility, the possibility represented in its extreme form by the arahant figure of the Mahayana, that you become too absorbed in the negative side of things. You become too one-sidedly negative in your approach. You think of the unconditioned too exclusively in terms of voidness and emptiness and silence, all those negative qualities which are an aspect of it, but you become exclusively absorbed in that particular side and you neglect the other more positive compassionate, in a way more personal side; you forget the Buddha himself.

Buddhadasa: One point, Bhante, about compassion: is karuna the ultimate emotion of compassionate enlightenment?

S: Ah, well, to begin with usually two kinds of karuna are distinguished: the karuna of compassion, which is one of the four brahma viharas, the second, and what is called maha-karuna, which is the karuna of a Buddha. Also sometimes the text speaks of maha-maitri, that is to say, a karuna which is something much more like an impersonal force. [545] It's not ego-based, it's not just pity or sentiment, but sometimes it is said in the sutras that there are three kinds of compassion. Let me just see if I can remember the technical terms for these - yes - sattvalambana karuna, dharmalambana karuna, and sunyatalambana karuna.

Buddhadasa: Can we get all these down please?

S: Yes, these three. Sattva alambana, which becomes sattvalambana - they are joined together into sattvalambana. Alambana is a sort of base or support. So that karuna, which has as its support or base, beings. Do you get that? So what does that mean? That means the ordinary compassion, the compassion in the sense of the second brahma-vihara. That compassion that looks out and sees other beings separate from itself, takes them as real, even absolutely real, as actually existing, as being separate selves and egos but feels compassion towards them. Then dharmalambana, that's the second term. This is the karuna, the compassion, which has for its object not the illusory beings themselves but their constituent psycho-physical events or processes. Here dharma is used in the sense of events or processes. It goes a bit deeper than the first.

Buddhadasa: Could you say that again? The compassion which has for its object?

S: Not illusory beings a such but their constituent psycho-physical events or processes. In other words dharmas in that technical sense. And sunyatalambana karuna is karuna which has for its object voidness. In other words which sees beings in their ultimate reality and makes that its object. So the first corresponds to the ordinary compassion, the second to that of the Hinayana, and the third

to that of the Mahayana.

Buddhadasa: I think there is a similar set in the Trikaya.

S: Oh, no.

Vajradaka: Can you just say that last one again? [546]

S: Sunyatalambana karuna.

Vajradaka: Is it seeing beings in their true. . . ?

S: You could you say, if you like, but in inverted commas, 'in their true nature', but that is not a very Buddhistic expression, but you could use it. Seeing beings in their ultimate reality and making that the object of one's compassion. In other words it's a sort of non-dual compassion.

Padmapani: So the first two states of compassion belong to the sort of conditional experience?

S: Not altogether. The first is conditional, the second is on the way to being unconditional but not completely so. The third is completely unconditional.

Padmapani: You mean in the second state the person experiences a deeper insight into compassion at times than at other times, so to speak?

S: No, not that, but that they don't see the beings that they feel compassion towards quite as separate, independently existing selves, as real egos out there. They go somewhat deeper than that, but not to their ultimate depth as it were. They go sort of half way in between. This corresponds to the Hinayana point of view which goes as deep as to see beings consisting of dharmas, events and processes, but not so deep as to see beings in terms of sunyata or their ultimate reality.

Padmapani: So it's quite a lofty plane, the second one?

S: Yes, yes.

Buddhadasa: So whereabouts does the karuna of the brahma vihara come in? Is that the first one?

S: That is the first one, unless of course one does cultivate it to a quite extreme degree, then it does start verging on the second one or can even eventually end up in the third. But [547] it has to be conjoined with a definite insight to do that. In other words we end up with the apparently paradoxical point of view that, so far as the Mahayana is concerned, or even so far as Buddhism in general is concerned, it's simply that the Mahayana goes deeper than the Hinayana, compassion is impersonal. It's not personalized in the way that we usually think of it as being. It's not you feeling sorry for him, as it were.

But whether or not we make use of the Arahant figure or even Arahant symbol in the Mahayanistic sense or Mahayanistic manner, it is a fact that there is this, as it were, danger. There is this danger of the one-sided approach, thinking

about reality in too exclusively negative terms and becoming more and more involved in that aspect to the exclusion of the complementary aspect, which means our whole practice and insight and realization becomes one-sided. I don't know whether anyone that we actually know is in that sort of danger, you know, [laughter] except perhaps at an very very elementary level, which is quite easy to correct. I don't think anyone is in danger of slipping into a one-sided sunyata unawares or becoming an arahant by mistake [laughter]. I don't think so. So perhaps we need not linger over it too long.

Padmaraja: Speaking on a much lower level about - in the metta last night - this thing about positive and negative approach. I found that at first your saying, may he be free from suffering, may he be free from unhappiness, wasn't going so well. But suddenly to switch and say, well, may he be happy and may he be well, may he be blissful, then suddenly like a tremendous burst of energy, a much more positive approach.

Vajradaka: Cintamani has an interesting different approach to this. He's changed it slightly, into 'they will be happy'. [laughter] He says it more when on the stage for himself, like you know ..[unclear].. I will be happy.

S: Well, it's like encouraging oneself. I think one should be careful how one applies this to other people. It's almost as if they've got to be happy whether they like it or not, you know, so that YOU can feel a bit more comfortable. [548] Anyway, let's pass on.

Vajradaka: [reads from p.491] "From the very beginning the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva, beside his practice of his insight into the emptiness of all phenomena, should also practise insight into the potentiality that abides in emptiness. If he does this he will realize with clearness that although the nature of mind is emptiness, as it comes to relations with suitable causes and conditions, it has the potential to create all phenomena though they are not real nor permanent. And though they manifest through different organs of seeing, hearing, perceiving, thinking, etc."

S: This is quite important. This is one way of, as it were, correcting the one-sided conception of sunyata, or rather the one-sided conviction of reality in terms of a purely negative and as it were literally empty sunyata. So you correct it from this point of view by thinking of that sunyata, that emptiness, as a potentiality.

It's like, just to give an example, suppose you see a field which has been ploughed and nothing sown, just an expanse of brown earth. You could say, well, the field is completely empty, there's nothing there, just the bare brown earth. That would correspond to the rather negative approach. But then you could also say but out of this field can come all sorts of crops and flowers, all sorts of green things, plants and bushes and trees. They could all grow, they could all spring up from this soil. In the same way you can think, with regard to sunyata, out of this vast emptiness all sorts of things can come, all sorts of things can be produced when the time is ripe, and also when the circumstances permit. In other words it's a sort of creative emptiness.

The Grand Master seems to be thinking of it here more in terms of Yogacara metaphysics. I don't think it's necessary to do that. Maybe that isn't even the best approach, but to think more in terms of the Bodhisattva activities, sort of springing forth from the emptiness, or compassion springing forth from the voidness. You might remember that in my 'Path of the Inner Life' there's a little essay on this called the Flowering Bowl. Do you remember? It basically deals with this theme. The empty bowl is the one-sided conception of sunyata. The flowers represent what springs up in the emptiness: the various sort of compassionate activities. It's as though when your ego, for want of a better way of putting it, is out of the way, when you are empty, then the various, as it were, compassionate or egoless activities can spring forth. It's also is a bit like the statement in the [549] Tao Te Ching, and perhaps the Grand Master has this at the back of his mind too. You know, when Lao Tsu says the wheel is empty right in the middle. There's an empty space, you know, where the axle fits in, and it's because of that empty space that the wheel is able to be made use of as a wheel. And he also says that it's because of the empty spaces that a house is able to be made use of as a house. If it was all one solid block nobody could use it, but because it's hollow and has got windows, because of the emptiness, it becomes useful. You could look at it like this. In this way emptiness is sort of unrestrictedness or potentiality, and this is what basically the Grand Master is saying. In other words to get rid of this one-sided conception of reality as a purely negative emptiness, reflect upon the potentiality of that emptiness, that all sorts of things can come out of it.

Nagabodhi: Looked at on a lower level in terms of one's own experience, it also provides the distinction between goal orientation and problem orientation. You have to make an attitude which is simply to see your practice as freeing you from all the dross. Or you can see it as developing your potential.

S: In other words, not just free from but free to, but you've got to leave yourself free. You can't do something, anything, unless at present you're not doing anything or haven't got anything to do, as it were. So the less you're doing the greater your potentiality for doing, because the more you are doing the more you're restricting yourself. Of course one mustn't take this too literally. [laughter]. The less you have to do, the more you can do, the more you're free to do.

Padmapani: It's like, the more potential one has.

S: The more potential you have, yes. So the state of sunyata is rather like that. It's this state of unrestricted potentiality in which you're free to do anything, because at present you're not doing anything, because you are not anything, you haven't even decided you're this or that. So you're free even to be anything, not to speak of doing anything. So that's the positive side of the [550] negative, as it were.

Padmapani: One's in a very position to teach, then.

S: Yes, well, anything. You're in a good position to do anything whatsoever.

Padmapani: I meant it in the sense that one would be impregnated with all these ideas and creative ideas that people on a lower level who come to the teacher and say, oh yes, this is what you mean to do.

S: But you line the line of argument? And of course the Grand Master mentions especially the emptiness of the mind, that's where this sort of, as it were, Yogacara point of view comes in. The mind is empty, mind in of course the deepest sense, and that is why it can be so creative and produce so much.

Padmapani: Couldn't one use, Bhante the symbolism of the Buddha, when he talks about the deeper states of samadhi absorption, using those parallels as a sort of... One can use that instead of forming a one-sided view of emptiness, you know, these deeper states of samadhi, for instance, like in the first state of absorption it's likened to soap powder and water.

S: Yes, except of course, when you come on to the level of sunyata, you're definitely concerned with vipassana whereas those particular similes were to illustrate increasing degrees of samatha. But I've given a port of analogy: that of the field and the crops it could produce. That is that kind of analogy but within the context of vipassana. Sometimes the analogy is given as that of a buried treasure, it's an expanse of land where not much is growing, but there's a buried treasure there and you've got to dig it up. It isn't really empty, it isn't really barren. But I think the analogy of the field that could produce crops is probably better. It's, as it were, more natural, more spontaneous. It just needs the rain to fall, it just needs the right conditions, and, you know, all those things will come up. They are there potentially. The field potentially is very fruitful, very rich. It isn't barren, it isn't empty, though it may look so. [551]

It's just like that, you know, with sunyata, or you could say the mind or the Bodhisattva's mind: it may look empty, it may be empty in a sense, but when it comes into contact with the right conditions, i.e. when the bodhisattva comes into contact with people who need his help, all sorts of activities, all sorts of functions, manifest quite spontaneously so that the void is not empty.

Padmapani: I think that answers my question earlier on about the person being in the position of a teacher.

S: Ah, yes. In a way you haven't got to think about teaching or being ready to teach. That's looking at it from the wrong end as it were. If you're ready, you'll be ready to teach. But you need not think in terms of teaching. If, you know, if you've got the experience, or if, in the terms of this level, if you are empty, then when you come into contact with a certain situation then something will come out of that emptiness. That's why we often find people who didn't think that they knew very much becoming involved in discussions and having to answer sort of questions, and understanding or knowledge comes up sometimes that they didn't realize they possessed. They didn't realize that they knew so much. I expect some of you must have had, this experience sometimes, just under the stress of the situation you produce the knowledge which was there all the time as it were. You've been quietly accumulating it, but you didn't know you had it.

So that's a sort of analogy, a sort of example even, that you thought you were empty, but when the situation arose then out of that emptiness something was produced. That's the potential of the emptiness, and it's quite good it should be like that and that you don't have something really in your mind which you produce as it were when you think that that is what fits the occasion. It's much better to be much more spontaneous than that. Sometimes it might happen that when you are asked something, for a split second you think you don't know but then the next second you know that you do know. It takes that split second for us to produce it from wherever it is. On we go then. [552]

Nagabodhi: [reads from p.491] "Notwithstanding his knowledge of the essential emptiness and silence of all phenomena, the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva, by the practice of rightly balanced insight, may practise all manner of activities in his conception of emptiness as though he were planting trees in the clouds, and also he may distinguish in sentient beings all manner of relative qualities. As the desires of our natures are innumerable, so the ways of our preaching are innumerable, also. As we adapt our various arts of preaching to their various needs, we will be able to benefit all sentient beings in the six realms. This is what is meant by 'the viewpoint of expedient adjustment to conditions,' which is our insight from emptiness into potentiality. It is also called, 'insight of equality,' 'the eyes of the Dharma,' and 'the garden of intuitive enlightenment.' If we make this balanced insight our viewpoint we shall perceive, but with difficulty and dimly because our powers of intelligence are comparatively undeveloped, the true nature of Buddha potential in everything."

S: It isn't enough as it were to swot up the answers in advance. This is what this passage suggests. The adaptation isn't that you sort of work it all out in advance and have it all ready in your conscious mind and apply it as circumstances arise. It is that you are yourself ready. It's just like, sometimes it is said, the gong. I mean the gong just sort of hangs there, it doesn't think about producing notes or anything like that. It is a gong, it's made of the right sort of material, so when it's struck well the note will come forth. So you should be just like that, you shouldn't be bothering what you're going to say to people and how you're going to say it and whether it's going to be according to their needs. When you are struck then you'll respond.

Buddhadasa: The bigger the stick, the better the sound. [laughter]

S: It's like the story of the Zen waster. It's a story in this little book that I'm reading. I don't remember the full details but apparently a young monk comes to the monastery, and he goes to see the master and apparently he's convinced, you know, he's unenlightened. So the master says, 'Monk.' And he says, 'Yes?' So the Master says, 'Well, nothing wrong with your hearing. [laughter] And he bends forward to offer the master something, and the master raises his stick rather threateningly and so the young man hastily retreats a step or two. So the master says, well, 'Nothing wrong with your responses.' So in this way there are three or four little incidents and the master convinces him that, you know, he's enlightened. [laughter] You know, it's all there, he's got it as it were, his

senses are all intact.

So it's not that you have to learn something or hold something sort of consciously in mind. If your being is such, then when you're struck, as it were, your being will give off the right sort of response. So the Bodhisattva's got to think [553] of it more in those sort of terms. You shouldn't be thinking in terms of swotting up all the possible answers to all the possible questions that you might be asked, and getting them all off by heart so that you're never stuck for the right answer. Well, some people do think in those terms, and at first no doubt you have to sort of learn specific things. You have to function more on the level of acquiring information and supplying information but there has to be much more to one's practice of Buddhism and one's preaching than this. And you always, when someone is giving you a reply out of the book, or whether he's speaking from his own experience and conviction, whether right or wrong, whether limited or not limited. And this is where ... and this refers to something that was mentioned yesterday, where, say, something like the correspondence course has its limitations because it is on the level of information and you're being examined in your knowledge simply of information.

So one could even say that it's one thing to know about Buddhism but it's another thing to know Buddhism, and maybe even a different thing again to be Buddhism.

And then this particular paragraph ends with the quite important statement that "If we make this balanced insight our viewpoint we shall perceive, but with difficulty and dimly because our powers of intelligence are comparatively undeveloped, the true nature of Buddha potential in everything." It's as though by responding to the needs of others in this sort of spontaneous way, we evoke something from them too. And we begin to appreciate their potentiality, at least dimly.

Do you see the process that the text apparently has in mind? Supposing somebody asks you a question, the question maybe quite superficial. It may be just a matter of information or asking for information. But if you give a real response, that at once raises the whole exchange to another level, and there's a possibility of your real response evoking in turn from that person, whatever the basis he may have started from, a real response in turn. By allowing your potentiality [554] to sort of function freely in relation to him, you encourage and even help him to realize his potentiality. And in that way you begin to see his potentiality and the potentiality of the people you're in contact with.

Padmapani: Could that be likened to sort of saying that one doesn't give the person what one wants but gives them what they need?

S: You don't give them what you want?

Padmapani: No, what they want, the one who is asking the question. But one gives them what they need in order to develop?

S: You could say that, but it's not that you're giving them something quite

different, but in the instance I gave you answer their question, but the difference is more in your manner of answering it, the depth or even, say, the sincerity with which you answer it. You give them more than they asked for, more than they expected, and that evokes a response from them in turn, and then they're able perhaps to ask a better question, a more real question, and then you can give an even more real answer. In this way it goes on.

Lokamitra: So you get spiral communication?

S: Hmm, yes. I'm just smiling at you ..[unclear]..

Lokamitra: Ah.

S: Alright, on we go then.

Ratnapani: [reads from p.491] "Although the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva..."

S: Before we go any further [laughter] there is a technical meaning usually attached to Mahasattva-Bodhisattva, anybody know what it is?

Padmaraja: In your lecture I think you said that - I mean this is just quoting you - that Maha means pertaining to sunyata, in the Mahayana. So Mahasattva means the being born of voidness. [555]

Voice: Does it mean irreversible?

S: It means irreversible, yes. Originally it seems to have started off just as a sort of honorific, but gradually it did assume this sort of meaning of an irreversible Bodhisattva, that is, one who cannot slide back into wanting to be an arahant and have a nirvana, as it were, of his own. Alright, let's go on.

Ratnapani: [reads from pp.491-2] "Although the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva has attained these two ways of insight, from the viewpoints of emptiness and potentiality, he has still not yet attained to perfect insight. Therefore, the sutra says that these two ways of insight are to be used as expedient means for by them we may enter by a middle way into Supreme Attainment and therein abide in both conceptions of Ultimate Truth - Perfect Intelligence and Perfect Realization, Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Love - with our minds in tranquillity and peacefulness. Then our minds will no longer run in two channels but will cease their flow in Prajna's Ocean of Truth.

"If the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva wishes to have all Buddha Dharmas embraced in a single thought, he should practise insight from the viewpoint of 'cessation of the heretical separation of the two extremes;' this will enable him to walk by right insight along a Middle Way. What does it mean to practise insight by the middle way? It means to look at the nature of our minds in a more comprehensive way. If we do that we will see that the mind is neither true nor false and from that viewpoint we restrain our dependent thoughts. This is what we mean by the right practice of insight."

S: In other words here, the Bodhisattva, or the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva, is trying to unify the two extremes, and he sees especially that it isn't so much that

the mind is void and then it produces out of the potentiality within that void. Mind is really above these two extremes, it is neither voidness nor potentiality, neither wisdom nor compassion, but it includes both and is more than those. And this of course is the middle way in the higher, or even highest, sense. This unification of wisdom and compassion, voidness and potentiality. Alright, let's go on.

Padmapani: [reads from p.492] "If we are able to reflect upon so profound a conception as the nature of our mind being neither emptiness nor potentiality, without cutting asunder our conceptions of emptiness and potentiality, then the true nature of our mind will be wholly and clearly comprehended as a manifestation of the Truth of the Middle Way, and we can reflect upon both of these paths of Reality (Intelligence and Intuitive Realization), with readiness and assurance. If we can see these two aspects of Reality as the Middle Way in our own mind, then we can see them in all phenomena. But we do not take these two aspects of Reality into our reflection of the Middle Way, for we are unable to find any trace of them in its nature. This is what is meant by the practice of right insight into the Middle Way. It is said in the Madhyamika Sutra, 'All phenomena which arise from causes and conditions are nothing but emptiness, but we give them pseudo-names and then think of a Middle Way.' "

S: Do you see what he is getting at? That really the Middle Way is not a Middle Way. Because the very distinction between the so-called extremes is unreal. You can think of reality as a Middle Way between wisdom and compassion [556] [Tape 22 side B] but if you completely unify wisdom and compassion so that they are no longer different things, then the conception loses its force. It becomes, as it were, unnecessary, so you can say that in the Middle Way there is no wisdom because wisdom means what is not compassion, and in the Middle Way the duality between the two is transcended. So you can say that in the Middle Way there is no wisdom and no compassion, in the sense that the duality between the two is transcended so that the very distinction of wisdom as something separate from compassion, and compassion as separate from wisdom, no longer exists. So even the conception of the Middle Way is an expedient; there is no such thing as the Middle Way on this level. We just use or we make use of the conception of a Middle Way to transcend our dualistic thinking, to transcend our thinking of wisdom and compassion as two different things. Once we've unified them we've no need to bother with the conception of the Middle Way any more.

Lokamitra: So it's the same thing as using the relative truth to reach the...

S: Mmm, exactly, and then you throw away the relative. You even throw away the distinction of relative and absolute. Alright, let's go on.

Voice: [reads from p.492] "If we carefully examine the meaning of this stanza, we will see that it not only embraces all conceptions of the differentiations of the Middle Way but it also shows the purpose of the two preceding ways of expedient insight. We will also realize that the right insight of the Middle Way reveals it to be both the all-comprehending wisdom of Buddha's Eyes and the all-embracing

love of his intuitive heart. If we keep our stand on this right insight, then our powers of Dhyana and intelligence will be in equality; we will clearly perceive the true nature of Buddha, we will rest peacefully in the Mahayana; we will advance with the steadiness and the speed of the wind; and we will inevitably run into Prajna's Ocean of Truth."

S: You notice that right insight is used in a slightly ambiguous way here. It's not insight as opposed to compassion or intuition, it's in the full and more comprehensive sense, unifying wisdom and compassion, dhyana and intelligence. So we only have a full realization when we unify those two in this way. Alright, let's go on then. [557]

Voice: [reads from pp.492-3] "If we do the deeds of Tathagata (The Ultimate Principle that is what it is), abide in the Palace of Tathagata, dress in the robe of Tathagata, sit on the throne of Tathagata, then we will be entering into all the imperial resources of Tathagata. Then we will regain the purity of our six sense faculties and will no longer be defiled or become fond of the changing and passing phenomena of life. We will enter into the conditions of a Buddha, we will become able to understand all the Buddha-Dharmas, will attain the Samadhi of reciting the Sacred Name, will enter into the peaceful continuance of the Supreme Perfect Enlightenment, and will attain the highest Samadhi of the Transcendental Body. Then we may visit all Buddha Worlds, preach the Buddha dharmas to all sentient beings everywhere, purify and adorn all Buddha's Kshatra [sic, should be Kshetra, tr.] make ambrosial offerings to all Buddha's everywhere, receiving and observing all the Dharma Scriptures, of all the Buddhas, possessing perfect ideals for all activities, and advancing along the Bodhisattva stages to Mahasattva-Bodhisattvahood. Then we will be of equal rank and in intimate friendship with Samantabhadra and Manjushri will be in permanent possession of Dharma nature. Then all the Buddhas will praise us and prophesy our attainment of Buddhahood."

S: So what is the Grand Master saying here? Or what is the basic comparison he is making use of and why? He's comparing the Buddha with the king or the emperor. So why is he doing that?

Abhaya: Because he's above all the Arahants and Bodhisattvas and Maha-Bodhisattvas.

S: Well that is true, but that isn't the actual comparison that the Grand Master's making here.

Voice: The king's put all the resources of ..[inaudible]..

S: Ah, yes. The king has all the resources at his disposal. So if you want have all those resources at your disposal, what you must concentrate on is becoming king. Then you automatically have all those resources at your disposal, you don't have to think about them. So the Buddhist or the would be Bodhisattva thinks just in terms of becoming the Buddha. This in a way represents the emptiness aspect. Those two are inseparable, the emptiness aspect and the ..[unclear]..

aspect. Just as when you are crowned a king , when you enter the king's palace and you wear the king's robe and you sit on the king's throne, at once all the resources come into your possession, they are automatically yours. So once you're enlightened then automatically all the Dharmas and powers and attainments and spiritual qualities automatically become yours, these automatically manifest. You shouldn't think so much in terms of getting them so much as in terms of gaining that position, gaining that status, or even that state of being of which they are the natural resource, as it were. I mean if you are a little rat and you make a hole into the king's treasury and you steal away a few coins, well, that's quite a different thing from becoming the king and having it all at your rightful disposal and being able to draw on any of these resources whenever you wish, according to circumstances. [558] So if you really want to do as the Buddha does, you must be as the Buddha is. You mustn't try to appropriate the Buddha's resources without actually being the Buddha. Otherwise you commit a sort of spiritual high treason.

Vajradaka: It's quite common.

S: Mmm, yes, yes, right.

Vajradaka: Like the dry method of insight, in a way.

S: Hmm, in a way, yes, And then the Grand Master says, "Then we will be of equal rank and in intimate friendship with Samantabhadra and Manjusri and will be in permanent possession of Dharma nature." What do you think that means or implies or suggests?

Ratnapani: You will be of that level.

S: Not only of that level.

Ratnapani: You will be there.

S: These are sort of archetypal Bodhisattvas, they're not historical personalities, they're all different aspects of the Dharmakaya, as it were, functioning in different ways but we think of them as separate independent personalities. But we will be just like that, as it were, just an addition, a fresh manifestation of the Dharmakaya, as it were, along with Samantabhadra, Manjusri, and the rest.

Padmapani: Is there a reference of the last sentence of the last paragraph, "Then all the Buddhas will praise us and prophesy our attainment of Buddhahood." Does that mean in actual fact that in that state one isn't even a Buddha?

S: Yes, one is still a Bodhisattva, yes. Presumably somewhere intermediate between irreversibility and Buddhahood. At this level one mustn't take these sort of stages and [559] distinctions too literally. In a way there's no distinction between Buddha and Bodhisattva because also it says "we will be of equal rank and in intimate friendship with Samantabhadra and Manjusri and will be in permanent possession of Dharma nature," which suggests full realization. So in a way it's both, you are Buddha, you are Bodhisattva, you are fully enlightened but you are operating and manifesting in specific ways. The specific ways in

which you or the Buddha nature or the Buddha manifests, those particular ways are the Bodhisattva's of which you, as it were, are now one, even though you may not have fully gained enlightenment. Again it's paradoxical. In other words it shows the limitations of the linear approach, you know, thinking of the absolute fixed point, you know, the final point: the Buddha's there, the Bodhisattvas are not there. It isn't really quite like that, they are there and they are not there. They eternally have arrived and eternally are arriving. So the Buddha represents the state of having eternally arrived, and the Bodhisattvas the state of eternally arriving. Really one should combine the two just like you combine the sunyata and the karuna. Alright, let's go on.

Sona: [reads from p.493] "This was the progress of our Lord Buddha from his ascent into the glories of the Tushita Heaven, down to the entrance of his spirit into the womb of his mother, Queen Maya, to his conversion to Buddhism, to his sitting under the Bodhi Tree, to his rejection of Mara and his hosts, to his full attainment of enlightenment, to his preaching of the Dharma, and to his Parinirvana. This means in possession of two bodies, namely, a True Body and an Appearance Body, which are like a sound and its echo, a form and its shadow. The True Body abides in all directions and all times and in all worlds; the Appearance Body accomplishes all the deeds of a Buddha. This is our mission as Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas that was begun in our practice of Dhyana."

S: So at the end of their paragraph the Grand Master reminds us that we started practising dhyana, or we start practising dhyana, originally so as to gain Buddhahood. And there's a reference here to the two kayas: Dharmakaya and Rupakaya. Later, of course, the two kayas were systematized into three, but at this stage there's only two. Apparently the sutras which mention the three yanas had not been translated into Chinese at this time. They were quite late in India anyway, compared with the sutras which referred to the two kayas.

So the Grand Master here is using the language of potentiality, as it were, that we are all potentially Buddhas, and that therefore we potentially possess the two bodies of a Buddha, the dharmakaya and the rupakaya, the true body and the appearance body. [560] Alright, let's go on.

Vessantara: [reads from p.493-4] "It is said in the Avatamsaka Sutra that as soon as novice Bodhisattvas begin their practice of Dhyana that they have already accomplished their full enlightenment, and have comprehended that the intelligence embodied in the true nature of all phenomena is to be accomplished in no other way than by full Enlightenment. In another place the same Sutra says that new Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas in attaining oneness with Tathagata really attain innumerable bodies and that each body is a Buddha.

"In the Parinibbana Sutra it is said: 'The beginnings as new Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas and the ultimate Buddha are in distinguishable, but in regard to the responsibilities the new Mahasattva-Bodhisattva has the heavier burden.'

"In the Maha-Vagga the Lord speaking to Sona Kutakanna said: 'Sona Kutakanna, there are some Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas who, no sooner have they made their

first practice of Dhyana than they are fitted to sit under the Bodhi-Tree.'

"We should realize that these novice Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas are really Buddhas in manifestation. This is signified in 'The Wonderful Lotus Sutra,' also, in the case of the Naga Princess, who was a disciple of Manjushri and only eight years old, but who presented her priceless jewel to the Lord Buddha as to an equal.

"In all these sutras the new Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas are represented as being already in possession of all Buddha-Dharmas. The same meaning is embodies in the Maha-vagga where it uses the first letter of the Sanskrit Alphabet - Aum - to represent wholeness. It is so stated in 'The Lotus Sutra,' where the purpose of our lord Buddha's appearing in this world is presented as manifesting and emancipating the Buddha perception and understanding that is inherent in every sentient being. It is so stated in the Nirvana Sutra, that as we have received the nature of Buddha, so we ever abide in Maha-Nirvana."

S: This isn't very clear I'm afraid, and the other translation doesn't help us very much. But the general drift seems to be clear, which is that as soon as you start on the right path it's only a question of just keeping on and on, and one might even say it's more difficult to take that first step than actually to realize the final truth once you start getting fairly near it. It's the first step, the first right step, that is quite difficult, but once you've made that it's only a question of just keeping at it. Everything is potentiality in that first step - which is not in a way a first step, that in a way is a bit literalistic, it's more like a seed in which everything is contained. You've only got to nourish the seed, provide it with the right conditions. You look after that seed, give it enough water, give it enough soil, give it enough sunshine. Sooner or later, if it is a healthy seed, you will get the plant and the flower and the fruit and so on. So the main thing is to make the start. And practice of dhyana is represented as the right start, the healthy seed, which will one day blossom into Buddhahood as it were.

Vajradaka: In a way it's very simple.

S: Hmm, in a way it's very simple, yes. It also suggests how important it is to ensure that that first step is the right step, and that that seed is a healthy seed, of course a seed of the right species as it were, and that you're not in fact planting a cabbage seed under the impression it's a rose seed.

Lokamitra: It's like taking responsibility for yourself, and once you do that then it will just...

S: Mmm, then everything follows.

Vajradaka: Keep the inspiration going. [561]

Buddhadasa: And taking responsibility also for your own conditions.

S: For your own conditions, yes, because here there's no gardener to do it for you. And you also select the gardener even if there is one, you appoint the gardener, so you have to take responsibility for that too.

Vajradaka: That's an experience [laughter] a lot of Friends haven't had, especially up in Scotland where there aren't very many teachers, there aren't any teachers so is they come to the Friends it's probably the first thing they've done and they don't know anything else.

S: Well as it happens to be the Friends, that's OK, but it might not have been. Had it been, say, some other body. It might have been almost anybody.

Vajradaka: Right.

S: It might have been a spiritualist group or it might have been the local theosophists or it might have been the local fortune teller or it might have been just a professor of philosophy or a yogi or almost anybody or anything. First impressions are very important, not to speak of the first step.

Buddhadasa: There does seem a tremendous reluctance on some people to give up that form of Buddhism that they first came into contact with. If they first came in contact with Zen there's a tremendous reluctance to give it up or Tibetan Buddhism.

Voice: Or ..[unclear].. [laughter]

S: Right.

Buddhadasa: Having made one step they can't bring themselves to make the next step.

S: Well they can't sometimes make the transition from Zen to Buddhism. [laughter] Well, in the sense of realizing that Zen is only a single leaf on the whole tree. [562] I think that's a quite convenient point to stop and have our coffee.

Nagabodhi: I've just thought of something. Do you see it as being a possibility in the future, when perhaps we are involved in translation work - I'm not just thinking of work with commentaries but even translation - it's possible that we shall be using terms to translate words like dharmakaya and so on far more in terms of potential and potentiality? Because this is something that I've benefited enormously from over the last two seminars, of cutting through all the kind of mystical ideas I had about Dharmakaya and seeing everything in terms of potential, which seems to be the meaning of the word anyway, ultimately. Do you see that as being a worthwhile thing or do the words contain so many other shades of meaning that you can't. . . ?

S: I think one has to be very careful, especially speaking to new people or people who are only on the mental level as regards Buddhism in terms of it all already being there, the you are Buddha, you are that, you've only got to just wake up to the fact. I think this is extremely dangerous. I think it's all right to speak in terms of potentiality. If you use the analogy of the seed, for instance, then it's clear that the seed is only a seed, you know, there's a lot of work involved between the seed and the flower and the fruit. There are many conditions to be created. There's quite a lot of work to be done. If you just speak in terms of someone being potentially a Buddha as if there is just a Buddha image underneath a piece

of cloth and all you have to do is to whip off the cloth and there's the Buddha, and it's as easy as that. Well, this is often how it's presented. Even Irmgard Schloegl suggests this in her little introduction to her selection of Zen stories, and I'm sure she'd be horrified if she thought she was really being understood in this sort of way by anybody, but the language does suggest that.

Nagabodhi: That's what I meant potentiality, because normally it's spoken in the sense of you are Buddha, not you are potentially - if you make the effort - Buddha.

S: Right, yes, all those qualifications are most important. [563] So it isn't a question of - as we were saying the other day - getting someone by main force of intellect to think that he is Buddha. Was it on this seminar or the last one? The last one. We went into this very thoroughly didn't we, one day, this question of potentiality? In that sense, a direct identification that you are that. Not that you can become that if you make the effort over the next ten million years sort of thing.

Ratnapani: But it's probably quite good to be baffled at the beginning, because then you know that it's not just something that is close at hand and...

S: The trouble is that you're not baffled usually; you think that you understand. You say, oh yes, I am Buddha.

Ratnapani: No, I mean by terms like Dharmakaya - one gets sort of the gist of the meaning.

S: If you are baffled it's good, but I think some people just get irritated by all these foreign words, not baffled in a positive spiritual sense, but in an irritated sense, you know, as though people are making things unnecessarily difficult and using these abstract terms, and it all seems a bit esoteric in a negative sense. Some people I know do get this sort of impression. You know: I mean for heaven's sake if they really have got anything [to say] why don't they put it into plain straightforward English?

Voice: The Dutch are pretty much like that.

S: Mmm, yes.

Voice: ..[inaudible comment]..

S: We shall be talking double Dutch, no doubt, at that retreat.

Nagabodhi: Could one translate Dharmakaya as the ever-present possibility of Enlightenment?

S: No, it doesn't really mean that at all. You could say Tathagatagarbha means more like that, [564] garbha meaning womb, treasury, store. Dharmakaya is the enlightened personality as the embodiment of ultimate reality. It means something more like that.

Vajradaka: Sambhogakaya is the one between the Nirmanakaya and the Dharmakaya?

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: And you once described Sambhogakaya as being a potential talent or one's innate kind of talent.

S: Hmm, I know what you mean, but not quite like that. I was speaking in terms of communication wasn't I? That just as in the ordinary personality there are body, speech, and mind, in the case of a Buddha there is Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya. Sambhogakaya corresponds to speech. It's the principle of communication and it includes not only words but influence, aura, as it were, and I used a comparison of the talents, didn't I, but that was only a comparison.

Voice: ..[inaudible. Something about the way potentiality in the way Nagabodhi suggests is alright, but would tend to be misunderstood by a beginner]..

S: Might realize your potential in a sort of Pelmanism kind of sense: You too can be a man in twenty-one days. [laughter]

Nagabodhi: Yes, yes. Maybe I'm overcompensating because personally I feel I've suffered from misapprehensions ..[unclear].. you know, I quite enjoy having a good, useless, think. [laughter] I certainly feel I've been confused by not having a mundane enough...

S: Hmm well, perhaps there's been no breach as it were, no link between the extremely mystical and the extremely mundane. Certainly in a way the concept of potentiality helps bring the two together. That this is potentially that however long a course of evoking the potentiality or realizing it may lie between them. Alright then, let's have our little drink. [565] [Tape 23 side A]

S: Alright, on we go then. Page 494.

Sagaramati: [reads from pp.494-5] "This is a brief elucidation of the attainment of supreme perfect wisdom through the practice of Dhyana by novice Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas. We will now refer to the attainment of Supreme Perfect Wisdom by the Buddhas.

"As we cannot see the conditions that surround the perfect minds of Buddhas, we are limited in our understanding as to how they attain Supreme Perfect Wisdom to the teachings of the Sutras. In the sutras we find only two ways in which Buddhas practise Dhyana. In the 'Lotus of the Wonderful Law Sutra' we read these words: '(All of the highest Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas) sincerely and earnestly and perseveringly praise the Wisdom of all the Buddhas.' This is their practice of realization in Dhyana. In their practice of Dhyana they abide in Samadhi. We get our understanding of their attainment of Supreme Perfect Wisdom through our own practice of realization.

"In its interpretation of the meaning of Maha-Nirvana, the 'Nirvana Sutra'

considers over a hundred phrases referring to the subject of emancipation. It interprets Nirvana as having the meaning of 'Stopping' that is, Buddhas attain Supreme Perfect Wisdom through the practice of 'Stopping'.

"In this Sutra, Maha-Nirvana is spoken of as the 'Permanent Tranquil Samadhi.' Here Samadhi means 'Stopping.' In 'The Lotus of the Wonderful Law Sutra,' though the Supreme Perfect Attainment is explained by deductions from the practice of realization, it is summarized in terms of 'Stopping.' It is stated that even the conception of ultimate Nirvana as 'Permanent Tranquil Samadhi' amounts to the same thing as 'the full' realization of emptiness.

"In the 'Nirvana Sutra', although Supreme Perfect Attainment is interpreted by deductions from 'Stopping' it is summarized in terms of realization, and therefore, takes the three ultimate qualities, Truth-Essence, Prajna-Potentiality, Blissful-Peace, as its Maha-Nirvana.

"Although these two Sutras treat the subject of Ultimate Nirvana differently they both follow the two ways of 'stopping and realization,' and they both explain Supreme Perfect Attainment in terms of 'Stopping and realizing' which is the same thing as saying that they unite in looking upon Supreme Perfect Attainment as the common goal of both Intuition and Intelligence, of both Love and Wisdom.

"We, the followers of Buddha, should humbly recognize and patiently accept the fact that the attainment of Bodhisattvaship, in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, are alike inconceivable. The newly translated Suvana-Prabhasa Sutra says that the Buddhas of the past are inconceivable potentialities; the Buddhas of the future will never be destroyed. This is true because all Buddhas arrive at the Supreme Perfect Wisdom by the two ways of 'Stopping and Realizing,' and these are not two divergent ways but are one Middle Way whose goal is Highest Perfect Enlightenment."

S: Let's just consider that, the rest is conclusion. We've been seeing that throughout this work the Grand Master is concerned mainly with what we call stopping and realizing, chih and kuan corresponding very roughly, sometimes very roughly indeed, to the traditional samatha and vipassana. And now he is enquiring, as he nears the conclusion, what there is corresponding to these two practices, i.e. stopping and realizing or samatha and vipassana, on the very highest level of all, as the Bodhisattva-Nahasattvas near the realization of full Enlightenment. The Dwight Goddard translation isn't all that clear but the passage can be understood with the help of the other translation too.

In the sutras we find only two ways in which Buddhas practise dhyana. Apparently, according to the other translation, it isn't Buddhas practising dhyana but the Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas, at a very high level of their development, when they're sort of practically verging on Buddhahood.

"In the 'Lotus of the Wonderful Law Sutra' we read these words: '(All of the highest Mahasattva-Bodhisattvas) sincerely and earnestly and perseveringly

praise the Wisdom of all the Buddhas.' " This is their practice of realization in dhyana. In other words, the praising of all the Buddhas is the most highly developed Bodhisattva-Mahasattva's practice of vipassana.

Vajradaka: Presumably they would really see the Buddha.

S: Right, yes, right. Incidentally perhaps it should be [566] mentioned that throughout the Mahayana Sutras when it speaks about the Bodhisattvas it repeatedly refers to them as praising all the Buddhas or praising the wisdom of all the Buddhas. So at the level of the highly advanced Bodhisattva, vipassana or insight takes this form of praising wisdom of all the Buddhas. This is their practice of realization in dhyana. And their practice of samatha is the high state of samadhi in which they abide. This isn't clear from the Dwight Goddard translation but it is clear from the other translation.

Ratnapani: The 'abide' in this, it's not something they have to do by now?

S: Right. It's become as it were a natural state. The alternative translation is: "The Lotus Sutra says, Persistent glorification of the wisdom of all the Buddhas is what kuan (vipasyana) means." [Luk, p.155] That is to say at this high Bodhisattva level. By nirvana is meant chih. Samadhi and nirvana are equated. The Bodhisattva's nirvana is his practice of samatha. His praising of the wisdom of all the Buddhas is his vipassana.

Vajradaka: What was his samatha again?

S: Nirvana.

Vajradaka: That doesn't make sense to me.

S: What's that? Well, it's that Nirvana is regarded from this point of view as the culmination of the whole samatha side of the practice. Nirvana is an aspect of full Enlightenment. It's samadhi become a permanent state of realization.

Vajradaka: Without the prajna?

S: No, the prajna is there in the form of the praising of the wisdom of all the Buddhas. I mean it couldn't become permanent without vipassana; without vipassana it can fluctuate and be lost. [567] So it's rather significant, you know, this definition or insight or wisdom even at the Bodhisattva level in these sort of terms, praising the wisdom of all the Buddhas. It's as though just before their final realization the Bodhisattvas are in contact with the Buddhas though they haven't yet become Buddhas themselves. They see the Buddhas, they see them as it were around them, throughout space, and their reaction is of tremendous joy and appreciation and praising, and this is their practice of vipassana, this is their sort of expression of their enjoyment of the presence of all the Buddhas, of their vision of all the Buddhas who are spontaneously bursting forth.

So again it suggests what was mentioned in connection with the lower level, as it were, that faith is the emotional equivalent of wisdom, not just its counterpart. So faith suggests, as I've said before, not just believing in but an attitude of

positive emotional response to a spiritual ideal, or the spiritual ideal. So this is just what the Bodhisattvas are doing at a very, very, high level indeed.

Voice: You said that nirvana is the culmination of samatha practice?

S: Yes, this is how it's regarded here, from this point of view. This is not of course the ordinary Hinayana point of view.

Voice: Well I was wondering if that applies - or is that taking it out of context - that implies that an arahant hasn't - sort of isn't...

S: Isn't?...

Voice: Wouldn't be in nirvana permanently because he doesn't have vipassana to back him up.

S: Well of course according to the Hinayana the arahant does have vipassana. This is a purely Mahayana way of looking at it. Actually, earlier on in the text, the distinction is made in this respect, between the arahant and the Bodhisattva, that the arahant has an excess of samatha and a deficiency of vipassana, and the Bodhisattva excess of vipassana and deficiency of samatha, but this is not using [568] the term arahant in its classical sense as we find it in the Pali Canon. It's giving it a quite different sort of meaning and using it almost symbolically.

You could say, I mean, the Mahayana does in fact say, that the arahant has realized nirvana. It's what they call the Hinayana nirvana, i.e. nirvana which is dissociated from compassion, and the higher Mahayanic nirvana as it were is that which is associated with compassion. So if you associate vipassana and compassion then you could say in that sense that the arahant has samatha and not vipassana. But you're getting quite away from the original sort of Theravada use of the terms; you're using the same sort of terms in a quite different sort of way.

Voice: I was wondering quite specifically if the Mahayana suggested that the arahant, in its usage of the word, was not really in nirvana at all.

S: Well yes, as I said, the Mahayana does distinguish between the Hinayana nirvana and the Mahayana nirvana, so in that sense they would say the arahant is not in the ultimate nirvana but in a state which falls short of that and is comparatively one-sided.

Nagabodhi: Does this explain why Mahayana sutras often begin with the Buddha illuminating for the benefit of everyone assembled all the Buddha-fields, as if he's raising everyone present onto the level of vipassana?

S: Yes, onto the level of a great Bodhisattva, who normally does see things in that way. One could say that.

Voice: You said just now that according to this text a Bodhisattva had an excess of vipassana...

S: Yes, that was earlier on.

Voice: I don't understand that ..[unclear]..

S: Well perhaps you should look at it the other way round. There are these two possibilities: developing samatha and [569] developing vipassana. So there's also the possibility that you develop either of them in excess over the other. So that gives you two possibilities, either you are a person with too much of samatha and too little vipassana, or vice versa. And the Grand Master quotes a sutra which identifies the first type of person, that is to say too much samatha [and] too little vipassana, with the arahant, and the person who has too much vipassana and not enough samatha with the Bodhisattva. But this is not the usual basis of the distinction between them at all, and he's presumably quoting it simply because of its bearing on this whole question of the balance of samatha and vipassana. So one could say that, yes, there certainly are these two kinds of persons, one kind of person developing samatha in excess and the other developing vipassana in excess, but despite what that sutra says, they're not usually identified with the arahant and the bodhisattva. I don't remember that identification being given anywhere else.

Ratnapani: Seems to be again this, well, so far in my experience, Chinese propensity to raise the lower levels almost at will ..[unclear].. the terminology.

S: Well, you can see quite clearly there are these two possibilities, but it seems a bit far fetched to identify them with the arahant and the Bodhisattva. It certainly doesn't seem to tie up with the rest of Buddhist thought very well, even though that statement is quoted as from a sutra. Alright, let's go no then and conclude.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.495] "In conclusion, I sincerely wish that all of you who are devoted to the practice of Dhyana. . . "

S: Just a minute. Originally we were told that this work was dedicated to or written for his brother, but here "all of you" is mentioned, and it's almost as though the Grand Master is addressing the monks and it did seem in fact like that a few times during the earlier part of the work. OK.

Lokamitra: [reads from p.495 to end of text] "will quickly get rid of the three poisons - lust, anger, and foolishness; and the five hindrances - covetousness, fear, ignorance, conceit, and doubt. As long as the mind is burdened with these poisons and hindrances, no matter how hard you may try, you will never be benefited. As it is said in the Prajna Sutra: 'All the Buddhas attain their emancipation by means of their own minds, which are kept pure and transparent and undefiled, which are always fresh and clean, without strain of colour, in all their six sense-fields. You, too, may attain the great Enlightenment.' " [570]

S: This seems quite straightforward doesn't it? He comes back to the beginning as it were and strikes a very sort of practical note that unless one actually works on oneself and gets rid of one's unskilful mental states, a purely mental consideration of the subject isn't going to do one any good.

Alright, we've got quite a bit of time left, if anyone wants we can revisit what

we've been doing. If there is any query, you know, arising from your notes maybe about anything I've gone through in the course of the ten days and about the sort of drift and purpose of the text as a whole.

Lokamitra: There was one point which you didn't follow up which you said you were going to talk about, talking about the asura world, and you said that you'd explain something later, I can't remember. Can you remember Sagaramati?

Sagaramati: Yes, you did explain it at coffee time.

S: Is it on tape?

Sagaramati: Yes.

S: What was it?

Sagaramati: Ummm... [laughter]

Vessantara: The ordering of the different worlds.

S: Ah yes, right. By the way, since then, just browsing through some of my books, I found a classification of four kinds of asuras, which I don't understand but I shall bear it in mind and try to find out more about it: asuras of the deva world, which are apparently those who fight with the devas, asuras of the human world which presumably means very angry and competitive people, asuras of the animal world, and asuras of the preta world. Apparently there are these four kinds of asuras, but, I mean, I can have a sort of guess about what that means, but I'd rather sort of look it up and [571] find out.

Sagaramati: In the Udana Sutra, I mean the arahants are equated with...

S: Ah, that's a rather different usage, a more general literary usage, as a great being, a sort of spiritual master.

Vessantara: What are the stages between ordinary everyday consciousness and the first absorption? You mentioned three such intermediate stages.

S: Ah, yes. This is what is - well, just a minute - not exactly - two really, the third being the absorption itself. They're called initial concentration and neighbourhood concentration. The initial concentration is when you start collecting your energies together and focus them on the subjects of concentration, and then the neighbourhood concentration is when the original gross object is replaced as it were by a subtle counterpart, and the energies in a more subtle form are flowing into or onto that, and then the third is what we call full concentration which provides the nucleus as it were for the development of the first absorption.

Vessantara: A nimitta with neighbourhood concentration?

S: That's right, yes, with some practices, yes, with corresponds to a sign, for instance the sight of the bones, the white shining skeleton, that is a nimitta and is prior to the absorption.

Vajradaka: What is the difference between a nimitta and a samapatti?

S: Samapatti is a very general term. It sometimes covers the dhyanas themselves. These are sometimes called samapatti, but in a still more general sense, as the term occurs in Mahayana sutras, it means spiritual attainments and insights and blessings and realizations in a very general sense. Sometimes hundreds and thousands and millions of these are mentioned.

Vajradaka: And nimitta? [572]

S: Nimitta means a sign, literally.

Buddhadasa: Are these signs that one could see?

S: Sometimes they are. For instance all the visual experiences. For instance if in meditation you see a light, a flower, a landscape, these are all nimittas. These correspond to this neighbourhood concentration. And if one allows them to die away and doesn't become fascinated by them one can enter upon the first dhyana, the first absorption.

Buddhadasa: The sort of things that are experienced in the early days of one's meditation ..[unclear].. begun?

S: Yes, that sort of thing, though for the neighbourhood concentration to be established, the nimitta must persist for a while, although ideally one should be able to control it.

Sagaramati: Would one concentrate on that nimitta?

S: Well it depends on the type of practice; there are some practices where you do.

Buddhadasa: In ..[unclear].. Murry's autobiography, he mentions ..[unclear].. [something about an Egyptian sign] Would that be a nimitta?

S: Not necessarily because there's also this question of coming from the subconscious mind, whereas nimitta suggests something from a level that is a bit above that of the conscious mind.

Buddhadasa: Ah, so not any old visionary material.

S: No, because that can be almost dreamlike.

Vajradaka: The initial concentration also rises at the same time as the nimitta?

S: No, you're mixing up the first and the second. The initial concentration is the sort of willed concentration on the subject of concentration when you're doing it [573] as it were somewhat effortfully, consciously and deliberately. As a result of that practice you get a nimitta or equivalent. I mean the question of nimitta in the strict sense only applies to some practices. But you get a nimitta or equivalent, and then the energies start going onto that nimitta, and when they go onto that nimitta or its equivalent then that is the neighbourhood concentration. In other words, a much more interesting object has arisen so it naturally draws the attention, and in this way you get more easily and spontaneously concentrated.

Abhaya: It's a sort of refined version of the gross object?

S: Right, yes. In the case of the mindfulness of breathing, if you get a very refined and gentle breathing, not at all like your ordinary breathing, this can be regarded as the nimitta.

Abhaya: So it doesn't have to be anything visual?

S: No, that's why I say a nimitta or equivalent. It varies quite a bit from one method or one practice to another. For instance, with the mantra recitation, the nimitta could be the very subtle inner recitation where the mantra becomes just a sort of rhythm, as it were, which goes on constantly.

Padmaraja: Is that the kind of reflection that goes on in the first dhyana? Say when you've achieved the four dhyanas and you go back down to the first?

S: No, that kind of reflection which gives rise to the vipassana is on one of the conceptual formulations as when you think all conditioned things are transitory.

Padmaraja: So that wouldn't come under neighbourhood concentration?

S: No.

Buddhadasa: Does one climb, so to speak, all eight dhyanas to form a ..[unclear].. before one has enough samatha to come back down to the first dhyana? [574]

S: There's no hard and fast rule, I mean, many teachers say don't bother about the arupa-dhyanas at all. They're not as it were higher levels, they're more like dimensions opening off from the fourth rupa-dhyana which can be explored or not as you wish. But certainly get as much experience of the rupa-dhyanas as you can before coming back as it were to the first dhyana and trying to develop one's vipassana.

Ratnapani: I would have thought that things like no-thing-ness and neither perception nor non perception had a strong feel of vipassana anyway.

S: In a way that is true, yes.

Sagaramati: Does that mean just a sort of more refined (?)obstruction?

S: This is what they really are, whereas you see with the ..[unclear].. of the infinite consciousness it's just a sort of spreading out of that fourth dhyana consciousness ss it were.

Abhaya: I suppose time is not really relevant here, in mean in terms of how long you spend in each dhyana doesn't have any relevance at all? Like if you were really concentrating could the mind traverse the four dhyana quite quickly or. . .

S: Why yes, yes.

Sagaramati:. Is there any correspondence between the sambhogakaya and the rupa-dhyanas and the arupa-dhyanas?

S: No. Some scholars do draw some parallels but from a traditional point of view, no, because the three kayas pertain to something unconditioned or transcendental, whereas the dhyanas are definitely mundane or conditioned.

Sagaramati: I always thought in visualization, say, of Bodhisattvas were, as it were, in the arupa-dhyanas or in the rupa-dhyanas.

S: Well one's experience may be within that, but the object itself is not. It's a bit like the non-returner in the heavenly world: the external form is as it were of the rupa dhyana, but the meaning and significance goes beyond that. [575]

Abhaya: Is it right to say that in dhyana there is the development of samatha and vipassana at higher and higher levels of concentration?

S: Yes, this is the sense in which the term dhyana seems to be used here.

Abhaya: And would you add also development of positive emotions as well?

S: Well, the development of positive emotions I would include under samatha, quite definitely. I mean the Bodhisattvas' praising of all the Buddhas and rejoicing in all the Buddhas is not positive emotion, it's vipassana, it's a form of wisdom.

Abhaya: Spontaneous expression of the wisdom.

S: Yes one could say that. You can say there are skilful states and there are transcendental states which are not strictly speaking skilful but which are apprehended as skilful states. I mean if someone, say, is very kind it might be simply a skilful mental state, his kindness that is to say, which may be lost also. Or it may be the kindness of a Buddha, which can't be lost. But to you, I mean, without spiritual insight on your part, it appears identical. Just supposing someone is generous; you may not be able to tell whether he's being generous with an interested motive or out of pure altruism or out of spiritual enlightenment or whatever. You just experience the generous action and you're not able to see, usually, much beyond that or more deeply into it. So it's the same with all these positive emotions: they be just skilful mental states or they may be transcendental states, but as far as we're concerned they look just alike. So the transcendental can appear, or be apprehended, as the skilful, never as the unskilful. Or you can say that when the transcendental wishes to express itself on the level of the mundane it is only in terms of, or in the form of, the skilful, not in the form of the unskilful. This is why it is said in the Diamond Sutra, [576] that the universal monarch has all the signs that a Buddha has, but he's only a universal monarch. So you cannot recognize the Buddha from those signs because even a universal monarch has them. So the fact that a person shows skilful mental states doesn't mean that they are enlightened. An unenlightened person can have then just as well. It's when there is the vipassana behind them that they become transcendental. So in very ordinary language it means that, so far as external appearance is concerned, the good and the spiritual look alike. You can't always tell the difference, but there is a difference.

Buddhadasa: Presumably a universal monarch anyway is a theoretical concept?

S: Well, from our point of view probably, yes. But what the Diamond Sutra is concerned with is to deny that the Buddha can be recognized from anything external or anything determinate, that because he has such and such characteristics, therefore he is a Buddha. Because he possesses the attributes of the cakravartivada, therefore he is a Buddha, no, the cakravartivada also possesses those. You can't tell a Buddha from his attributes or signs or marks, and this applies to all signs or marks. It means that you can have all the characteristics of a Buddha without being a Buddha. So a Buddha is not to be known by characteristics. In other words you can never infer the existence of a Buddha; you have to directly perceive it. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: Could you explain how neighbourhood concentration develops into full concentration and provides the basis for the first absorption?

S: Well, to give the more sort of standard example, first of all there is the gross object of concentration, which may be the breath, the ordinary breath, or it may be the sound of the mantra. So one fixes the attention on that, which usually means it's a little bit - not actually forcible but there has to be a definite effort which you have to keep up. Then after a while it becomes a little bit more easy. [577] And as it becomes more easy, the gross object changes into a comparatively subtle object. It's as though the attention changes the nature of the object itself. Just like when you concentrate on the breathing, the breathing itself becomes more and more subtle. So in this way, due to your attention, the gross object becomes more subtle, and then in as much as it is, after all, or has been from the beginning, your subject of concentration, the concentration continues to go on that, but in as much as it's more subtle, the concentration itself becomes more subtle, and the subtler energies go into that, or the energies go into it more completely and then as this builds up, as it were, you get into a state of complete absorption or complete concentration which gradually starts being felt as pleasant, as joyful, as blissful and so on. And as those sort of factors associated with it all start clustering around the initial deep concentration. Then the absorption develops. It becomes, say, the first absorption. In other words one could say that the increasing integration of one's energies is experienced quite naturally as something pleasurable. And in this way the factors of bliss and joy, which are the characteristic factors in the first absorption, along with the vitarka and vicara and the concentration itself, you know, come into existence.

So if concentration if still difficult and painful, however sort of well you're keeping it up, you're not in the first absorption.

Lokamitra: You're not even in neighbourhood concentration?

S: You're not even in neighbourhood concentration.

Voice: So the object of the concentration virtually disappears?

S: Yes.

Voice: Or becomes so subtle that ..[speech becomes too subtle to decipher]..

Buddhadasa: Have you done this in the Survey?

S: I don't remember. I think I have actually, at least [578] I think I've mentioned it.

Lokamitra: What's access concentration?

S: That's another translation for neighbourhood concentration: upacara-samadhi. There's parikamma-samadhi, upacara-samadhi, appana-samadhi. These are the three: preparatory, neighbourhood, and full.

Buddhadasa: So these three concentrations take place after the horizontal and vertical concentrations have been completed?

S: No, they're roughly synonymous. Just a minute, let me work it out because I haven't thought of it in this way before. The horizontal concentration refers to the first, and you could say, though it doesn't completely correspond or exactly correspond, that the second and third correspond to the vertical. I'll give that further thought. Yes. That is roughly the position, yes.

Abhaya: Could you say what you mean by vertical? I've never heard these before this week.

Ratnapani: Are these horizontal and vertical integration?

S: Yes, it's also in the lecture on what meditation really is. But roughly speaking by horizontal concentration I mean the collecting together of the energies of, as it were, the conscious mind on the conscious level by the conscious effort of concentration. So [it's] integration on the conscious level, you could say. But when concentration deepens and you start drawing upon first of all the energies of the subconscious and integrating them too, and later on even the energies of a state of consciousness above that of the ordinary mind, then this I call vertical. So the first is a process of horizontal integration of energies, the second a process of vertical integration of energies. But you could say therefore that the horizontal [579] integration corresponds to the preparatory concentration and the vertical concentration to the neighbourhood and full concentration, though the two classifications are made from slightly different points of view. So therefore it isn't a very exact correspondence, not quite point by point, but it's certainly a correspondence of a kind, or general correspondence you could say.

Vajradaka: Do you think there's any direct link between the forming of the stock practice, the one that Gurdjieff used to use [580] [Tape 23 side B] and the one that we've used occasionally at retreats and the stopping of the...

S: I don't know. I've no idea.

Ratnapani: I was thinking about just that this morning actually, and as far as I understand it Gurdjieff stopped practices - merely recollection of oneself and the practice of mindfulness at intervals but ..[unclear].. out to consistent

mindfulness. I presume they took it that far. I've never seen it go any further than sort of ordinary mindfulness.

S: We've had it once or twice on retreats. We've suddenly rung a bell and everyone's stopped, just catching themselves doing whatever they were doing. I mean, done in this way it is a mindfulness practice. Whether in Gurdjieff's practice of it there was anything more than that I'm not quite sure.

Vajradaka: I got the information from groups ..[unclear].. there was.

S: Mmm, hmm. I have been thinking that I probably ought to write up my lectures which I gave in New Zealand, including this one on what meditation really is, especially explaining in greater detail than I have actually done in the lecture, these very early stages, and sort of spell it out rather than just explain it. Especially this whole question of integration of energies, both what I call horizontal and vertical.

Buddhadasa: That's what really concerned with, isn't it? Those few...

S: Yes, I really think so, yes. If you do it in a sort of thorough way it keeps people busy for two or three years, quite happily, and then meditation, you know, in the stricter sense becomes more easy and natural afterwards. [581]

Ratnapani: My own experience usually - on the cushion in the shrine room - doesn't quite fit this because there's the initial effort of concentration and then usually quite quickly it's easy. Time goes quickly, I feel reasonably happy, I'm not actually into yogic sleep but it's certainly not one-pointed, there's certainly no such completion of horizontal integration, at least not quite, but a sort of a something between numbers one and two almost - and I seem to have been there for quite a long time.

S: It probably means that there has to be a much more conscious effort to get the concentration and the energies completely together.

Ratnapani: It really means going back to the beginning of number one and really coming in with a bang, as it were. I think the study we've done actually has given a full perspective, so now I feel I really know what I'm doing; before I really didn't.

S: Perhaps it's as though we haven't been quite thorough enough or demanding enough. It's perhaps like, you know, when you clean a room, you can be either absolutely scrupulous and get it absolutely clean, or clean enough. So very often concentration is concentrated enough, as it were, but I think now it's a question of having it absolutely concentrated. So: well, it'll do, I'm concentrated enough to be able to go on further. Well probably you are, but sooner or later you have to think of coming back and being completely concentrated, then going onto the next stage.

Ratnapani: I found here that making that extra effort is very uncomfortable, extremely painful in fact, can be physically and definitely emotionally painful, whereas just staying in my usual happy enough ... and the hour goes nice and

quickly. I feel great afterwards, but this extra effort must be awful afterwards. [582]

S: I think one has to be quite careful about surroundings when one is practising in this way: there isn't much that is grating or jarring in the surroundings, that they are reasonably peaceful and supportive as when one is out in the country; not too many cows mooing or too many birds chirruping under the eaves. [laughter] Not too many dogs barking outside in the street, not too many friends calling. Right, any other points? What about the general sort of feeling that people have now got from the text after going through it? Or feeling about the text even?

Nagabodhi: What interested me is that he never seems to have ... although he refers to practices - he talked about the mindfulness of breathing, he talked about the metta - in terms of experiences one would encounter, that was his rhetoric at the time, and throughout the whole book, in a way, he's hasn't actually said: and then you will do your practice or you will ... he's never directly said what one would be doing when sitting on the cushion.

S: Well, perhaps it was directed towards people who were normally sitting on their cushions etc. I mean we are told it was written for the benefit of his brother. We aren't told that his brother never practised meditation before. And it does seem as though some of it incorporates material meant for monks. It does seems to me that if ever this seminar is transcribed and edited, it will have to be edited in a different way from the other seminars with more of the supporting framework supplied, maybe with a little introduction to each chapter, and maybe an introduction giving a resume of the whole sort of method, the whole practice, filling in some gaps which the Grand Master himself has left. I think this could be done fairly easily.

Abhaya: Certainly for me, it's been a text which I think I would have missed a lot without, you know, comparing it with other texts. I can think of [583] other texts which I probably would have gained more from with an initial reading than I would from this. I don't know whether that's...

Ratnapani: I think that would have just put me in a complete muddle. I wouldn't have understood a word of it if it hadn't been done with you in this context because it sort of... In this particular context using this particular language ...um.. has lists but never gives you the whole list, so it needs somebody sort of with a better perspective to give you the full picture.

Lokamitra: I read it at Easter, and I mean I got tremendous amount from the seminar and understood. But just reading it in quite a superficial way I got a lot from it, a tremendous amount in fact, very inspiring.

S: I think I still do consider it the best general work in print on meditation. I don't think there's anything better, even though there are gaps here. I don't think there is anything better really, on the whole, not in English anyway.

Ratnapani: For the feel and the general picture?

S: I think the general feel is very good. It's very honest, very sincere. There's quite a bit of sort of common sense in various passages. You feel that the Grand Master was very much in earnest about it all, about the spiritual life, about Buddhism itself.

Lokamitra: No mucking about.

S: No mucking about. At the same time he is quite reasonable. He doesn't go to fantastic extremes or anything like that, as an Indian author very often does. He is pretty sober.

Abhaya: Yes, thank you very much.

Lokamitra: Yes, yes. [Other voices join in]

S: I'm glad it could go off so well.

Lokamitra: Have you got anything to say about our pujas before we go back?

S: Oh, I think they certainly have improved quite a bit, and the chanting, the Padmasambhava chanting. Anybody else got any comment on the puja and chanting?

Vessantara: I just found it very interesting going back to London on Sunday and taking puja.

S: Ah, yes.

Vessantara: ... which everyone else found very good, but it seemed very very crude after the ones here, seemed very harsh and very lush.

S: I think it really has to be watched then. What is it produces this? I found on both the retreats so far I really noticed at the beginning how harsh the pujas were, and the chanting, and what a lot of shouting there was and, you know, a quite sort of negative energy being pumped into the puja, as it were. I noticed this both times. I think the first seminar was quite a bit worse than this one, though this one was bad enough at the beginning. So what is it? Where does this all come from? What does it mean?

Buddhadasa: This is ..[unclear; something about one's own activity].. and is the way we can do it, but not the right way of course.

Abhaya: I think it's an indication that there's a lack of openness between people.

S: How do you see the two things as connected?

Abhaya: Well I think if there was a greater degree of openness, that is, if people felt generally much easier to talk even about their negative emotions or get them out with each other, then they wouldn't have to use the puja as a means. [584]

Buddhadasa: The difficulty there is that people don't realize they have them.

Abhaya: I don't know about that.

Padmapani: I think it goes deeper, I think its too base to be, you know, the aggregates, the skandhas, entering through the senses, it's to do with external conditions.

Abhaya: Well I don't mean in Archway.

Padmapani: Well I'm thinking in the context of the sangha. You don't agree?

Voice: Well, not everybody lives in Archway.

Padmapani: That's true, but they come to the centre.

S: Well I don't want to mention any names but some of the most serious offenders definitely did not live in Archway, and some of those who did live in Archway, I mean individually, didn't offend at all. I was listening to everybody individually.

Ratnapani: I believe there's feeling that one has to put oneself into the puja, so you put whatever you happen to have into it, and if that happens to be considerably negative then that comes into that too, rather than an attitude of just saying the puja, and being quiet and aware of how you sound and how you feel, sort of screwing oneself up and squeezing oneself into the puja.

Lokamitra: ..[unclear].. imagination.

Buddhadasa: Yes, people are looking for a vehicle into which to carry their negativity, and so it lays itself open to this abuse. So people see this as a vehicle for their negativity and off they go.

S: Yes, it really did sound like that.

Vajradaka: I think there's also another explanation and that is [585] that rather than having an intuitive natural way of doing the chanting, people think how they should be doing it, and the idea of how they should be doing it gets sort of translated into the actual doing it. But the idea is usually a wrong one.

Sagaramati: The ideas based on chanting in (?)pairs.

S: Well it's certainly not based on my chanting. [laughter]

Vajradaka: Well I'd like to take an example. When we chant the Padmasambhava in the three time, it's always very strong and very powerful, as opposed to when we do the chanting at the end of the mantra.

S: Well there's a tune there and there's a different rhythm. At the beginning it was just like that, but it seems to have degenerated in some unaccountable way since. It's not as though people don't know that original tune or had no experience of it. They heard it many a time when I was around in London. It was all right then.

Buddhadasa: Have you got any thoughts about this, Bhante?

S: Well, my sort of actual experience, leaving aside the explanation, was of negative energy going into the puja quite definitely, and that was the cause of the trouble. But why, I'm not quite clear. And being almost forcibly pumped in,

and in some cases almost a sort of black energy. That's the nearest I can get to describing it: negative energy.

Padmaraja: Could it be that people have no feeling for it? They're doing it against their own will?

S: Well, I won't say against their own will. I certainly didn't get that impression. But almost with the wrong sort of will. But yes, certainly, I think I could say there didn't seem to be very much feeling for it. Sometimes perhaps, well, apparently none at all, not any actual feeling there and then. Maybe in the case of, you know, the people concerned an overall feel for Buddhism, the Dharma, yes. [586] But not a particular more specific feeling for the puja and what it represented there and then. I think feeling was conspicuous for its absence. Well perhaps you could put it this way. I hope I'm not being sort of too neat. Feeling was being replaced by energy.

Lokamitra: Yes, and equating energy and feeling, and that if you can't put the feeling in you can at least put the energy in.

S: Yes, something like that. That's what I mean by negative energy. It seems a strange sort of expression, but it means energy without any sort of positive feeling in it.

Vessantara: I can only speak about Archway because that's where I've been, Archway being a very busy place where there's a lot that needs doing all the time. So it's often quite hard to do things as one feels one wants to do them. One has to do what needs to be done. Very often one's having to will oneself to do something because one's actual feeling is that one would rather maybe be doing something else, very often.

S: Maybe you ought to think of doing what Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri do in Helsinki. Vajrabodhi does practically everything else and is very much more busy than Bodhishri, but she always leads the puja because she is the one who has more time and is less rushed and is not just as busy as Vajrabodhi, you know, she just can't function in that way. So perhaps one should think in terms, especially at such a busy centre as Archway, of having just two or three people, who are not so busy, leading pujas more than other people who are habitually very very busy. Unless of course some of those other very busy people are able also to get into it properly.

Lokamitra: We have be careful there because I think the case with Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri is that Vajrabodhi it seems to me probably doesn't have so much feeling.

Voice: ..[unidentifiable exclamation]..

S: No, I think in his case it isn't so. [587]

Ratnapani: I think he has a difficulty and that's why. . .

Buddhadasa: Vajrabodhi definitely has a difficulty in chanting.

Lokamitra: Sorry, not feeling, that was the wrong word.

Buddhadasa: It was, wasn't it.

S: But he actually did lead the chanting one evening when Bodhishri wasn't well. He didn't think he would be able to do it but he did and it went off all right. He can certainly lead the ordinary puja well. It's the Padmasambhava chanting at the end that gets him, but he did manage that, on that particular occasion.

Padmaraja: It's the same at Aryatara too.

S: Well, we'll be getting that little lot along this evening, and it will be very interesting to see what happens with a completely different set of people, again with hardly anybody from Archway. Well, perhaps no one except Dhammadinna and ..[unclear].. But there again they're women and they've got women's voices and they're usually more pleasing than the men, not harsh. I think probably it if something to be borne very much in mind, the feeling quality of the puja.

Lokamitra: So we should be careful about who takes...

S: Not only that but everybody, when there joining in chanting, the responses should be very mindful. Especially on the first retreat, for the first one or two days there was definite shouting. It can only be described as that. Almost bawling.

Nagabodhi: I think the idiom at Archway has been very much in terms of energy at the expense of other aspects.

S: But then some of the worst offenders weren't from Archway.

Nagabodhi: Again, I'm just thinking in terms of my own experience.

S: And some people sort of quite prominent in the Archway [588] area not offending in this particular way. That's why I'm quite interested to hear the people on the next retreat.

Nagabodhi: I can definitely think how I've fallen into a kind of attitude: energy at any price.

S: Or vigour at any price.

Nagabodhi: And although I can certainly see how I've fallen into that trap of wherever it is, even if it's out of the dirtiest pit, I'll dig it out of there ..[unclear]..

S: Yes, that's the impression almost I got at the beginning of the first seminar. I quoted these words of Confucius, you know, Confucius is supposed to have said that he could recognize the moral quality of a state by listening to its music and, you know, perhaps you can judge something of what's going on at the centre just by listening to its puja and its chanting.

Ratnapani: In my own experience I find that very often in chanting, in particular the mantras, my throat tightens up and I can do no more than croak. More often than not, I've simply stopped making a noise at all this week, often because I

can't reach a low note and often can't find another one, but there seems to be a definite inhibition. I don't know whether it's physical...

S: It's psychological, yes, and that means a nasty noise is made whatever you do.

Buddhadasa: Well there's quite a bit of that. Well I couldn't chant the closing mantra right the way through this week.

Lokamitra: I found that too. I couldn't chant. I mean I did but I could very limply.

Ratnapani: Just a whisper.

S: Your throat dries up?

Lokamitra: Well, it wasn't - I couldn't... [589] I don;t know.

S: Loosening up.

Lokamitra: I thought it was objectively because it was too low for me.

Buddhadasa: I think that's what it is. I've mentioned this to Bhante before.

Lokamitra: I don't think it was anything in me.

S: Can't you harmonize? We used to have people harmonizing when we had the pujas at Centre House. It was always beautifully done, quite naturally.

Ratnapani: I think you were doing something here, weren't you, Abhaya?

Abhaya: Yes, I just had to take the upper range, but the upper register was a bit of a strain, but I managed one night. I think it was Dave, or somehow his resonance got me right here, and I picked up something between the two which wasn't a high register and wasn't a low register and it was completely comfortable. But then I found last night when I tried to recapture it, it just wouldn't come back. It was either too low or very high.

Buddhadasa: I think it was a very low register. To try to achieve that within me, I found myself caught up in negativity and I had to stop. [Confused discussion, with various people speaking at the same time]

Padmapani: [Comment about the Padmasambhava chant]

S: [About having to stop it on the first retreat; about females and chanting]

Nagabodhi: [about getting a tuning fork]

S: Anyway, I think perhaps we'd better end there. It is a quarter past one.

[end of seminar]