

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR
THE FIRST CONVENTION OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER 1974

Held at: Aryatara

Those Present: (only those who speak, in order of 'appearance', have been noted here as no list of names was available)

The Venerable Sangharakshita, Chanda, Mangala, Kamalasila, Chintamani, Ananda, Vajrabodhi, Devaraja, Vangisa, Mamaki, Nagabodhi, Vajradaka, Dharmapala, Hridaya, Ratnapani, Marichi, Manjuvajra, Devamitra, Subhuti, Padmaraja, Suvratta, Asvajit.

NB: Many contributions, by women speakers especially, are not picked up clearly by the microphone and are indicated by ... or (?)

When the terms '(Chat)' or '(Talk)' are used in what follows it means that anything said was only small talk between a few participants and not of any general interest - anyone wishing to listen to this parts should refer to the tapes. Apart from this what follows is completely unedited.

[2]

Session 1

Sangharakshita: All right, this is our first Convention of the Order, and I expect you have all seen the Summary or Programme which appeared in the Order news-sheet. Anybody not seen that? All right, I'll just give you an idea of what was in it.

In the course of this Convention, we are going to have four plenary sessions, which means simply all of us sitting together and discussing certain things, and there are four topics for discussion, one for each session. This morning, in this session, we are going to talk about 'The Spiritual Development of the Individual Order Member'. In the afternoon we are going to talk about 'Communication within the Order', i.e. among or between Order members. Tomorrow morning we are going to be talking about 'The Order and the World', and in the afternoon 'The Functioning of the Order' - a few practical matters.

But this morning it is 'The spiritual development of the individual Order member', and this as it were serves to remind us that this is in fact what the whole Movement, the Order, the FWBO, is all about. It is basically concerned with the development of the individual: that comes first. That is the foundation of everything. So it is to this that we are going to devote our attention this morning, by way of reminding ourselves what it really is that we are concerned with, what comes first, what is the absolute bedrock upon which everything else has to be built.

Now how I want to approach it is this. I want first of all to raise the question of how people feel they have been getting on: whether people do feel that they have been making some progress since their Ordinations; whether they feel at least that changes have taken place; whether anybody has got anything that

they particularly want to say on this particular point, on this particular topic; whether there is any particular difficulty in their evolution, in their development, that they have encountered; whether there is any particular experience that they would like to share; whether there is anything they are not sure about; whether it constitutes progress or doesn't constitute progress; whether there is anything they have noticed in connection with this particular matter in the Order as a whole, or even individuals within the Order; and also whether there is anything that could be done on an Order basis to help individual members continue with their own spiritual development, and in this connection I myself will have a few words to say about the study retreats, for instance, that we have already started having.

So this is the sort of area within which the discussion or comments will fall this morning. So if anybody feels that they would like to say anything or ask anything around this topic of the spiritual development of the individual, then now is their opportunity. Even if anyone feels they haven't been developing and are wondering why, others might be able to tell them; who knows?

Chanda: Bhante, is it right to say that a man can be an individualist? Being quite honest with you, I don't meditate, and yet I feel tremendous growth, because I know that I am a man of action, I always

have had to act; that's the reason why. But I've tried and I find it very difficult to meditate. It seems to be a kind of tremendous block that I cannot seem to shift. But I can act, and get great zeal from doing it, but to sit down and meditate is - well it's a purgatory at the moment! I just cannot beat it. That's why I say, can anybody be a Buddha and divorce himself from the technique of training and also get there?

[3]

S: Ah. There are several points here. You asked about meditation; you also asked about the technique. What is important is the state of mind - whether you get into that state of mind through actual formal sitting or whether you get into it in some other way. One doesn't want to say that every individual has to follow the same pattern. I won't even go so far as to say that meditation is equally important in everybody's spiritual life. It isn't. It does seem that some people do manage to develop the right positive spiritual states of mind without devoting all that amount of time to formal meditation. They seem to get it, well they do get it, in other ways. At the same time, though, you have referred to a blockage. Now whether you meant that to be taken literally or not I don't know, but if there is a real blockage and you can't meditate - or anyone can't meditate - because of a blockage, obviously the blockage is to be tackled, whether one after that meditates or not.

Chanda: Well, furthermore I have felt in the last six months tremendous growth.

S: Hm, right.

Chanda: I have a technique: when I go to my bed of a night-time, I am already more or less in a state of semi-meditation for about two or three hours. But I wouldn't term that meditation. But to sit in a group and meditate, I'm all fidgety ...

S: The main thing is the state of mind you get into, and if you are sure within yourself that you are experiencing growth, well, fine. There's no problem. Therefore don't let anybody talk to you and say that you aren't actually sitting, therefore you can't be developing. That wouldn't be so at all. And I think it's pretty obvious that some growth has been going on, with or without the meditation. But we have really to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. The sitting is not essential; the meditation is. You may be the sort of person who can get into the right state of mind more through action than through non-action, so, if you can, that is the way for you.

Chanda: Thank you, Bhante.

S: I don't know whether anyone else has got any sort of feelings on this? A lot of people we know do definitely progress, perhaps even more through meditation than anything else, but at the same time we do have to be open to the possibility that for some people, at least, that isn't necessarily the way.

But anybody else got anything, any comment at all, like Chanda's?

___: I would like to say something about what Chanda said, that he said when he was alone in his room he was in a meditative state, and other people think to meditate you have to do it in a group and you have to ... to do it in a group. Some people seem to meditate better alone, when they are not confined to a particular time and are not worried about disturbing other people. If you ask them ...

Mangala: I think there might be a lot of - I know in my own case I was a compulsive sitter, like you feel guilty if you don't. That is something I'm just beginning to come to terms with, I think; I see sitting as something which I feel I want to do sort of deep down which I need, rather than something which I compulsively do because I feel I should, you know?

S: Of course, there is the danger of the other extreme. We all know about that; maybe I need not insist on it. It means one [4] just has to be very honest with oneself and really clear-sighted with regard to oneself. I knew a French nun once who insisted she could meditate much better when she was walking briskly along the road. I was a bit doubtful about that in her case, but I am sure in some cases that is a possibility.

___: You find when you talk to people about meditation that they say, 'Oh, I meditate anyway on the bus or when I'm doing my household chores.' It's very difficult to find anywhere to go from that, people say that. What sort of answer would you give?

S: Well, you can only observe them over a period and see whether there is in fact any overall growth. If

there isn't, if they still seem to be just as distracted and just as restless and just as unhappy as before, you can point that out and say, 'It seems to me you can't really be meditating.' Say, 'I don't deny that you may be able to do it in that sort of way, but are you actually doing it in that sort of way? To me it doesn't seem so.'

Kamalasila: What would be your yardstick for measuring growth?

S: You mean as regards meditation, or in general?

Kamalasila: In general. Both for yourself and in other people.

S: Well, first of all there would be increased awareness. You more quickly recover yourself after you have become unaware. In the earlier days you might remain unaware for weeks or months on end, but with some practice you come to yourself much more quickly, maybe after just an hour or two, or even half an hour, you realize, 'Oh, I was rather unmindful and I wasn't very aware.' But as you really do grow and develop, the awareness becomes constant. You never lose it. And when you never lose it, then growth is continuous, even though it may be fairly slow still, but there never is a time when you are not growing if you keep up that awareness and mindfulness. And, of course, if it isn't alienated; it must be a real integral -integrated - awareness. I would say that is the main sign or indication of growth. And a feeling of openness and expansion, increased sensitivity, concern for others, and energy. It may not necessarily be outward-going energy, but you will certainly feel really alive and really well, even if you are physically ill. These are all signs of growth.

And there are other various external things which also are there: for instance, you are not so much attached to material things as before, don't get so upset because of what people say about you, etc. etc. These are also secondary signs of growth.

Also, perhaps - to be a little paradoxical - if you are really growing, you are not over-concerned to keep stopping and measuring yourself. This is a bit like what The Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines says about the irreversible Bodhisattva: one of the signs of irreversibility is that you don't bother whether you are irreversible or not. So a person who is really growing doesn't fret about whether he is growing; just like a really healthy person isn't always fretting about his health. He doesn't need to; he feels healthy. So the person who is spiritually growing feels alive and feels more and more alive spiritually, and that is the growth. He doesn't have to stop and examine himself and analyse it: 'Have I improved in this particular area or not improved in that?' and so on. He feels intuitively within himself that he is growing, that he is becoming more and more spiritually alive as the days and the weeks go by. He can see different things breaking up; he can see little complexes resolving themselves, quite naturally.

[5]

Chintamani: Could you say something about growth specifically in the context of meditation?

S: It's very difficult to generalize there. People's experience seems to be very, very different. It isn't a question of spending more and more time on it. I think we have to be very careful about that. To meditate for an hour is good; to meditate for two hours is good; to meditate for three hours is good. But to meditate for two hours is not necessarily twice as good as meditating for one hour. Therefore, one mustn't think of one's progress in meditation or spiritual life as necessarily coming about in that sort of way. It's not necessarily a question of being able to spend more and more and more and more time on meditation, or anything else of that sort. So it's very much a question of the quality of the meditation, though also -provided the quality can be maintained or even enhanced - yes, length does also play its part. But essentially success in meditation or growth in meditation is a question of being able to be in contact with and remain in contact with higher states of consciousness more and more, which also involves for longer and longer periods of time - though that may or may not be correlated with longer and longer periods of sitting - and to be able to do everything in or with that sort of state of consciousness, whether it's accompanied with a mantra or a visualization or not. And also one finds more and more energy again being liberated.

Ananda: Could you possibly speak about work, Bhante, in the sense of outside jobs? I personally seem to find it sometimes quite harmful and find myself getting into a very mechanical state of mind, a very repetitive state of mind. Consciousness seems to start operating on a very mechanical level.

S: Well, first of all, something about work in a general sense. Maybe also we ought to be a bit more

careful about our terminology. I believe that people who write on these things distinguish between work and labour and employment. Anybody familiar with this?

Ananda: I mean employment.

S: 'Work' is anything - any activity, you could say - which requires energy. The expenditure of energy is work. But 'labour' seems to be applied to physical work, and 'employment' is work, whether mental or physical, for remuneration. I think this is what is usually said. So I think maybe we ought to restore 'work' more to its original meaning. I sometimes get the feeling that, in the Friends, 'work' is a really dirty sort of word, not used by nice people!

But, just looking at work in a more general sense to begin with, work is an integral part of the spiritual life, because it's an integral part of ordinary life. You can't not work; you can't not be doing something or expending energy in some way or other. So the question arises of your overall spiritual attitude towards that. Obviously Ananda is asking about it in a much more specific way, that is gainful labour, employment: how does that tie up with your own individual spiritual development? Well, it does seem - and no doubt other people have their experiences to contribute here - that most people find that ordinary employment - especially when they are having to engage in different fields of operation which they don't feel particularly happy about, say, ethically - find that this really does get in the way of their spiritual life. I think it is something that isn't going to be very easily solved, because though you may get a relatively pleasant or easy job, I think it's very difficult not to get some kind of job which isn't to some extent tainted by all sorts of things in society with which one doesn't agree. So I don't think there is any sort of easy and simple way of dealing with this. If [6] you can get a more vocational sort of job, that's fine, but I think the chances are you probably won't. Or maybe even, as an Order, we ought to consider whether it might not be possible to create particular kinds of work and job, even perhaps on a community basis, which would enable the individual to work in a way more in keeping with his spiritual life and spiritual ideals.

But anyway, what is people's experience about this? Maybe there ought to be a bit more pooling of different experiences before we come to any conclusion.

Vajrabodhi: Yes, I have come across this question, because several people in our group have problems, which ...

S: You mean the Helsinki group?

Vajrabodhi: The Helsinki group, they have problems with unpleasant work, unacceptable in many ways. And it leads ...

S: Can you first clarify 'unpleasant'?

Vajrabodhi: Unpleasant in that way that they feel alienated because of that work. And it seems to be that when a certain level - well, at first a person may have ordinary work, and he is spiritually happy, but when he starts progressing or becomes a bit more aware, he finds the situation gradually getting more and more unpleasant, with increasing alienation. And of all types of alienation I have come across this is the most difficult and most penetrating, and it leads finally, in the very worst cases, to rather persistent headache and complete hell in the mind; people don't want to go to their work, and they know they have to live somehow. They try to find some other job, but most other jobs really, in the society, are unacceptable, especially at a certain level of ...ation. So this is a very difficult problem, and it is with them all their life, because after all it's about eight hours a day. And many people get so fed up during those eight hours that they feel the stress all evening. And they need one full free day before they are beginning to melt, to feel a bit normal state of mind, and that means that Saturday is free, so they live only on Sunday. So they have one day a week to live, and this is quite sad, in a way. And this is the worst case of alienation one can have: most of the life is in a way cut off. Eventually those people will, of course, find a solution to that problem, but in the beginning states it is a very existing problem.

S: So it would seem, then, that there is a very basic economic problem: that people obviously have to support themselves in some way or other, and that means gainful employment, and then of course all these difficulties do arise. You are speaking about full-time, especially?

Vajrabodhi: Yes, and especially those people who feel the stress are usually in a bit like a supervising

position with lots of responsibility and they are usually accused from all directions, above and below, so they are under very heavy fire, and that increases the stress.

S: Well, what I'd like to ask is this: whether people have found that there are any categories or types of work from which one is less likely to be alienated than others. Let's narrow it down a little bit.

Devaraja: I think teaching at school is a very good example of what can be done.

S: How many teachers have we? Hm.

___: Three or four.

[7]

___: I've found with - again, I would be teaching if the children were a year older ...

S: You're playing now?

___: Yes, I'm playing! -that although the job is vocational, socially constructive, part-time, lots of holidays, and not alienating, still the energy - it seems a shame to black all work, but the energy type - particularly with young children; I imagine it would be better when they are a bit older - but the scattered, diverse, flying energy has an effect, and I find myself becoming scattered, unaware, spaced-out.

S: It's interesting you say that, because a few evenings ago I went along to the Old Rectory at Tittleshall, just to conduct the Full Moon Day Puja, which I said I would do for Mary, rather. So before it started - it started a bit late - I was just sitting in the library, and there were what seemed to be these hordes of small children flying about, and this was quite definitely what I saw -that there was - I could almost see it like electricity in the air. It was very scattered energy, and I was just observing it - and after all, I was only there for an hour or so - but I can well imagine that if one was working all the time like this...

Vangisa: (interrupting) I think this is a very crucial point, what you have described as scattered energy. I think this is probably what is involved in the problem that people have at work. Certainly, it is a thing you notice very much if, as in my case, you are also involved in family life. You are surrounded by people all day whose energy is just ... it seems to me you say you experience it as ... I frequently get the feeling there are explosions going on all the time, not only around but inside as well! And I just have to... the idea of getting a hold on it and preserving one's own mindfulness is an absolute necessity. You seem to just literally disintegrate otherwise. And I think this is basically what causes this tension and strain.

There is another point, though, that I have seen myself in the case of many people, a desire for what they consider the necessity of gaining such a good livelihood as they do, is very strongly tinged with an aspect of greed. Most people wouldn't have this problem at all if they just were satisfied to get what they needed in the way of material requirements, which is really very little. And in fact, probably this could be achieved, in our kind of society, by doing a certain amount of work for nothing, instead of aiming at earning as good a living as you can, try to do something, perhaps material, whatever it may be, that is in itself useful ... and may possibly just get enough food and shelter and so on to survive on.

I find, myself, in my particular situation, having a family who have to be fed, a complication that in the case of most other people whom I hear talking about the difficulties involved in earning a living, doesn't exist, in other words they don't have to. Perhaps the fact that I have to to such a great extent as I do, because I haven't yet succeeded in getting the situation as completely as it should be from an ideal point of view. At least it is an added complication, and it seems to me that I'm in the happy position of Vajrabodhi here, of not really having to earn such a wonderful living, but I would be crazy to even want to try. I honestly can't see much reason for this, when there's only one person to ...

S: So what you are in effect saying is that for perhaps the average Order member who is seriously concerned with his or her spiritual development, all that you really need is a part-time job, and to keep down your requirements. I think this has been general thinking for some time past.

[8]

___: And practise, too.

S: And practise, too, yes.

Vangisa: I think I was speaking probably a little bit more generally. I know ... part-time job, I was really expressing the view that it seems to me crazy for anybody to waste time earning a living ...

Ananda: This brings up the whole question of one's attitude to work, doesn't it? It almost begs the question ...

Vajrabodhi: of why we work, yes. Because there are two sorts of jobs. You have this, I would call it employment, and it is just for money. And there is vocational work, and you can't mix them because they are by nature very different things. If you do what you want to do and you get paid for that, it's all solved: there are no problems whatsoever. There may be tiny difficulties, but they are tiny, small difficulties, and no problems. But if there is employment and you can't get better, and you don't like what you do and you have to do it, and for example you haven't yet found part-time work, then the big difficulties. And eventually, for such people who have no knowledge of any vocational work or they have no schooling ..., so for them the only solution I can see is part-time, part-week, part-month, part-year work, if you can find one. It's the only way round it.

S: If we put it rather strongly, we could say there are really ... only two alternatives or two possibilities: either you are in full spiritual agreement with the fundamental basis of the society in which you live and work, and can therefore participate in it, which includes working with it and for it wholeheartedly, or not. I suppose most people would agree that it is the second possibility in all our cases, whether it's England or Finland, or probably anywhere else that any Order members happen to be living. So when you are living and having to work in a society with the basis of which you don't really agree, or the way of operation of which you are not happy about, then there are only two alternatives. One can describe those as (1) parasitism, and (2) smash and grab. [Laughter] Parasitism is the traditional Buddhist method. I am using the word in a quite neutral, descriptive sense; there is nothing wrong with being a parasite, a parasite is a healthy organism, it just happens to live off another healthy organism. In the East monks, of course, economically speaking, are parasites and are proud to be that; it is their duty to be parasites, in other words to be non-productive materially speaking, and they live their spiritual life and everybody is quite happy that they should be parasites. But under the system here, a degree of parasitism is possible, as some of you have found [Laughter], but you don't get those 'sadhus' resounding in the way that they do in the East with regard to Buddhist parasites.

So here it's only a question of smash and grab: in other words, you just have to, well, hit and run, if you like, or tip and run, whatever you call it. It's just a question of you just have to get what you can from the society for your needs without sharing its basic objectives and ideals, or even being in disagreement and conflict with them. You don't want to hurt any other individuals, but you get just as much as you can from the society for your own limited personal requirements in the simplest way possible, and that seems to suggest a part-time job which isn't too demanding and with which you are not too much in moral conflict. That would seem to be all that is possible under the present set-up.

Mamaki: I don't find that about my particular job. I find that quite a lot of it does really help my development. It helps me to be more aware of myself.

[9]

S: Could you say a bit more about your job, because lots of Order members may not even know what you do?

Mamaki: Yes, I'm a psychiatric social worker in a child guidance clinic, and this is where families have come, there is some problem, and it's usually centred on the child and the child is referred to the clinic, and it's our job really to help those people to feel happier about their relationships and about themselves. And some of the people I've had to deal with, their problems have been spiritual problems, so that I see quite a lot of the work I do as very similar to the sort of things that in fact go on in the FWBO. I don't think it's trying to make people fit into society, but to help them to be more aware, and to be more aware of their own spiritual possibilities as well.

S: In your case, then, obviously you've got a vocation, not just a job.

Mamaki: Yes, but this was something that I took training for, and I wondered whether this is not possible for people, if they ...

S: When did you take the training, by the way?

Mamaki: About five years ago ... I started.

S: So it is therefore the sort of training that is open to an adult? And did you have to have any sort of qualifications before that?

Mamaki: No.

S: Not at all?

Mamaki: Except that they are selective in people that apply to the colleges. They expect a certain level of intellectual ability to cope with the academic side of the course. But that's not the only kind of course there is. There are many different courses geared at different levels and different interests or abilities.

S: You are full-time, of course?

Mamaki: I'm full-time, yes.

___: More than full-time!

Mamaki: Well, we're very busy. But it seems to me that if people were looking for vocational work rather than being anti-work in general, they might find that there were more possibilities than they thought.

Ratnapani: I think it really does come down to time: that to have such a vocational job part-time would be very nice, because one could get on with the rest, being an Order member and meditating and going on retreats, but these things tend to be full-time and more than full-time, and there's just not enough of you to go round if you're that useful a person.

Mamaki: They do have part-time social workers.

Vajrabodhi: But this means that there are possibilities for re-education, and I think all the possibilities have not yet been surveyed. There may be more possibilities than we know of.

Chintamani: I think there's quite ... an important point here, getting back to what Vajrabodhi was saying about the tension produced in people. As far as I am concerned, it's not the situation itself that produces the tension but the amount of resistance you give to it.

[10]

Devaraja: That's a very good point.

S: Yes. Though, of course, sometimes you have to make up your mind whether it is a situation where you ought to give in or where you ought better to resist.

Chintamani: Well, presumably, then, if the resistance is such that it's just producing unbearable tension, it's whether you put yourself in a situation where you (unclear) ... quite so much or not at all

S: Quite, yes.

Devaraja: But the point you were making about energy flying about, and Vangisa was making, and resistance to these things, seems to tie together for me. I found I was losing a lot of energy in my first term with a kind of a resistance resulting from an attitude about how I had thought a teacher should be, and the behaviour of a teacher, and the rights and wrongs. And when I started not worrying about that so much and so just throwing myself into it, just sort of flowing along with the situation much more, I found that I developed a far better balance in the situation, even though it was very stormy often around me. It often involved. I had a real block against clipping kids, which I managed to get over [Laughter]. But that's because that was just my idea, just an adult idea about not clipping kids, and the kids didn't mind because... it was only me who did.

S: Well, maybe they expected it.

Nagabodhi: I think it's worth while trying to break through any illusions of to what extent the work is responsible for your alienation. I found certainly that I think I went through two years of very extreme alienation which I said 'Oh, it's my job I'm going to have to give it up', but I carried on to-ing and fro-ing. In the last six months I've been working harder, probably, than I've had to ever since working; and there was no possibility of going home and saying, 'Oh, great, now I can sit and do my other things, and now I'm me; I'm someone else at work.' I was literally working right through the night sometimes. So through this I discovered that it's not so much a matter of giving in to the job, but discovering that you can be yourself in the job in any situation. And so not only are you getting... I feel I've grown more in the last three months than I have possibly in the last two years, but also I feel, like Steve very much, I mean the fact that I'm here is due to Padmaraja, I feel that I too can act as some kind of beacon for people, people who see people acting authentically within a situation where they see alienation as the only possibility. This is a very valuable thing.

Marichi: Yes, I find that one of the most important. This balance between stopping the separation between work and not-work, employment and work.

Lokamitra: It's quite easy, though, when you are talking in terms of vocations, because I think with the more run-of-the-mill jobs which a lot of people have to do when they haven't got training, it's very different.

___: There are ways of getting training; Mamaki suggested one. One could look into that, really.

Devaraja: Yes, I think one's got to distinguish between not being able to get the right job and basically not wanting to work.

S: Ah. I was taking it that Order members didn't come within that category. But this is the thing of being workshy, just being lazy. But I'm hoping that doesn't apply to many Buddhists - [11] disinclination to work when you're here.

Vajradaka: I see employment and work in a number of different ways. First of all, as a career, something which becomes an expression of one's attempts at being a Bodhisattva, so obviously working with children and even maybe being an example in a job, you'd maybe see that as part of your Bodhisattva training; or there is the way of doing the Bodhisattva training - studying, meditation - with just a little bit of employment work, enough to keep one alive. And I feel now, more than I had before, that there are two ways that one can go about this, and that is that one can go out and one can do some very ordinary little job, out with ordinary people: cleaning or working in a shop or whatever, something like that. Or one can do something in the context of the Sangha, of the spiritual community: set up a little business maybe, doing something or another which comes out of the creativity of one's mind, and set up in such a way that enough people are doing it and it runs, is organized, well enough so that people can only do two or three hours a day if they want to, and make enough money from that to live, and the thing goes on. It doesn't need someone spending eight hours a day organizing it. Perhaps one person could just spend three hours a day organizing it, and the other people could be making things or doing whatever it is, but there would at least be the situation where people in the Sangha would be relating to each other; which I feel is a very useful way to arrange work.

Dharmapala: Has this effectively been demonstrated in a form of enterprise?

Vajradaka: Well, not yet, but this is what I hope to be doing in the next weeks -try to ...

S: I think Hridaya's got some experience of this, haven't you?

Hridaya: Yes, I've been fortunate for the last four years to be able to support myself in things that I've been doing, mostly in craft work; I haven't needed to take any outside employment. I did that in London for three years, and last year I've been living in Wales, and I found it even easier in Wales because I'm naturally drawn to gardening and keeping bees, and the living is much cheaper, so I'm able to support myself completely doing that.

S: So would you say that for you there is no 'problem', inverted commas, of livelihood? In other words, you don't find that the question of livelihood gets in the way of your spiritual life?

Hridaya: It does, but it needn't. The problem is that it can take over for 24 hours of the day. One's thoughts can be tied up. The idea of Vajradaka saying you could run the business three hours of each day, just running it, that sounds fine in theory but I certainly found that takes a lot of working out. This is one of the reasons for moving from London, because I was working with a group here, and I found that I was managing the group and I was working for seven days of the week and all the time as well. And my friends were completely in that group, so I was tied to it all the time. I found being on my own and away from it was quite difficult. So that is one of the problems.

Again, in Wales it's not quite like that. I'm much more on my own, and I see no reason why a group like that, in the country, anyway, shouldn't be able to work in the same way, with a bit more land and some kind of craft work - some candle-making, a bit of pottery, all kinds of things, and also gardening - supporting yourself in food. It could well work, if people felt they wanted to live in the country.

S: It seems, then, summarizing the discussion so far, that there [12] are three possibilities, or rather three ways at least of solving this question of livelihood in the case of someone who wants to get on with his or her spiritual development. The first is just a part-time job which gives you enough money to live on, a job which is moderately bearable; that's one solution. The other solution is to find a job with which you can really identify, in other words which is vocational. And the third is what you've just outlined: the productive, creative type of solution.

So what I feel is, it's not enough that we just discuss it. These are very practical matters, and it would be good if some Order members or certain Order members could do a little bit of research, even, and report back and let everybody else know, because this is a question which concerns everybody.

Ananda: Do you mean, Bhante, research into finding out exactly what sort of employment is possible?

S: Yes, right. Especially, perhaps, on the vocational side and as regards what particular sorts of crafts could be started up and under what conditions, where, how and so on.

___: Finding out who could do what, especially; who is especially skilled in what, trained, within the Order.

S: Right, yes. Maybe we ought to ...

[end of side 1 side 2]

... ask three different people to report, first of all one of them on part-time possibilities that haven't yet been explored, 2) on vocational possibilities that haven't yet been explored, and 3) on the creative productive sort of thing which hasn't yet been explored.

___: Perhaps with that in mind somebody or people might in small groups like to come to Wales and spend some time with me there, with the group that's up there.

S: So any volunteers to make little reports - do some research and then report back? When I say report back, what I have in mind is that there is a short report written and circulated as a supplement to the Order news-sheet so that the information gets round quite quickly.

Ananda: A very, very useful thing to do.

___: I'll do on part-time jobs.

Mamaki: I'll do something on vocational.

S: Right, good. And who'll do on the productive/creative? You will, OK. And, say, could you do it within three months? I think that's a reasonable period. Within three months could there be a supplementary sheet simply attached to the newsletter and sent out with it that month? OK.

___: So far as existing abilities among the Order goes, I can compile this information from the register when that ...

S: Right, fine.

Mangala: I think in a way there's all this information already available in things like 'Alternative London' - like there's a lot of information ...

S: Yes, but we want it available in a form which Order members and other Friends can have easy reference to. Get it from all these different sources and put it together. Yes, I'm sure there is [13] information available.

...: Yes, there's a book called The Directory of Alternative Employment, something like that.

___: It's published by Bit.

S: This is one of the possibilities - whoever does that particular item of research will add a little bibliography: 'There are such-and-such publications which will give you such-and-such information'.

Anything else on the subject of work or employment before we perhaps pass on to something else?

...: What struck me when I was working part-time for just enough money to support me that as an Order we also need extra money to give into a general pool, ... needs, so that anyone who is working at the lowest possible level then it wouldn't be ...

Ananda: Well that's a possibility that we could implement. I suggest - maybe it's a bit revolutionary - but the idea of all the financial resources available to deal with it should be pooled for the support of the Order and for the propagation of the Order's ideals.

S: Hm! Well, that means something quite literally communistic, in the platonic sense more than the Marxist sense.

Ananda: Yes. It's an idea which I feel very attracted to, but I think at the present state of development perhaps it's a little bit idealistic.

___: Would we have to imagine it on a worldwide scale or just on a regional scale?

Ananda: On the Order scale, ...

...: If you began on the community scale ...

S: Ah, yes, yes.

...: - then we could get it going, ...

S: We have got several little communities. Is there anything of this sort going on in any of them at the moment, any pooling of resources?

___: To be sure in my household! [Laughter]

S: Do they all contribute?

___: Dependants as well would have to be considered ...

Ananda: You mean people who don't work?

___: No, I mean people like Vangisa's wife, and dependants ...

(Inaudible chat)

Ananda: I mean the Order itself could be the receptacle for all the financial resources, everything people earned in the Order, and it could automatically all go in there and everybody would receive -

[14]

Marichi: But what do you do in the case of people's families?

___: They'd get the family allowance. [Laughter]

Marichi: ...person still have different lifestyles in their different houses, and you'd have endless gradations of how much people would need to take out ...

S: ... someone would have to adjudicate, presumably. How do you adjudicate, say, between an Order member's psychological need for a new dress and an Order member's psychological need for a new book, supposing you had only enough money for one of them?

Ananda: This is the age-old problem of communism.

S: But anyway, it's certainly something to keep in mind. I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be practicable, to begin with at least, on the community level.

Ananda: We considered it a long time ago in Sarum House as a practical way of doing it.

S: What was the conclusion you came to?

Ananda: I think the conclusion was that - well, this problem of who would decide what people needed.

S: Yes, right, yes.

___: ... {(laughter)}

Vajrabodhi: I think it's not like that. What I thought you thought - I misunderstood. Everybody's paying in all he receives - and everybody's getting the same salary out of their general fund.

Ananda: Well, actually we didn't consider paying a fixed salary to people but just giving them what they needed.

S: For instance, you could buy foodstuffs collectively and everybody would eat. If they needed a bit more they'd eat a bit more and if they needed a bit less they'd eat a bit less.

Chintamani: That's been organized already at the Centre. The food co-op is in its third attempt at ...

Ananda: Basically, I think the problem is that there is individual freedom to decide what they want, what they need.

Marichi: It probably would work if everybody was paid a salary, ...

Ratnapani: I think one tends to automatically live at the lowest possible level doing that, because one tends to be supporting people who have got less, and their families, and people who don't want to work because they're into something else.

Ananda: You'd have to have quite a lot of spiritual generosity, in the sense - you know - and trust.

S: And trust, yes, and be concerned.

Vangisa: We are talking about this now, as so many other things, from the point of view of our present situation, our present state of development. What seems theoretically an excellent idea now may be quite a practical idea at some point in the future.

Lokamitra: One thing we were discussing was if we can get [15] more rent-free houses, with one or two Order members in per, and maybe that Order member is a very very involved person at the moment and hasn't really got time to work - then the other people in the house can perhaps pay a rent of \$1 or \$1.50 a week which would go towards the upkeep of this Order member. And we are hoping to find out about the possibility of getting more houses very soon.

Ananda: We have been talking about the possibility of doing that here, and supporting one member free, ... various ... It will be possible here.

S: So that really means that the working community adopts the responsibilities that in the East are taken on by the lay people with respect to the monks. It really means that you are creating that pattern on a smaller scale, which is certainly a very good thing.

___: I was very pleased to hear you label that way of living as parasitic.

S: Why were you pleased?

___: Well, because for a number of years I've been - well, I haven't actually done any work, really [Laughter] - and over the last year I've been considering this, and I've been feeling that I am just taking, taking, taking; I'm not really ever, I've never put anything back into the system that's supported me. And it's concerned me great sort of moral fluctuations. And I came to the conclusion that it was parasitic.

S: Good!

___: - and it didn't really matter.

S: After all, does society exist for the sake of the individual, or does the individual exist for the sake of the society? Obviously, there is a certain amount of interdependence and mutuality, but in the last resort the society is for the sake of the individual. And if a society is able to support certain individuals who are simply growing, and apparently not giving anything back to the society, well, that's what the society is for. That's the Buddhist view. If there is later on some overflow from the individual back into the society, fine; but if there isn't, never mind; an individual has been produced. That's the purpose of the society.

___: I've noticed this particularly in the country - I've just moved to Cornwall, and there it seems even more so. I could, if I wanted to, just live off the people around, because they are continually dropping in with things and inviting me to meals. But I do get this guilt feeling that I should be giving something back, that I should be able to give them some food sometimes and give them meals ...

Ananda: You give them spiritual food back.

___: It's very easy to say that, though, isn't it - say 'Oh, I'm giving them spiritual food', but ...

S: But sometimes you like to give concretely. You would feel like that, as it were. But in India it often happens that if you are in that sort of sadhu-like position you get lots of things, but you get more than you need, so you give in turn out of what you've been given; and you may give to the sort of people that nobody else would think of giving anything to. Even animals, even the dogs and cats around - at least that.

___: Symbiosis can be a bit of a parasitic sort of -

[16]

S: No, symbiosis is mutual, but this need not be mutual. You are under no obligation to give anything back. You have no duties to the society, in the highest sense.

Vangisa: In any case from a purely social and economic point of view - a very very large proportion including some of the people on highest salaries, are not actually producing anything. They are living parasitically on the work of what is probably the small minority.

___: They do frequently provide a function, maybe an organizational function, ...

Vangisa: It's only brief.

S: Or distributive. Though, of course, very often there are too many people in the chain, there are too many middlemen in between the middlemen in between the middlemen, sort of thing.

Vangisa: It is a self-perpetuating system.

Manjувajra(?): My uncle works in the dockyard, I've got two uncles who work in the dockyard, and I've also talked to farmers, and they say, 'Look, you've never done any work.' But if I say back to them, 'Well, you needn't either', it seems such a strange thing to say. It seems as though, even as I'm saying it, it can't be true. I don't understand how people who are really caught up in manual work, manual labour, can escape that. Most of us, I think, are in a reasonably good position to be able to go on to some of

these vocational courses; we haven't got the responsibilities, we can take part-time jobs. But for people who've got a family and a factory job, it's very difficult to get out of it.

___: ...

S: Anyway, this raises all sorts of questions which could take us very far afield. I think perhaps we'd better leave employment for the time being, and perhaps go on to other aspects of the spiritual development of the individual. But it does seem that the whole question of work and employment is quite important, both on account of the extent to which it can get in the way, and also perhaps in some cases the extent to which it can be even an extension of what one is basically into.

Vangisa: There's a slight comment ... when you talk about the extent to which it can get in the way. This is very true, but all this depends on one's particular stage of development ...

S: Sure.

Vangisa: Because there are times when you are just - I don't know - creating energy, it's coming up - and everything, work or going to work in a factory, or coming home and coping with the children - everything is a complete, living, dynamic path of growth, you can feel it. And, as you said, if you're not feeling well or you're actually feeling ill, it doesn't make any difference, you're still bubbling over with energy. But this - at least in my experience - this is not a continuous state; it doesn't go on like this for ever. Then something else starts coming up, from some other level of consciousness, that you've got to start coping with, and then all these other material circumstances can come in, because at this point you're perhaps just wanting to go away and sit down ...

S: Well, yes, there are times in people's spiritual life when they feel they just don't want to even go along to the Centre, even that gets in the way; what to speak of other things. So, yes, the question of stage of development and phase, even, of development, has to be considered.

[17]

Manjuvajra(?): Can I ask a question on another topic? It's to do with scattered energy. (Break to open window.)

S: How many of us are there, by the way? Twenty-seven.

Manjuvajra(?): I'd like to talk about this problem of scattered energy, and how to deal with it. When I find myself in the situation where there's a lot of chaotic energy all around me I tend to just withdraw, and I find there is very little I can do about it other than go further and further inside.

S: When you say withdraw, you mean mentally withdraw or physically withdraw?

Manjuvajra(?): Um - mentally, initially. And if it gets too much, physically. But not so much physically.

S: Well, if you're in a situation like that, there are only really two things that you can do. You can start drawing the scattered energies together, if you are sufficiently strong. If you are not sufficiently strong, in the long run you would probably be better advised to withdraw physically. I think you shouldn't be in a situation where you're just mentally withdrawing too long, you know? That can lead to a somewhat alienated state. If that mental withdrawal persists for what feels like too long, just physically withdraw. That is much better. And recognize that you're not able to cope with that situation - which isn't necessarily blameworthy. It may be just objectively beyond you at that particular time and that particular stage.

Manjuvajra: I notice it specifically with groups of people. And also I seem to notice it with individuals as well; some individuals seem to have that same kind of quality about them. And with them it's as though I just go into a kind of trance, and I listen to their talk but just kind of float away.

S: Well, it isn't good to be in that sort of situation too much. It's best to physically withdraw and muster your resources, muster your energies, and then next time maybe you'll be better equipped to deal with that sort of situation. But I think for most people of just moderate development it would be very unwise to stay in that sort of situation too long. You would just get more and more alienated and you might even explode in a negative sort of way, sometimes, with no good to anybody.

___: If one finds oneself in that position with someone and you do feel particularly strong, is it a good idea then to try and pull it together, to concentrate it?

S: Well, it depends what one means by pulling together, and how. It's very difficult to generalize. You could, of course, point out to that person that their energies were scattered, or you could just do a purely mental operation to try to get them more together. But that's obviously much more difficult. And you can't collect a person who doesn't want to be collected. Even the Buddha can't do that. You can't collect anyone against their will. If they want to be scattered, scattered they will be, and sometimes you may just have to let them alone.

___: Sometimes, however, the most unlikely people, if you just talk straight in a way which they can either reject or accept ... - you're not forcing them to go along with you - sometimes the most unlikely people will turn round and have a laugh with you about what's been going on and you can really get to them. It's really worth trying, at least gently, for a few times.

___: I'm glad to hear - really - some people talking about the same experience, because I've been in this very cold [18] kind of situation of not really being able to judge my own experience in this and thinking maybe it's all me that's making it seem like this.

S: It seems to me that as I hear different people, Order members and others, there seems to be around a bit too much self-doubt of the wrong kind. I don't know where this comes from, but people seem not to trust themselves, their feelings and their reactions, nearly as much as they should do, or as they in fact are justified in doing. Of course, in a sense, one must question the validity of one's motives, etc., etc. But so many people seem to question too much the better and more healthy and positive part of themselves if it seems to be challenged from outside, and not to have the sort of conviction: 'I'm the one who's right!' A lot of people seem to find it very difficult to feel that way, and are sometimes very hesitant where they have every reason to be quite firm and confident. This seems to be a quite almost a general sort of malaise among people in the Movement. Because I know sometimes I have to bolster people up and say, 'No, you're right!' I very rarely have to tell people that they're wrong, very rarely, but I often have to tell people that they're right. And that seems really strange.

___: This comes from people not knowing themselves, doesn't it? Perhaps they don't know themselves when they're wrong, either, but are more inclined to take a negative pattern from someone else than a positive one.

S: Well, any pattern ... so they don't trust ... undermine ... (microphone noises) They don't even trust their own good feelings, positive feelings.

Chintamani: Maybe it comes from a gross misunderstanding of the way the ego is ... nasty, evil ...

S: Well, if it's me it must be wrong, sort of thing. But no. Well, spiritually, in the ultimate sense, yes, but that level is quite remote, and mostly people are just functioning on a lower relatively more psychological plane, and on that plane you may be healthily and happily right, and justified in insisting on your rightness. But so often people say to me, 'Oh, I guess it must be me', or 'I guess I must be wrong' and 'I guess what the other person says must be right' and 'I guess it's just my blindness I can't see it' or 'I guess I don't see myself as I really am; they must be right.' But in at least six or seven cases out of ten it isn't like that, and they're right and the other person is wrong, or persons are wrong. It seems really strange - the lack of - almost lack of self-confidence.

Vajrabodhi: I have been thinking about this same question very simply, and I thought that way that people have a dimension in their minds which is not much perhaps realized. I would call it vitality. People have different levels of vitality, and some people may have usually the same level of vitality throughout their life, at least when they are children they are very active children, when they are grown up they are so as well. And this level of vitality is connected to this phenomenon. And people of very high vitality always think they are right, they always express themselves, they are just pushing through whatever the point. But funnily enough, as far as I have seen, these higher vitality level people are no more spiritually inclined than anybody else. Usually the other way round, even, because they are so straightforward they think that all sort of psychological, religious or even philosophical considerations are just out of their field. They usually become leaders, businessmen, politicians, people like that.

S: Right, yes, this is true.

Vajrabodhi: But I would say that if there would be one of those [19] high- vitality people becoming a religious person, he would have tremendous impact.

S: Yes, this is true. I said some years ago that one of the reasons why we have our present set-up in the Friends and why only Order members are admitted to positions of responsibility and so on is just so that we don't get in any of these high-powered types who want to bypass the whole spiritual side of the Movement and just get on with the organization. Because it's been quite clear to me, as the result of my experience of different groups and organizations and people, that what really keeps most organizations and groups going is the neurotic energy of the people running them. It's just that. And we don't want to run our Movement on anyone's neurotic energy. And that certainly isn't happening, or hasn't happened as far as I've been able to see.

But we tend to have the opposite difficulty. There's so much self-doubt and self-questioning that vitality almost trickles away into the sand. But if we can have, as you say, people with tremendous vitality but also with a spiritual awareness, that's ideal for everything. They're in a happy position individually, and the Movement will really go forward in the right sort of way, with the right sort of energy, the right sort of vigour.

Mangala: I think that's happening, I think that's been happening.

S: I think you're quite right, yes, it's beginning to happen, yes. But it's been quite a slow process.

Ananda: For a long time I felt a tremendous feeling of frustration there - not for me particularly, though I've been part of it, but in Council meetings and general organizational meetings, I felt a lot of frustration of energy. There's been a lot of energy there, but it's been very much blocked, I feel.

S: Well, perhaps to some extent it's blocked by this self-doubt - attaching too much importance to what is said outside, and maybe, for instance, as a group - using that word cautiously - we ought to have much more sort of group confidence, without any submergence of the individual in the group, but be more bold and outward-going as a Movement and as a group.

Ananda: I feel, instinctively almost, we've been much too afraid in the past, almost throughout the entire career of the Order, of identifying as an Order, as a group but in a positive sense. We've been too afraid of doing that.

Devaraja: I know in my own case I have sometimes felt really suspect of my vitality and I thought it was possibly certain situations ... I've probably had a false attitude that it was something not quite spiritual.

S: Well, maybe not; but vitality can be given a spiritual orientation.

___: One thing that can be looked at in regard to that is that in any gathering each person is in a way responsible for what is taking place, and if he accepts that then much more can come.

S: Mmm, yes! For instance, we have heard in the past - not so much now - at least, I haven't heard - someone saying, 'I attended a meeting the other day. Oh, I didn't like it at all. I really sat there seething. I was really very disgruntled. They were doing this and saying that, it was all a waste of time, I wish I hadn't gone.' Then you say, 'Well, did you say anything?' 'Oh no, I didn't think that would do any good.' I've heard this over the last few years so many times from so many people. Instead of someone saying, 'Look, I don't like the way this meeting is going. [20] I don't like the atmosphere. I think you're all talking too much.' Well, maybe you're even wrong in saying all that, but at least if you say it then others get the chance to point out your error, if it is an error, or to agree with you and correct themselves if in fact they are in the wrong. So everybody is responsible, including the person who keeps quiet. In fact, maybe the person who keeps quiet is more responsible because he feels something is going wrong, or something isn't quite right, which apparently the others don't. So always say. If you feel that a particular meditation class has got a bit stuffy or a bit staid, say so. If it's your delusion, that will be pointed out. If it isn't, something will be done about the stuffiness. And so on. If you think that a Council meeting is too talkative, say so. If you think a retreat is stagnating, say so. And so on. Why not?

But this comes a bit under the heading of communication - we'll be dealing with that in the afternoon - but it's very relevant to how the individual feels also.

___: ... probably be surprised at how much real insight there really is.

S: A lot of people, I'm sure, see quite a lot and know quite a lot, but they're almost afraid to say. They are even afraid of what other Order members will think of them, what to speak of the big outside world. They even hesitate to say what they think in front of other Order members.

Marichi: I think people don't always know how to express themselves. They fear they are going to hurt people. A lot of things aren't said, because they're afraid they are going to hurt somebody.

S: Well, one can say gently. And I think the person who is afraid of hurting others is not very likely to, you know? It's the person who says something unthinkingly and without any awareness that what is said may hurt that does in fact sometimes hurt people's feelings.

Ratnapani: I know for myself if I reject something that somebody is saying or a situation they are in, I tend to reject them as well. That's an attitude - it's very difficult to be skilful in the words.

S: But also amongst the Order generally there must be a lot of give and take. Even if you do feel a bit hurt by something someone has said, well reflect to yourself, 'I'm sure that person didn't mean to hurt. After all, it has been said with a positive motive, at least to a great extent. Let me take it in the right way. I can point out later on, when the time is ripe, that I did feel a bit hurt by the way you put it. But let me just put that aside for the time being and consider just what that person has said, because they've said it for the good of me and the whole Movement.'

So if there's more feeling of this sort, we won't get hurt so easily or so deeply.

___: Some of it may just come from an attitude of believing that in a spiritual group everybody should be very nice, friendly and ...

S: So it should, sure! But then one is working towards that, and one may have to work towards it through a certain amount of sort of positive conflict. Just like in ordinary friendships, if everything goes all calm and quiet it usually means it's stagnating somewhat, and may be cooling off a bit or getting a bit indifferent.

[21]

Vangisa: If you are continually afraid that you are going to hurt people's feelings, without intending to do that, perhaps the motives are rather unworthy motives, a completely materialistic, with strong egocentric reaction, which one may unnecessarily impute to other people.

S: I think really people are very often much more afraid of their own feelings than of other people's; that if they start really talking, they might really start becoming quite angry and insistent and something might really pop out. I think very often they are more afraid of that than of the other person's reaction, more afraid that they will be really carried away and get a bit out of control if they are not careful. I think a lot of people are afraid of that.

___: It's connected with that, but supposing two people are having a discussion, and what usually happens is that two people are backing each other up - I mean in a local pub we frequently hear the blacks being put down or the miners being put down, this or that or the other being put down. And I often think that I don't really agree with that; I see it a bit differently. I wonder whether I should state my case. So sometimes I do state it, just off the cuff, and maybe people agree with it, and then go on back to the old argument. [Laughter] And I never know, in that sort of situation, how far to go; whether it's just involving myself too much.

S: I see what you mean. I think one mustn't take the objective content of the discussion too seriously. People are not really discussing that topic at all. They are exchanging signals, and the signals say 'We all belong to the same group; it's OK.' This is what is happening in sociological terms. So if you disagree you are simply waving a different flag, that you don't belong to that group. So logically you would just go away and have your drink in another bar, where they're all waving your sort of flag. [Laughter] That's what it's really all about: it's people establishing something in common, that they are together. What they establish it by means of doesn't matter all that much.

So they're not on the level of objective discussion and don't want to be, they are doing something else,

so there's no point in your interfering with that. If you want to communicate with them, you've got to find a set of signals that you can all wave, so get on to some other topic where you do find that you are waving the same signals as they are. Then you can get into something. But if you just insist on waving another flag, it won't get you anywhere.

___: I went through difficulties at one point with regard to the precept on useless speech. I was thinking very much that that sort of thing can be quite useful but the content was quite useless.

___: That's the value of chatter, isn't it?

S: Yes. For instance, in the old days ladies meeting at an afternoon tea party would have certain topics of conversation: 'Oh, my cook was terrible this week, my dear.' And then somebody else retells a horror story about her housemaid. They established through these signals that they all belonged to the same sort of social level, the same social class, they all have servants, and presumably an income above a certain level; they are a natural group of people. But if Mrs So-and-so who -she may have five or six servants but she won't play this game - well, there's a rather stony silence. She's spoiled things if she starts sticking up for servants and saying they're wonderful, loyal and so on, and everyone else is exchanging these servant-running-down signals to establish their own fellow feeling and unity.

[22]

Of course, sometimes it happens that a subject is being objectively discussed, people really want to know about it or what to think about it. Then you can say what you really think. But that's a different sort of situation from one in which they are merely exchanging these signals.

___: It doesn't seem to happen very much at all.

S: You mean the real discussion?

___: Yes.

S: Well, probably not, because people don't presumably go to pubs for serious ...

___: I didn't actually mean only in pubs, I meant sort of generally.

S: Well, people want to feel that they belong to a group, and how do you find out whether a heterogeneous collection of individuals belong to your natural group or not? You start flying signals and see whether the corresponding signal comes from the other side; then if you're all flying the same signals after half an hour you know you're a happy little group, you can get all matey then. You're safe.

___: The art is to know when to do that and who to do that ...

S: You just have to establish a point of contact through some remark.

Vangisa: Even this discussion here wants to take objective remarks of considerably subjective content, sure. In fact, just sitting and listening to what everybody else is saying without saying anything for myself is the best way of finding out how their mind is working at this particular moment. [Pause]
[Laughter]

S: Sometimes there is a slightly different situation where someone sends up a certain signal, and you don't because you can't. But then they start insisting that you send up the same signal. Then that is difficult; then you really have to face up to it and that may be quite unpleasant, because you cannot in honesty run up that particular signal or adopt that particular attitude or express that particular opinion, but they want you to because they feel not quite happy on their own, as it were.

For instance, I sometimes meet people who say, 'Oh, I think Guru Maharaji is wonderful! Oh, he's really lovely! Oh, he's God incarnate! Isn't he?' - you know? If they go on saying how wonderful he is, I've no objection; let them say that if that's what they feel. But then they demand that I send up the same signal. So if they say, 'Isn't he?' what can I say? I just have to say politely, 'I'm sorry, I don't think so.' And sometimes they may be deeply offended. But you sometimes have to do that. Well, you can't get out of that sort of situation. You then have to confront them, whether it's in a pub or anywhere else. But they've no business to do that, they've no right to do that, and you certainly have a right to defend your own integrity and to choose to differ, and not agree with them - disagree with them and not send

up the signal that they want.

But it's the same with people who are discussing the blacks. If they turn to you and say, 'Don't you think that they are terrible? Don't you think we'd be better off without them?' If you're directly challenged, you say, 'No, I don't agree.' You've no way out, you have to stand your ground then.

[23]

But if they're just exchanging signals and they just ignore your not sending up the same signal, there's no point in flying a different kite, as it were.

___: You're just piling on troubles for yourself.

S: But if they pick a fight with you, OK. You let them have it.

Asvajit: I often find at work that when there's been a long period of silence that we can then really communicate, and then we're talking on the same level; whereas if I insist on talking to them or they on talking to me, immediately it's very difficult. One isn't talking about the same things at all. One is, as you say, just putting up signals, saying, 'You agree with what I say, don't you?' and I agree with what you say.'

Marichi: Sometimes the silence is actually necessary... You put up signals ... each other and you know you're being silenced ...

___: There was a woman who introduced the concept of 'creative listening', Rachel Pinney, and it seems to me that what went on there was that she totally listened to the other person, so that presumably their first signal went up and she went on listening without having in her mind counter-remarks and so on. She totally listened to them, and it stopped being a signal and became an opening for a proper discussion. So that perhaps the person who is listening also has some responsibility about whether the signals go on waving at one another or not. [Pause]

Devaraja: That's a very good point ...

S: Shall we now come on to something rather different, because time is passing? Has anybody got any sort of ideas or suggestions with regard to extra facilities to assist the spiritual development of Order members - that is, of everybody? Anything that anyone would like to see or that they feel the need of, which isn't around or available at the moment?

Devaraja: I think it would be very good if we did something to try to arrange extra individual retreat facilities.

S: You mean just for one person?

Devaraja: Yes, for long periods of time, maybe even with some small amount of financial help if it was possible, depending on the individual case.

___: I'd like to see more actual Order retreats.

S: More Order retreats; yes. Perhaps this is the time, then, for me to say a few words about something that some of us have been discussing and which everybody ought to know about. It did occur to me quite recently that we ought to improve our nomenclature. 'Retreats' seems to cover too much now, it's too wide a term. So what I thought is this. We'll have three kinds of whatever it is. First of all, retreats; we keep that term for one kind of thing. 'Retreats' from now onwards will mean going away somewhere, preferably somewhere nice in the country, for a mixed programme of lectures, discussion, meditation, communication, Puja, yoga and whatever. This sort of mixed programme for a week or 10 days or a fortnight or a month, somewhere in the country, will continue to be called a retreat. Or it may even be a weekend.

Then we shall have what we call 'sesshins'; we shall adopt this term, because it seems to be quite current even outside strictly Zen circles, and it seems to be quite intelligible to people with [24] any sort of contact with Buddhism or Buddhist activities, they know what a sesshin is, and it's a nice, short, simple word. So let's adopt the word sesshin; a sesshin will mean a predominantly meditation-type retreat, in fact apart from the meditation there'll be nothing except Puja; there'll be no lectures, no

discussion and no communication exercises, only meditation with a little Puja. We'll call those sesshins.

And then there will be seminars. Seminars are what I've been calling the study retreats, where the emphasis is more, for want of a better term, intellectual; more of lectures, discussion, study of texts and so on, where we've got some meditation and Puja. But it's the study and discussion element that will predominate and usually revolve around a particular topic or a particular text.

So we can have, for instance, an Order sesshin, an Order seminar, a mixed sesshin, a men's sesshin, a women's seminar, and so on and so forth. These will be the various possibilities.

Mangala: The word sesshin uses the Japanese word?

S: Yes, we use the Japanese word, s.e.s.s.h.i.n.

Mangala: I don't think there's a plural to that, actually, I think it's just - sesshin includes this plural and singular.

S: Well, we'll adopt it as an English word and put an S on the end. [Laughter] We've adopted words from foreign languages for hundreds of years. We can't stick to the original plural and singular forms.

___: We can judge our popularity, as well, by the first time it gets used ...

S: - otherwise I shall have to say Upasakani instead of Upasakas! Ten upasakani instead of ten upasakas.

___: Would it be worth while we're at it, getting rid of the word 'retreat' as well? Because that seems to have rather negative implications?

S: I've not been able to think of a better one actually.

___: - great leap forward. (Inaudible comments and laughter.)

S: GLF. [Laughter] Maybe that might be misunderstood. [Laughter]

___: Would you dislike the transatlantic word 'workshop'.

S: 'Workshop'. I think if we have that at all we'll reserve it for our sort of more therapeutic encounter groups, if we do have them, in fact. It's not a bad word, workshop. It's down to earth and practical, with a certain suggestion of a sort of messing about with tools and things. But I think 'retreat' is fairly well established in our own circle, as it were. I think people don't think of it in High Anglican terms or anything like that.

If anyone has any better term to suggest, please bring it forward. We'll consider it. But anyway, to get back to what Devaraja said ...

[End of tape 1 tape 2]

- and also what Dhammadinna said - really there should be more activities for the Order. We have always had this in mind, but [25] until now there haven't really been enough Order members to make it very viable, or enough Order members able to get away on retreat. But I think now this will happen. We should have retreats for Order members. They need not be more than, say, 10 or 12 people. And the study retreats or seminars will be predominantly for Order members, though not exclusively so, but mainly.

So it does seem that there should be much more Order activity, which means especially activity to help individual Order members' growth - not actually the outside, that's all done through the framework of the Friends; the Order is more as it were internal.

But any other suggestions along these sort of lines? There's the facilities for individual retreats. Some Order members have in fact gone on individual retreats already; Buddhadasa at this very moment is on one for six whole months up in Scotland, and Jitari had one for a spell; and even outside the Order,

Graham had one for a month. So there have been a few of these going on. But I personally feel - this is something that perhaps I should mention now - that I would like to see in future a sort of pattern developing whereby every Order member, fairly soon after ordination, has a solitary retreat of if possible up to a month. I think this is quite an experience which no Order member should miss.

[End of recording on this side]

The rest of the tape contains a Sevenfold Puja and the ordinations of Jinamata, Lokamitra, Devamitra, Aryamitra and Nagabodhi - may all auspiciousness be theirs!!

[Tape 3, Side 1]

S: When I say 'solitary retreat', let me say what I have in mind. First of all, the person should be alone. You go on a solitary retreat on your own. You don't take your girlfriend with you. [Laughter] One in fact did! And, if possible, you don't even see other people - anybody. If possible, it should be in a part of the country where there's no other habitation near by, not even in a village, so that you literally don't see another human being; or even if you do, it's only from a distance; you don't have to have any actual dealings with them. It would be good, perhaps, if the nearest person was some other Order member or some other little centre which could shield you from those sort of disturbances, even bring along food when it was needed, and just quietly put it down and leave it. It might be possible to develop these sort of facilities.

And once we get the new Centre going, as we hope, at Castle Acre, there will be facilities there also for one or two people - though that won't be solitary, but it will be relatively solitary, for short meditation and study, things of that kind.

___: Are you going back to your retreat in Cornwall?

S: Er, no.

___: Because it strikes me that - from what I've heard, I haven't seen it - it might be quite useful for the Order as a whole just to keep up payment for that place.

S: Well, I'll tell you what the position is. The rent is \$4 a week, which is going up to \$5 in the spring, unfortunately; but it would be possible to keep it on if the Order wanted. There are one or two drawbacks. In summertime it becomes a little busy. You're certainly not isolated from people. You are relatively isolated only during the winter and the early spring. It is tucked away [26] round a corner, but you do hear people - not that that bothered me - but it wasn't a solitary retreat in that sort of sense. But I'm sure many people would find it very preferable to staying in the town, and could certainly have a retreat there. How did you find it Luvah? You were there in the autumn - or winter, even, weren't you? But summertime, of course, it does become a bit more active on that cliff. There are a lot of little chalets that people come to for the weekend.

I didn't find it too bad; I certainly found it quite bearable. But it was a little odd sometimes going up the cliff, just going for a walk, and one would have to pass through a small crowd of weekend holidaymakers, and one got a very different sort of atmosphere and vibration, it was really quite odd. So if one didn't mind that occasionally, it would be quite a good place. But that's up to - if the Order feels like that, it should refer it to the Council of the Friends to see whether it could be arranged.

___: It's a very desirable part of the country, isn't it? Especially in the summertime, I was wondering whether ...

S: Very desirable.

___: - a small place, perhaps, in not such a desirable - well, not such a popular place, might be a lot cheaper to ...

Devaraja: I think Arthur Smith, I'm sure, he's got quite good facilities.

S: That is true, yes.

(Inaudible remarks.)

Hridaya:... come where I'm living ... at the moment, you get one or two rooms with no toilet, no running water ...

S: But probably later on even a caravan could be got hold of which could be parked in the corner, perhaps ...

Hridaya: Well, what I hope to do is to move into neighbouring barns ... which are really ... at the moment ...

S: Yes. So it seems that there are possibilities.

Ananda: Just for the record, Arthur Smith has said definitely that the house is open to Order members any time and he won't charge anything for them to stay. Obviously it's limited, and it's not ...

S: He is a good old friend of ours.

Ananda: Yes, and he said any Order member is welcome to go and stay there if they just write to him, any time of the year; and there's no charge. But obviously it's very limited in that way, and ...

S: Well, that's what we want in a way.

Ananda: - and it's not completely solitary ...

S: No, not completely solitary.

___: ... He likes to talk business.

Vajrabodhi: Talking about solitary retreats or anything of that sort, I had an idea which might sound a bit strange to you, but I think it's - actually, it's my opinion that people usually go to the country and to distant places for solitary retreats, and after [27] experiencing myself various places of a sort of quiet living in a self-contained place, I have found that the best place for a retreat is the very centre of a very large town - provided you don't know anybody there. There you really can get along with yourself. There's no one to disturb you. Whereas you go to the country, however sparsely populated it is, there are neighbours, and sooner or later you are in a ... where you have more friends than ever before ... [Laughter] ...

S: That's very true. I certainly found this when we moved into Cotesford Cottage. Cotesford Cottage, which you haven't seen, where I'm staying at the moment, in Norfolk, is about half a mile from the village - it's not even in the village. So when we arrived there from Cornwall it seemed really deserted and fields all the way round, so Mark and I thought, 'We're not going to be bothered; nice and quiet.' The first few days there were dozens of people calling, knocking on the door on one pretext or another - all local people, not anyone from London, they left us alone, because they realized we wanted to be quiet - but local visitors and callers, especially the first week, till we made it known that we weren't 'at home', kind of thing. But what you say is correct.

But I think this could be got over if it was a sort of cell or caravan, not too far away from, say, two or three other Friends, or a little centre, so that they could intercept the visitors.

But otherwise you can have a solitary retreat in a quiet room in the town, but then - I don't know, I think you'd pick up quite a lot from the immediate surroundings, even though you're not physically in contact.

Vajrabodhi: I don't know, because I find it's quite effective if one takes a walk in the town, ..., preferably a completely foreign country, and just see that things are different, you see the people moving, but you really feel a sort of outsider, and I find it very good to be in retreat in the centre of a big town - provided you have no communication with other people except just seeing them going around. And it's sort of stimulating, alternating with meditation, and being in the hustle and bustle of a big town. I think it is very good and effective, and I would say that the nearest place I would prefer to London is Paris - it's a big town, and quite near and London is - there are too many friends around here.[Laughter] I would say Paris, or perhaps something like New York, would be ...

(Laughter and comments.)

Vajradaka: I would be a little bit suspect if Devaraja said 'I'm going on a solitary retreat to Paris.'
[Laughter]

S: Especially if you saw him buying two tickets! (Laughter)

Devaraja: Three!

S: But that's what Vajrabodhi was saying, you can have a solitary retreat in the city, and I mentioned when I came back to Muswell Hill, to my old room at 55, I commented it was much quieter there than it had been in the chalet in Cornwall, or than it was in Cotesford Cottage in Norfolk. It was really quiet. It was down the hill and round the corner, and there was no sound and everything peaceful. It think it is quite possible to have a little retreat like that; maybe arranging for someone in the same building just to open the door at regular intervals and put your food through. Or if you had a little stove inside, you could do it all yourself: lay in your supplies for a week or a month beforehand. No reason why you shouldn't do this.

Vangisa: ... is one thing about it (in the magazine?) you do cut [28] yourself off: you are exposed to a certain barrage of vibrations all around you ...

S: Sure, yes, that's true.

Vangisa: - which may have all kinds of effects that you don't realize consciously.

Marichi: In this situation you do become aware of them and how they are affecting you, and it's doubly useful.

Vangisa: In the middle of Paris?

Marichi: Yes.

Vangisa: Well, what I was thinking of was the effect that you are not conscious of. If you are in the country, you can notice these things when they actually do happen, whereas if it's going on all around, you're in the world, you're likely to get ...

Marichi: I have yet to find a piece of country where you can't here machinery vibrating and aeroplanes, ...

Vangisa: I wasn't thinking so much of machinery as people.

___: Could I ask people to speak up a little? It's very difficult to hear what you're saying.

S: Can you project? Be a little megaphone!

Chintamani: I think the point is that it has to be an environment you're not used to. If you live in the city, go for a retreat in the country, if you live in the country go for a retreat in the city.

S: Of course, another thing I'd like to say at this moment is that I really have seen, in the course of the last year, that people can stagnate in the country. If they are on their own and there's no spiritual community, you're much better off in the city, much better off where there are possibilities of spiritual fellowship. Just to go away into the country on your own or with just one or two friends is no solution at all, and not in the least helpful for spiritual life. I really say this very strongly. You're much better off in the city.

But that is a distinct thing from what I spoke about earlier, just going away for a month's solitary retreat. I think if you normally live in the city, go and have it in the country, but if you can't get away into the country for any reason, well, have it in a secluded room even in the city; you can still have it there. In certain respects it won't be so good, but it is certainly an experience of great value even so.

Mangala: Do you think a month is the optimum time?

S: I find it very difficult to be hard and fast, but I'd say a month is certainly a good period, a good satisfying period. If you can't, well, never mind; do what you can. But I'd say, if you possibly can stretch to a month, do that.

In fact, I'd like Order members to make a mental point that sooner or later they will have a solitary retreat, and that they'll make it possible by hook or by crook, in one way or another. You can then experience yourself as an individual on your own, and you can have a greater and better experience of yourself, free from what other people may be putting onto you. You have space around you, which you don't usually have. Your own aura can expand, as it were, in all directions.

[29]

Anything else anyone would like to suggest to help individual Order members develop or grow? We've had two suggestions.

Ananda: I would like to see something that has already been suggested, and that is the arts, in connection with artistic expression and communication. There is a project in hand - I don't know how far it's got - but I feel I'd like to contribute something to that. I also feel a need for it which I've missed quite a lot in the Friends in the last few years.

S: I think this raises a particular question, that is, how many people, whether in the Order or out of it, feel that some kind of creativity of an artistic nature is necessary to their spiritual development? I think not everybody feels this way. It would be perhaps a question of trying to ascertain roughly how many people do feel this way. Recently someone said to me that she felt that the whole aesthetic side of things was quite irrelevant to her personal spiritual development, and there may be others who feel this too, who just don't want to bother with the arts and feel it's all a bit of a side issue, who don't feel that it advances their spiritual life and growth at all, as though it's a bit of a distraction, even.

Vangisa: I think you also find that there's a great deal of just lack of interest, not only lack of enthusiasm, and also, when you do get a certain amount of interest it's very dilettante.

S: Are you talking about the arts especially or everything?

Vangisa: I'm talking about my limited experience of any of these activities within the Friends.

S: Arts activities?

Vangisa: Arts activities within the Friends, yes. And it seems to me, anyway, that this whole business of creative activity is not something that can really be organized on a communal basis. It may sometimes happen on a communal basis, but it's not really an activity that you can cater for in any kind of group, even a spiritual community. It's something on which individuals - it's a level on which some individuals function. And whether or when they're going to do it has nothing whatever to do with laying on some communal group activity. I think it's a very good thing: I wish, I wish it could become a greater group activity, but this is my experience.

Devamitra: My own personal experience is that if you're going to involve yourself in the arts it is so demanding, really, that you've got to be there all the time, at it all the time. Otherwise, it is a distraction, it is a side issue. This is how I feel about it. If I'm going to be an actor I've got to be an actor 24 hours in a day to really be able to benefit from that, otherwise I'd rather just get out of it.

Vangisa: You could even put it in another way: sometimes it almost seems that leading the normal spiritual life is in fact an attempt at getting out of it easily. Because this business - well, the whole, the basic purpose of creative or artistic - ... - the activity involves a complete penetration to the depths of your own mind, and sometimes this is such a ... it's not an addiction, it's just something that is there that you're happy and at the same time you will think of all the reasons and excuses for not doing it completely, not taking this plunge. And it really does seem to me that even other activities - it's so much easier, for instance, to avoid sitting properly in meditation than it is to avoid doing the other, the creative activity properly. You can go on for years practising the normal meditational techniques without ever realizing that you are using these techniques as a defence against [30] the actual experience of meditation. It's not too easy to use these kind of defences in the creative artistic ..., and it is a complete part of your - it is, it is your entire life, it literally is.

Subhuti: I don't see that you have any real basis for saying that there's any less likelihood of behaving

defensively in the one than in the other. You certainly do see a lot of amateur art; people use art, painting, simply for social reasons rather than for ...

Vangisa: No, I'm not ...

Subhuti: I'm just saying that there's no essential difference. If you are orientated towards growth, whatever the means that you choose, you will pursue to ...

Vangisa: I wouldn't disagree with that. I just made the point which got rather out of proportion to the context from which it arose: that, in fact, it seems to me, it has sometimes seemed to me, that it is easier to avoid facing up to yourself in the normal spiritual activities than it would be in a purely creative activity. This is just a point literally in passing.

S: Well, of course, it's partly because, in the case of creativity, something tangible is involved or is produced which other people can then look at and tell you what they think of it. If it's a shoddy piece of work they can say so. But how your meditation is going, provided you are still sitting there, nobody knows [Laughter] ...

Subhuti: That's if you see your meditation in the limited sense of just sitting there ...

S: Right, sure.

Subhuti: - but your whole response to people is a measure of your endeavour to reach those states of consciousness.

S: Right; or what you've experienced then.

But I want just to get back to what Ananda started by saying. One thing I'm not quite sure about is whether he's saying that people ought to be more into the arts than they are.

Ananda: What I said really can be reduced to the simple expression of a need for not so much an artistic activity but the involvement of the higher emotions, in the context of the Friends and the spiritual life in general.

Vajradaka: Well, surely the magazine is an ideal outlet for one aspect of that.

Ananda: Well, for me that's a very intellectual pattern of activity, very conceptual. I'm talking about a different level of experience which I experience in listening to music very intensely. That sort of level of experience.

Padmaraja: Do you not find you can get that through your practice?

Ananda: Yes. But not - I suppose ideally, yes, but in practice, no, it doesn't ...

Ratnapani: I don't see that this really concerns the Order yet.

Devaraja: Can I make a point that I think is quite valid? The arts are a very good means by which to communicate the Dharma, and I think that - for instance, I feel that I'm not out there creating, when I'm painting, I'm not creating a work of art, [31] I feel that - I get a lot out of doing it and often the result's very beautiful, but I feel that it's the Dharma, and people often get turned on by something like that; in the same way with a piece of music, maybe Japanese temple music or Tibetan ritual music or whatever.

Padmaraja: Why not Beethoven?

Devaraja: Well, yes, sure. But what I don't - I'm talking about specifically Buddhist - in a more limited sense of the word - works of art, which are intent on communicating the Dharma. And I feel that's a very - I think it's a great way of turning people on to Buddhism.

S: Perhaps that really is the middle way between two extremes. On the one hand you've got the spiritual life without any aesthetic component, and on the other hand you've got aesthetic activity for its own sake, divorced from any spiritual considerations.

Devaraja: I think there's a lama whose work I've seen in India, and he paints as a spiritual activity. That's his way - he doesn't write texts or commentaries; his activity is painting. It's in that way that he communicates the Dharma and that's his Bodhisattva activity.

Chintamani: Yes, but surely the whole conception of that kind of painting is not art in the sense certainly that I understand Western art. The whole point about for me Western art is that you are making a complete discovery, whereas with traditional Buddhist art you're very much in a tradition with very very considerable limitations within which you work. I mean, OK, you can open out within those limitations, but with Western art you're making a personal discovery of yourself at that time, divorced from any particular tradition. It's your own experience.

Devaraja: Well, I don't know, I didn't really want to get into an analysis of Western and Oriental art, but it's just that I felt that it was valid to use artistic means to communicate and to turn people on. I happen to get a lot out of doing it that way within a very strict Buddhist tradition.

Subhuti: I think it's generally accepted that art is a valid and useful means of developing, but it's not something that you can decide to do. If there are artists within the Order, then very good indeed; but if there aren't, there's nothing we can do about it.

Vangisa: And if there is anything that can happen or develop in the form of a communal activity it will...

(Voices agreeing.)

S: I think usually the best thing that other individuals can do with the artist when he's creating is to leave him alone, rather than get together with him. I certainly know with my own experience in writing - though I've not done very much which was strictly creative - but when I'm writing whatever it is I just want to be left alone. I don't want to see anyone or talk to anyone, and just get on with my writing.

Vangisa: But, Bhante, all your writing is creative.

S: No, I wouldn't - not strictly, I would say.

Mangala: At the same time, I think if there is ... let's say for example a magazine's being produced, that in itself might be an encouragement for people to say well maybe I could write something after all, and it may prompt them just to go that little [32] bit further and maybe...

S: I think we ought to ask ourselves what we are really concerned with. One, we are concerned with the development of the individual; and, two, we are concerned with the emotional aspect of that development and the integration of the individual's emotional energies with his whole life and growth. And one way of doing that is through the arts; but not for everybody. One way of doing that is through creating, as distinct from merely enjoying, the arts, but that's not for everybody, apparently; not everybody is into that. Others get emotionally involved just through Pujas, through personal contact, or nature. So I think we have to distinguish between recognizing that the individual's emotional energies need to be brought into the mainstream of spiritual life and growth; that's one thing, and that that may happen for certain individuals with the help of the arts - and distinguish between that on the one hand and this whole question of whether we should have some provision for encouraging people in this direction or not - whether it's even possible to encourage people, whether they either are like that or not like that.

Vajradaka: I was talking to the Art Director in Glasgow for the Scottish Arts Council, and he said that there were some Arts Councils in England that were willing to give money to groups to do work on their own and give them full facilities - video, machinery, and things like this.

S: Well, that might be more useful. Just facilities and resources if individuals who want to do that sort of thing can just make use of. It's just like having books in a library that you can go and borrow and read.

Vajradaka: So, Ananda, if you are interested in that aspect, perhaps you could get in touch with the different Arts Councils in the South of England.

Vangisa: Yes, but you have to have some work that you're doing. It's no good going along and asking

for money when you have nothing to offer.

Vajradaka: Well, you've got to find out the details first of what they offer.

Devamitra: I've had a bit of contact with Arts Councils through this indirectly myself, and unless you do have a project to lay out before them and unless they've seen your work previously, they are very reluctant to give any money whatsoever to support ...

Nagabodhi: They do seem to make the most extraordinary decisions there sometimes.

Devamitra: Well, it depends who you know, really. It comes down to that in the end. If you know somebody on the council then you've got a reasonable chance of getting the money, but if you don't, then you can forget about it. That's really ...

S: Anyway, I think it isn't all that clear what Ananda was really getting at, what you hoped to do or what you were hoping would be possible.

Ananda: I was merely expressing, as I experience it now, a certain lack in my own life.

S: What does that lack consist in?

Ananda: In relating to the Movement and to the Order through a higher emotional experience. That's really it, it's not so much an organizational ...

[33]

S: Well, for instance, how would that take place, ideally, or could it if it did, in a way that would be satisfactory to you?

Ananda: An idea that comes to my mind is making music together on a fairly organized level or fairly formal level - that sort of activity. Of course, there aren't that many musicians, but there are certain things which people could do together, I'm sure.

Ratnapani: I think that will happen spontaneously if there are musicians who want to play. Jonathan has been into that; he and Vajradaka had a go, and when they've wanted to they've done it, when they haven't wanted to they haven't done it. To have a provision I think constipates it, in fact. I think the same would go for, say, a poetry workshop, which was your other idea, wasn't it? - reading and discussing poetry. I think to put that, say, at the Centre one night a week, which was discussed, and in fact provisionally agreed to, I think that would be more likely to constipate the poetry than inviting friends round to get into poetry together on a casual basis.

Vangisa: You get the practical experience which happened earlier, last year ..., when after one of the combined organized meetings a number of people in general conversation got worked up about making a play. Everybody wanted to do it, quite a large number of people ... I wasn't even in the conversation, I was just listening. And then ... everybody wanted it ... 'Let's get started on it.' I was offered the job of directing it and I accepted, and then I got in on the conversation, called a rehearsal for a few days later, and three people turned up. [Laughter] And for the second rehearsal nobody turned up. (Laughter and Vangisa obscured by hilarity!) ... where all the enthusiasm was generated.

___: That thing has happened to me at times. It's happened with plays and it's happened with music.

Ananda: It's almost a hallmark of the Friends!

___: I think the point is that this is a religious Order. It's a spiritual community. It's not an orchestra. It's not a theatre group.

S: It's not even a pop group.

___: And if you want to relate - if you want to commit yourself to an artistic expression, then one should be involved with these things. You're involved with Buddhism, it's a Buddhist Order.

Subhuti: What about all these Tibetan painters and the music in temples and things like that? They're all ...

___: In the East, art is not so much cut off from the spiritual life. When the spiritual movement grows in this country, then we will find we'll have Buddhist orchestras and Buddhist ...

Padmaraja: In a sense, great music is Buddhistic, it's creative, it's a manifestation of higher awareness, consciousness.

___: Ananda's talking about his relationship to the Order, to this group of people, and he thinks that this can be improved by him involving himself and other people in some artistic pursuit. What I'm saying is that if he wants to relate to this Order then he has to relate to it through its thing, and it is Buddhism.

Ananda: I don't really agree with that, I really don't. I think that [34] that's almost a label, it's very limiting.

___: Well, what is an Order? An Order is a label, it's a label for these people here.

___: I don't see what stops you. If you want to play music you can play music anyway. I play music once a week with people who are not Buddhist but it - it doesn't make any difference.

Ananda: It's almost like cutting off a part of your experience, putting it ... (Several voices at once.)

Vangisa: There's a difference in kind between going on a solitary retreat for a month for instance and getting involved with playing music with one another. We are talking about the form of a type of activity. A solitary retreat for a month, is something ...

___: We're not.

Vangisa: Not at this moment, but this is the kind of thing we have been discussing up to now. The subject you've introduced is a diversion. The solitary retreat for a month is important to everybody whether he's a musician, a nuclear physicist or a psychiatric social worker or a layabout, or whatever it may be - this is something that from our approach to life, how we are developing or want to develop or whatever it may be, this is something essential, this is something we've got to provide facilities for this kind of thing. And it doesn't interfere with playing music or writing poetry or whatever else it may be. But to start talking about specific activities, whether they are creative or otherwise, on the same level as that, I think we are talking about something of a different kind.

Marichi: As a point of order, we've actually moved on to another point, which was arts groups.

Vangisa: Yes, I know, I'm merely saying that the arts group - the discussion of the arts group - we're talking about something that is not just different in degree but different in kind to what we have up to this point regarded as the kind of facility we want the Order to provide. This is undoubtedly - my point is this: providing facilities for solitary retreats is undoubtedly a function of the Order. Providing facilities for the other things is something very, very pleasant, useful and maybe a most important experience for some people; when it is, it will happen.

___: One thing that comes out quite strongly here is that you were saying it happened, or at least enthusiasm in that particular instance among people and so on and then a week later forgot it altogether, and everybody laughed very much, and Ananda said, this is typical ...

Ananda: A hallmark.

___: - a hallmark of Friends' activity. And it seems to me that whatever you are doing, if it is a spiritual and religious community, whatever you are doing you should at least have a particular kind of attitude towards it, which is one of knowing what you want to do, being able at a particular point to say 'I will be responsible, I will do this particular thing with these particular people', and carry it through, which seems to be missing here. Everybody seems to be well aware of the fact that this kind of ..., knowing what ... being responsible for, is missing, and nobody seems to be terribly worried about it. It's a bit confusing.

S: I think there are two things here. When Vangisa was relating that experience, I was reminded of scores of similar experiences [35] in India. I think it's a bit like what we were talking about before, this

sending out the signals. When you get enthusiastic in that sort of way, if you have any sort of self-knowledge you know that you're not going to go through with it, you know that you're just talking. And actually the person who undertakes the responsibility of organizing a group of people of that sort - well, I'm afraid he's just wasting his time, and he ought to be able to recognize this - anybody.

Ananda: It's being intoxicated with an ideal, isn't it?

S: Well, whatever, it's an intoxication which will pass off. It is not an expression of serious interest and commitment. And these things do come up all the time, but one must be able to distinguish between this momentary bubbling up of enthusiasm, or what looks like enthusiasm, and a really solid interest and determination. These are two quite different things. I know even within the context of the Friends, there are certain bursts of enthusiasm and people say this and say that, and I've taken no notice. I've not even bothered to follow them up, because I know that there's nothing solid in it, it's like a bubble. But if people are a bit more integrated they won't even do this. But it does happen quite a bit.

I won't say it's a hallmark - no, it's a different sort of thing, and there are quite a few things that the Friends carry through successfully, month after month and year after year. But these bubbles seem to come up a bit more on the aesthetic front, if I may say so, because the nature of art is more of that kind. If you have this momentary bubbling up, and it only lasts for two or three days, you're just an ordinary person; but if it's bubbling up all the time and you can't stop it, then you're an artist.

Marichi: This is why if you're ... people who are artists have this determination to work it out on their own and then come together.

S: If they do decide to come together. They may or may not, we can't even predict that.

Marichi: But it's not really a group thing, it's an individual thing.

S: I certainly don't feel like sitting down in a room at the Centre, say, once a week, writing my memoirs, with other people also writing their memoirs! [Laughter] I'd much rather do it on my own.

___: A frightening thought.

S: I think we still haven't got at what Ananda is really getting at. I don't think he's got at it himself fully yet.

Ananda: I'm working towards it.

S: Yes, but what I feel it seems to be - that you want to share all your experience with other members of the Order. This is basically what it is. (Ananda agreeing.) You don't like to feel there is some area of your own worthwhile experience which you're unable to share with other members of the Order. This is really what it is. And since for you art and music are very meaningful things you would like very much, it would be an enhancement of your experience, to be able to share with others.

Ananda: That's just about the bottom of it.

___: I can remember once seeing when you did that, and you did that really well. At the summer retreat a couple of years ago, you gave a lecture; you illustrated it with a painting, and [36] some music, and that was absolutely incredible. That was the way to share it, I think, with something like that.

Ananda: Well, since then - that was good, and that was a very vitalizing experience for me, as well as apparently a few other people. But I feel the need for that to be - it's gone out of my life, that aspect ... And I don't really know why.

S: So how do you feel like doing it now? I must say this is something I've never felt myself very much in this way, so I'm a little bit in the dark as to what you're wanting. For instance, I can remember a few years ago, when I was at Muswell Hill, I went along and heard Handel's Messiah at the Alexandra Palace, and thoroughly enjoyed that. But I didn't feel any particular desire to hear it in company with the rest of the Order, sort of thing. If they were happy to go and hear it and enjoy it the music, fine; if they don't, it doesn't disturb my enjoyment of the music.

Ananda: Oh yes, sure. I feel ...

S: Therefore, I'm not quite clear what you're getting at or why this means so much to you.

Ananda: It seems to be connected with the idea of sharing basically. Sharing a meaningful experience with people who I feel I should relate my life more closely to on a deeper level, that's really all it is. Sure, I can enjoy music perfectly well on my own, very much.

S: But you evidently have a hankering after enjoying it in the company, as it were, of others?

Ananda: Maybe it's more like an idea being imposed on the emotional - the actual reality. I feel I should want to share my experience.

S: Ah. Because I notice that you use this word every now and then, even at the beginning - when you said we should have an evening for this or should have that particular kind of activity; as though almost you were insisting that others should be artists. I'm sure you weren't, but the language almost suggested that. As if to say we've all got to be artists so that you can relate to us on that level, when we don't want to be artists ...

Marichi: And you just now said you felt you should share - you should get close to people, you should share with these people although they didn't want to.

Ananda: Well, I want to be close to the people in the Order on as personal a level as possible, yes. But it's the way in which that is worked out in practice which I'm trying to sort out in my mind.

S: I think what isn't clear - maybe not in anybody's mind - is how one does relate, if one does relate at all, through the arts. Is it by way of performer and audience, or is it by way of mutual performance - doing it all together, playing together, how does one do it? - or by writing something which others read, producer and consumer as it were?

Ananda: I see it as a sort of mutual involvement of energies.

S: You seem to see it in terms of people actually doing the same thing together. I wonder whether it needs to be like that.

Chintamani: In my experience I think that art is by its nature a very solitary thing.

___: Creativity is ...

[37]

Padmaraja: Well, maybe he's a frustrated musician, because that seems to be very much the nature of making music.

Asvaji: It seems to me that all these activities, whether one indulges in an artistic activity by oneself or in the company of other people, whether it's orchestrated or a set of individual performances as one - you should cultivate the same - should; there's the word again - attitude in each, that you are part of a unity of involvement, each part affecting the other parts, yourself being involved with other people, giving out and taking in.

Ananda: I appreciate that. I'm not so much concerned - I think the emphasis in this discussion is slightly wrong - I'm not so much concerned with the actual external expression of the thing. I'm not concerned with actually producing some work of art together. It's purely a psychological, or spiritual, type of thing, the need for involvement of my more deeper experience with the Order. That's what it comes down to. And I thought of the idea of the arts as a vehicle for doing it, that's all.

S: I'm sure it can be a vehicle, but it can only be a vehicle when, to change the metaphor, it's a common language for both parties. Otherwise you can't.

___: It seems to me that the arts, and music particularly, enables you to relate right across time, because you can read what somebody maybe has written about a piece of music and maybe wrote it a few hundred years ago, and you know the piece of music now, and you can judge that you have the same experience as that person. And so the arts really are a non-temporal communication, a non-spatial communication. It's as though they pop out of the void every now and again when one involves with it.

So when you listen to a piece of music, you're not only experiencing it just yourself, you're experiencing it all the other times that that music's ever been experienced. And in that way you relate to people.

S: Also, what occurs to me with regard to what Ananda has been saying in connection with this question of sharing, it suggests that you feel very strongly you are not sharing.

Ananda: Yes, that's true.

S: So is this a general feeling? Because obviously you feel you're not sharing, you feel you should share; you yourself have got an involvement with the arts, so therefore it occurs to you that maybe we could share through the arts. (Ananda agreeing.) You seem to take the sharing as your starting point. That suggests that you feel that you're not sharing.

Ananda: There is that. I feel quite a gulf, yes. One or two or three Order members, yes, sure, but I feel the Order should be a whole.

S: Could you say a bit more as to what you mean by sharing? What is involved here? It seems to be something different from being in communication with, or on the same wavelength as - what does one exactly mean by sharing?

Ananda: I don't feel it's different. I just feel that lack of communication on a non-conceptual level.

S: Ah, I think we're getting a bit closer now, because - and we're also getting on to the afternoon's topic, and we've gone way over time. I think we'll have to break off in a few minutes, but continue in the afternoon session. Because ...

Ananda: The essence is communication -

[38]

S: In other words, it seems to be for you a communication problem, or question. And you seem to be thinking of the arts as a sort of solution to this. (Ananda agreeing.) But before we do break up - for lunch, I hope, I just want to say something which I have said to some of you before, but not everybody has heard it, in connection with my own experience when I was in Cornwall, and when I was physically separated from Order members, and just seeing the odd Order member just occasionally for a very short period. But I can say very categorically that I have never felt more in contact and communication with Order members than then. And it wasn't because I was writing letters or anything like that; it was quite different from that.

So I feel that perhaps, if there is any solution, it is to be sought more along those lines, and I'd be very interested to hear later on, when people start going away for their own solitary retreats, how they feel in this respect - if they do in fact feel more communication. I can certainly say that I felt much closer, that I was closer to other Order members and they were closer to me. And sometimes it was a sort of visual experience, that I could see them all sitting round and feel them all there in sort of concentric circles, in a way that I had not felt before, certainly not when I was in London and seeing many of them every day and talking. So I think there may be some sort of pointer here.

Anyway, let's carry it on after we've had our lunch. The next session is - what did we say? Three o'clock. All right. So it'll be lunch and a little fresh air.

[End of side one]

[side two]

Session 2

S: We're going to more or less carry on from where we left off before lunch and that also happens to be appropriate, because in this session we're going to be concerned with the whole question of communication within the Order - that is to say, communication between or among Order members. I think most of you know, or at least many of you know, that this is one of things that we have been very much concerned with over the years within the Order: our contact with one another, our communication with one another, or getting to know one another, our sort of mutual generation of

energy on a spiritual level. Sometimes we know there have been quite unfortunate failures and lapses of communication, and maybe they still occur to some extent.

So in this session we are concerned with that whole area of our experience. So I am wondering whether anybody has anything to say, anything that they'd like to bring up or any comments that they'd like to make about this whole question of communication within the Order: whether people feel it's going satisfactorily, or whether they personally feel that there isn't enough communication or communication of the right kind, or if they have any suggestions to make.

Vangisa: Bhante, might I before we generally start, come back to a point you raised earlier on about your experience of actual communication by a particular person? An important aspect ... I was wondering if you thought it might be a good idea to deal with that to some extent first. It's a matter of communication among the Order as a unit, not just a unit of individuals but more energy, force, level ... the energy actually generated by the [39] existence of the Order.

S: Well, it's like a sort of magnetic field. I don't know whether that's scientifically feasible, but that's how I think of it, how I feel it. I also feel it's like a gigantic spider's web, all these very thin filaments stretching in all directions and crisscrossing - we hope in a harmonious and mandala-like fashion. And I feel as though I'm also on that sort of network, and I receive little impulses and tremors from other parts of the network, that I'm in touch with other Order members, as it were, on that level, through that sort of network. This is the way I feel it and experience it.

But I did say, and this is what in fact I was emphasizing, that I felt this much more than ever before, after being away from people, away from the Order physically. So I simply wanted to strike a note of caution and remind people that contact and communication are not necessarily just physical and external. There's another level which I think is there all the time, but which people are not often very conscious of or very aware of, and in which perhaps they don't have all that much trust and confidence, but it is there.

Chanda: Could we try and do it more on a social level, meaning that the only time we meet there's either meditation and things like that - I mean outside. I mean if two people are interested in, say, ballet, for one...

S: All right, what are we discussing now?

Chanda: We're talking about communication by finding out how can I communicate with him if I don't know what his natural interests are? Might find the two of us have got some interest in common, so we can at least communicate on that wavelength.

S: Well, what do people feel about this?

___: It could be done through the register.

Chanda: Oh that's a good thing.

Ananda: Can I have your questionnaire? (Laughter.)

Vangisa: On the whole though, as far as I ... concerned, I would suggest members of the Order are on the whole very busy one way or another in whatever activities they happen to be involved in outside, their own personal practice and there is work within the Order. It doesn't really leave them an awful lot of time to go to the ballet.

S: I thought you were going to say it doesn't leave an awful lot of time for going off into solitary retreat!

Vangisa: Oh no, no! No, I mean, for other kinds of what would normally be considered good from the point of view of communication.

S: I think maybe we're going a bit too fast. What do people feel about the present level of communication and what is happening? Maybe we should look at that first.

Chanda: Well, I would say that we don't know enough yet. That's the way I feel.

___: I feel a sort of identification with the directions of the Order and in that way I feel an identification and I suppose a communication with other people in it, but I don't actually feel, with one or two exceptions, that any of the people in the Order are close friends.

[40]

Ananda: I think the question is should we really anything? That seems to be the ...

S: Well, what does one mean by 'close friends'?

___: I mean really someone who has got a background of shared experience, so that there's a closer understanding of an individual's reactions in certain situations.

___: Or just being open with one another.

___: No, that's not really what I mean by friendship I don't think. I think I can be more open, in fact, with a complete stranger than I can with someone I know just vaguely quite often.

Chanda: It's an interesting point really because we are the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and the word must mean something ...

S: Well, we're more than the Friends of the Order, we are the Order.

Chanda: I mean the word is even used in our title - the 'Friends'.

Chintamani: I personally don't feel obliged for a start to get on well and closely with everybody in the Order. I mean I don't think it's something one can force. I quite naturally find certain affinities with certain people.

Chanda: You can do it in your own way though, surely? Not any set patterned way, you can do it.

Chintamani: Well, yes, that's what I was saying: What I'm saying is that I don't think it's going to happen with everybody in the Order. I don't feel obliged for that to happen, not on the sort of level of friendship.

S: I think there's a certain ambiguity in words like 'friendship', and even more in words like 'closeness'. People often talk of being close, but what do they really mean by that? It's not at all clear to me what they usually mean.

Ratnapani: Often it's just so many signals have been exchanged, that you've accepted the situation (in the way we were talking before?) that everybody is happy and are members of the same group. Looking back on past friendships what it has in fact meant. We know the same jokes, respond to the same signals and - I find it often like slipping into that with Order members, and I prefer - often I find it more valuable spiritually, feeling a bit apprehensive with someone, someone who puts me ill at ease, so that there is an effort made to communicate on the highest level of which we are capable. Bypassing all the underneath friendliness and chumminess.

S: You see, anthropologists talk about something that they call grooming. You must have read about this in *The Naked Ape*, I think? Grooming with animals has got a very important function: animals of the same species groom one another as a sort of sign of friendliness, to establish a sort of contact. They pick out one another's fleas. So the anthropologists have also coined the term 'grooming talk' among humans, that your talk is on that sort of grooming level. That's all that you're really doing. But whether that is closeness or friendship from a more spiritual point of view, I think that is open to question. So when we talk about communication within the Order, do we mean that we must be very actively grooming one another, by talk or in other ways, or [41] do we mean something more than that or different thing from that at least?

Ananda: Surely we mean spiritual fellowship.

S: Spiritual fellowship.

Ananda: All going in the same direction.

S: Yes. So also that raises the question: to what extent does spiritual fellowship coincide with ordinary friendship and chumminess, as it were? I think perhaps we've tended to assume that they more or less coincide, but perhaps they don't.

Chintamani: I don't think that's what I meant; one grows out of the other.

Ratnapani: I think you can miss one and have the other; you can miss the chumminess and have the real friendship, the spiritual friendship, with spiritual colleagues - without ever spending time having dinner together or anything else, but when you come into contact in the context of the Order the contact is there, and you don't especially want to see each other any other time.

Ananda: You may be right, but I think with anything it requires each of the individuals concerned to have been through a lot.

Ratnapani: What you have to do is appeal often to their individuality...

Vangisa: What strikes me about the Order and the (?) is - I always think about it, this kind of question is raised, and I don't think it's anything to do with ordinary association, friendship, that kind of thing, I hadn't thought in terms of grooming, and so on, but ordinary friendship and association normally involve the antithesis of any kind of bond in common, whatever it may be. And it seems to me personally, the impression I get is that there is a difference in experience between people who at the present moment tend to be living in or at the Centre and spending all their time actually physically involved in the Centre, and those who aren't. And probably those who aren't are more likely at this point, depending on your degree of involvement at the moment to be aware of this.

But it seems to me that there is a definite flow of energy coming through the Order, irrespective of the identity of the members involved, and every member of the Order is coloured by this. This flow of energy in so far as we experience it, can be said to originate in us, or you can say it originates from the heart of Bhante himself, but it still is something much wider than that, and it includes the whole line of Sanghas, of gurus, of everybody - you can trace it right back through all the historical individuals if you want to, but it is a definite perception of energy coming from something much way out beyond us and manifesting right now in us. And this is our experience of Sangha. Well, I suppose I'd better leave it there for the moment. But this is for me quite the antithesis of ordinary hanging around together and getting to know one another. Obviously you don't feel this - feel with every individual at every moment - a complete closeness or bond in common, but you can feel it with a lot of individuals, and you certainly feel it in the Order ... and you can feel it stronger with some individuals at some times than you would normally expect to experience this kind of thing in other circumstances, a different kind of thing.

S: And you can experience it also, quite definitely, despite even incompatibilities on the purely personal level.

[42]

Vangisa: Yes, yes, and even in spite of what might have previously seemed to be barriers to communication between you and this other individual for all kinds of ordinary obvious reasons that would come between an ordinary communication or ordinary friendship. They just don't seem to exist ...

Vajradaka: There was a period last year during your sabbatical when a group of us were quite involved at the Centre and in the Centre business. We went out to Hampstead Heath actually on a study group that we'd organized ourselves, and we realized that we were - I think there were five of us, and we were all completely different, and none of us would have dreamt that we'd have been friendly together or even thought about coming together or doing anything together in any other situation other than the one that we were in. And we were all very close. But in any other situation it would never have happened, other than the spiritual relationship.

Dharmapala: ...has been saying sort of corresponds to your experience in that this energy is what you have experienced from members of the Order, but often when we're together the personality seems to get in the way, you don't realize that this is going on and that you do have ...

S: I must also say that during my sabbatical from time to time I did see people, including Order

members, not very many, but every few weeks I saw someone. And I noticed that usually, whatever had to be said - that is to say, the meaningful communication - didn't last for very long. I often felt that ten minutes was all that one really needed. After that, the level just abruptly lowered, and one wasn't really saying anything. In fact, sometimes I terminated the interview quite sharply and quite quickly, because whatever exchange was possible or necessary had been effected; so why do you have to just go on talking? And in some cases ten minutes was quite enough; in other cases, more time. In some other cases I didn't terminate the interview as quickly as I would have liked to because the particular person would evidently have felt that I was being rude or so on; perhaps they weren't an Order member, not in a position to understand so well, so I just sort of played along. But I was quite conscious in my own mind that in fact the interview has ended, that communication has ended. So you're not necessarily more in touch with people or closer to them or communicating with them more by just spending more time with them or talking to them more - not necessarily. Maybe; but certainly not necessarily.

: I've felt often at Order meetings at the Centre on Fridays that I wished we'd just stop talking and just sit there right after the meditation. Say there's a reading and then it's discussed, and perhaps all that's going to be said about the reading is said. We then go on and often I'd feel more for the people if their mouth wasn't moving, I'd be more aware of them because I wouldn't have to bother with all the words ...

S: Well, we've found that on retreats, haven't we, during the silent period? We've found that very tangibly, were very aware of one another without any talking, in fact more aware than we are usually when talking.

All that I am doing now, or trying to do, is just to question whether what we think is communication is always communication, in fact, and also to point out that there are other levels of communication that perhaps we pay less attention to than we ought. And it's very true what Vangisa says about energy: there is a lot of energy in the Order at the moment, and it isn't just the energy generated by the members of the Order in their personal capacities; it does seem that the Order has become a sort of vehicle for an energy that can only be described as [43] spiritual, and it certainly does link up with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and gurus and so forth.

Ananda: I've felt a tremendous amount of vigour and energy sometimes, not really freely swimming but ...

Vangisa: Another slight corollary of that as far as individual Order members are concerned, the individual is said to represent all this in himself and is therefore entitled from all the others to the same kind of respect as you would pay to... Each one of them is a living incarnation of the Three Jewels, and I think we should remember this in our relationships with one another.

Chanda: The nearest experience I've ever had to this, Bhante, occurred in the old days when I was born, every street was a community. Every street, everybody knew one another, you always knew their bad sides and their good sides, and you saw them every day and you ate with them and drank with them, and you grew to like them just because you knew more of them. And I think myself this is what's missing. We don't know more of the people. Here we just know ... I suppose I see one chappie about once a month. What do I know? I don't know his interests, I don't know how to get to him. Whereas we were at our local and everybody was there and there was this family community and we did know how to understand people. This is lacking, we don't know the people.

S: What you say is true, but at the same time I think we have to be careful to distinguish between knowing someone and knowing about them.

Chanda: Well, that's what I mean - knowing about them, I mean you get to know about them ...

S: Yes, but you don't necessarily get to know them by knowing about them.

Chanda: No, but it's a medium to use. You do know about them.

S: I increasingly wonder about that, actually.

Chanda: Well, if I've only seen one man twice and yet if I say I'm working with a workmate, I know more about him, say we're both on a bench, I know more about him because I'm with him 48 hours a

week, we converse about different things, horse-racing, betting and things like that, I know more about him there than I know ...

S: Yes, but you may not know him better.

Chanda: No, but it beats warts. If I only saw a man two hours in a year I'd know nothing about him.

S: It could be, but not necessarily. I think it's that that we have to watch: that it is in fact going in that direction, and is not just remaining on the level of knowing about.

___: I think it's possible to have very strong communication with someone you meet once.

___: Very much so.

S: For instance, to put it in much more concrete and personal terms, someone asked me some weeks ago, apropos of my retreat and the ordinations, 'How do you feel about ordaining people that you don't know?' Or, in Chanda's terms, really it would mean 'that you don't know about'? And I said, 'I feel quite happy [44] about that, because I feel that I know them when I ordain them, because it is a sort of contact or communication on a spiritual level. I don't need to know much about them; that isn't necessary.' But when you meet them, you know them, and it may only be for two or three times. It isn't necessary for me to have long discussions with people and to know all their history and what they've done and what they haven't done and their problems, etc. It isn't necessary to know all that for the ordination to be effective. To the extent that it is something spiritual it bypasses all that.

Chanda: The trying to know the person becomes its own barrier. If we have like dharma classes and things like that and we're learning. They should be good enough, but trying to go beyond that ...

S: We do have to go step by step, sure, and for most people it is a question of you get to know someone, then you know about them a bit, and then you use that as a sort of medium, and then you get to know them. This is the usual pattern. We just have to be careful - this is all that I'm saying - that we don't get stuck at the 'knowing about', and mistake that for really knowing.

But, for instance - this is something we'll be discussing later - we shall be having what we call a kalyana mitra system whereby two people who have been closely associated with a candidate for ordination declare that in their opinion that person is now ready for ordination. So if I, for instance, am in contact with those two people, I can trust their judgement, and through them I am in contact also with that person spiritually. I don't need to be in direct contact on the purely personal level in that sort of knowing about way. That just isn't necessary. Otherwise, what a job! I can't even remember it all, I don't bother to remember any more the personal details. If I happen to remember them, OK; but if I think of someone, or such-and-such Order member, it may be in London, it may be in Helsinki, it may be in New Zealand - I am in contact with them, though I may not remember any of the personal details. Actually I do remember quite a bit, but as old age creeps on I might forget more and more.

Chintamani: So you usually block that kind of communication?

S: Too much contact.

Chintamani: Can you be more specific?

S: I think one will be much more aware of this and sensitive to it if one gets away on one's own for a bit. I really do.

___: When you say know somebody, do you mean recognizing their personality make-up, or are you meaning knowing them in some kind of metaphysical sense?

S: Definitely a metaphysical sense, yes.

Vajradaka: Could you use the word essence?

S: It's not a very Buddhistic word, but - yes, you could use it. Yes, you could.

___: There is a Buddhist equivalent, though, isn't there?

S: Well, you could have 'Buddha-nature'. But even these terms don't really apply very strictly. They're much too abstract. It's as though it's, yes, essence is the best word, just the innermost essence of that particular person.

___: That's nothing any different from your own essence [45] is it? I can't understand how we can be individual - you see, I can look at somebody - and it's happened on occasions, I recognize them, it's just a kind of act of recognition, and that recognition is also realizing that person's no different from me. And yet there seems something amiss there.

S: I think that's - what you call recognition that that person is no different from you - that is the mind, the intellect, if you like, adding its explanation of what has happened. I don't think that that is actually what happens; it's something more than that, if you like. But that's the best way in which the intellect can explain it; it's a sort of make sense of the experience from its point of view. I wouldn't say it was wrong to think that, even. But it ...

___: - is not complete.

S: After the experience, it follows upon the experience itself, it is not the experience itself.

I was even wondering - this is only wondering - whether it might not be a good idea some time in the future, when perhaps Order members are more widespread and scattered than they are now - if we have a regular time when all Order members meditate; recollect one another or practise metta bhavana towards other members of the Order, at the same time throughout the world. We'd have to work out the timing of that, because it wouldn't be the same by the clock everywhere.

Ananda: What do you feel about going back to the old Sangha practice in the Buddha's time when they met on the new-moon and full-moon nights, wherever they were, they tried to meet on that night?

S: I think that's a good idea, but it would rather disrupt our programme, which is not based on the lunar calendar, wouldn't it? We've tried, in a way, in earlier years, full-moon day observances. It doesn't seem to work. It could, perhaps, only work in communities.

Devamitra: It could actually work if you had a very late meeting, say at 10 o'clock at night.

S: Well, midnight meetings. It could in that way.

___: ...

Ananda: Is full moon the same all over the world?

S: No.

Vangisa: The full moon is the same moment all over the world, it's the time that's different.

S: I remember in India there was quite a problem with the different calendars. You'd have for instance, the Wesak full-moon day, which was quite important, and so according to the Indian calendar it was on the eighth of the month, say, of April, and according to the Sinhalese calendar it was on the seventh, and according to the Tibetan calendar it was on the ninth in the next month! So it's not easy.

But anyway, there's no reason why in this country we shouldn't have full-moon day observances.

Marichi: They're sort of beginning spontaneously.

Ananda: I feel we should print an FWBO calendar, based on a lunar cycle.

[46]

S: Ah, well, that's another point that we'll be discussing a bit later on, in the fourth session. But anyway, just to get back to what I was saying: I was just wondering - it isn't even a suggestion at the moment - whether at some time or other we shouldn't have an appointed time for, say, metta practice with particular reference to other Order members throughout the world. We mustn't take these things as just being nice, flowery, poetic, sentimental things. It is to be taken quite literally that you are in actual

contact with other people on a non-material level.

___: That is the main practice of the Arcane School.

S: Hm, right, yes. They have a particular time - ?

___: The new moon. They don't have any public meetings or not very many. They just all send metta.

S: One shouldn't be too self-conscious about it, or stretch and strain to be in contact: that isn't necessary. Just do the practice, just think in a very ordinary sort of way of other Order members, and you are in contact. Because there is so much that you have in common.

___: I did belong to a Gurdjieff Sufi group where we did do this. We all meditated at a certain time each day, and certainly this did give a feeling of a kind of inner knowing of the other people.

S: Good, yes.

___: I found that very good.

___: I've experienced this too, Bhante. I was in hospital and I used to meditate at the time that the community did and I felt I was very aware of the general happenings of the community.

S: Ah, good.

___: ...

S: Well, perhaps this is something which ought to be discussed, say, in detail in an Order meeting one day.

Chanda: The metta I think is very important.

___: There's one group of people who can be in triangles, three people communicating with those people. A whole triangular system joining up with other triangles, and they reckoned that it doesn't matter if you were doing at the same time as long as you're doing it. Even if you did it at different times. They reckoned that it didn't make any difference as long as you're all aware. It's mainly the awareness.

S: Well presumably if the energy can transcend space it can also transcend time.

___: [very very quietly spoken] ... doesn't know that ...

S: I would say that you are in contact with the person. The person is aware of that or is sensitive to it, but he is not taking any notice of it. He's allowing himself to be distracted, as it were. We often get thoughts, ideas, inspirations that we just brush aside.

Vajrabodhi: This project of full moon and new moon days, it doesn't take any effort, any money except to print it out in the [47] Order news-sheet, so we could start it straight away without exception now, so we have to ask somebody to write up the days.

S: Come on, then. OK. What is agreed, then? Is it to be the same time or different times or what?

Voices: The same time as far as practical.

S: Could someone work out the practicalities, then?

___: Yes, at 10 o'clock on a Wednesday.

___: Too late for us. It's twelve o'clock then.

Subhuti: Well there's a meditation class on before that, which is ...

S: We'll just have to move further South. West sorry.

Dharmapala: I think for those who can do it at a common time it would be good; for those who can't, I think it doesn't matter that much, providing that attitude ...

S: Well, what I suggest you do - draft something and then show it to me, and then we can circularize it in the news-sheet.

___: We can certainly let everybody here know ...

S: Well, if it can be calculated.

___: I don't know if I can do it this weekend.

S: In that case the news-sheet. What is it going to be? Is it going to be full moon and new moon?

Chanda: I don't think that's very interesting. I think if it was a given time once a month, a given day and given time, and everybody knows at that given time - say, every 30th of the month at 7 o'clock, that's all that's got to be done. 30th of the month, 7 o'clock you meditate all together, wherever you are.

Ananda: I think there's two points. Is it more important to all be thinking or aware of each other whatever we're doing and in whatever situation at the same time? Or do you feel it's really important that it should go by the moon or by ...?

S: Well, I didn't suggest the moon, that has been suggested. But it's open to discussion.

Devaraja: I think the full moon is very good because it has a good symbolic value... (Voices inaudible.)

Marichi: I was under the impression that it affected the rhythms of most living beings!

Ananda: ... every individual here, providing he knows the time, for one minute, just be aware of the Order. You don't have to be ...

S: I would suggest not just be aware, but to develop metta. If you develop metta, the awareness is there anyway.

Ananda: One could do this whatever situation you were in, whatever ...

S: Well, sure, but if you make it more specific it's more likely to ...

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___: If we knew all the dates well in advance, this could supersede any other activity ...

Vangisa: There are two points. One is the possible advantage, which certainly appeals to me, of sticking to the new moon and the full moon, but if we're not going to do that it could be as often as once a day, certainly once a week. If you're just going to keep it on the ordinary calendar, there's no point in limiting it to once or twice a month.

S: Well, no, but I think we should have certain definite occasions, probably, I think, once a fortnight is adequate. But people can do extra, certainly.

Subhuti: At the moment we have Order meetings on Friday nights - I don't know what other people have. If this was made a tradition in the Movement that there's always an Order meeting on a Friday night.

S: Is that good, by the way, in view of the fact that retreats often start on the Friday evening?

___: Well, there isn't a retreat every weekend.

: ...

___: Well, people not on a retreat could do it.

S: It looks to me as though this will have to be the subject of further detailed discussion.

Vajrabodhi: I once read something about telepathy and it seems to be that gravity has something to do with telepathy and it was pointed out that when there is a full moon the gravity on earth is minimal because there's a compensation of the moon and sun and it's at maximum when it's new moon, so if this thing really is so ... it makes sense to follow the cycles of the moon, because then we are ... on top of the gravity field.

___: ...

Chanda: There's also the possibility. I was reading that Russia has developed ESP to such a fine pitch that they can communicate in the field to all the officers from Headquarters. So it is this psychic factor. If it was done, if anybody is psychically minded, it would tend their psychic faculties to go too I think.

___: Another suggestion would be to make some small practice that all the Order members did in their daily practice connected with the Order and linking them all. Just make this part of their normal daily practice.

S: Well, that could well be the metta practice.

Ananda: You mean at specific times?

___: At the time you want to do it.

Ananda: There's a community in the south of France called l'Arche - I don't know if they still do this, but they used to have a system by which every two hours or four hours, a certain number of hours every day, they'd all stop whatever they were doing just for a few seconds and be very mindful and concentrate very hard, and develop ...for all the other members of the community and all the teachers all over the world wherever they were. This is effectively the same thing, but they did this regularly every day all together, when a bell or a gong went.

[49]

Chanda: You ever get it in the spiritualist movement, when you become a healer...at 10 o'clock, sending out to ... Some people do feel it.

___: One thing they do at Findhorn is that any time during the day when any group comes together before they start anything, or any time they feel that the energy is dropping, they have what they call an attunement when you just stand quietly together and centre ourselves and be together and this happens frequently if we feel it's necessary and it really unites the group.

___: Bhante, when practising bhavana so that the Order members are involved, would you advise that the so-called friendly person would be the Order member or the friendly and neutral and enemy would all be Order members?

S: Let's just think about this. I haven't considered this before. You start off with yourself, then you'd go on to the near and dear person; that would be another Order member with whom you were in personal contact and with whom you had a sort of affinity or with whom you got on very well in the ordinary human way. And then the neutral person would be an Order member that you'd never seen. And there are some, aren't there? There are several Order members here now who have never seen Akshobya, so how can you either like him or dislike him? So in place of a neutral person you should put an Order member whom you've never seen, whose name you've merely encountered in the news sheet. Or, failing that, an Order member towards whom you do feel fairly neutral - you neither like them nor dislike them, in the ordinary human way. And, human societies being what they are, there are probably Order members who irritate you sometimes, or whom you don't particularly like or whose style you don't like, or with whose opinions you don't agree, etc.: well, put them in the fourth place.

Vangisa: I have actually practised the bhavana using members of the Order.

S: All four?

Vangisa: I must say I've usually put somebody else in the fourth stage. I find that they usually start moving on. The neutral person today is no longer a neutral person by tomorrow, he has come up into the position of the dear friend.

___: A sort of merit system.

___: Well at the rate that you're ordaining new Order members ...

S: And also, when you go round the world, around the globe - you all remember this, I hope - in the way that we used to, in the guided meditation, you can go round the globe or you will soon be able to go round the globe, with Order members; if you go round in a clockwise direction from west to east just think of all the Order members in different countries.

___: They could represent that country: ...

S: Yes. But perhaps we should ask Suvratta to work out a few details and then show them to me, and if necessary we'll have a discussion, but if it all seems quite straightforward just publish it in the news-sheet.

___: How necessary do you think it is to communicate on a more personal relative level with other people? Do you think that's totally unnecessary?

[50]

S: Necessary for what ... ?

___: Well, I'll take away the word necessary and say desirable.

S: Well we have to go step by step. Suppose, for instance, you'd all never seen one another, but as soon as you were ordained you were put in a separate box and told to communicate just mentally. Well, you probably wouldn't be able to do it. You need something to start with. So no doubt the more ordinary kinds of communication and friendliness are necessary, to begin with, to get you a bit attuned to one another. But I think one just has to be very careful that it doesn't remain on that level, and I think that going away by oneself from time to time having solitary retreats will ensure, or at least will help, the development of that purely as it were spiritual communication. And then you can depend more and more on that, and less and less on the personal. But you probably - at first, at least - can't bypass the personal very easily.

___: Would you say that it happens quite a lot of the time, without us being aware of it?

S: I'm sure it does; especially with - I'm talking now about members of the Order who are practising together, who do sit together, but usually so busy either talking or doing something or getting on with other work that they are not able to be aware of the sort of impulses or whatever you like to call it, vibrations, that they are in fact receiving.

Subhuti: They might attribute them to something else.

S: Right, yes, even that.

___: When thoughts of people come to mind and they don't seem to have any connection in the sense of one thought leading to another, but they just come to mind or something.

Chanda: Bhante, supposing for argument's sake that somebody was where a different type of meditation had been taught, because in some books on yoga there are these different mental exercises, would it be loyal to you to use another man's system or not?

S: I think it would depend on what sort of system it was.

Chanda: Well, there are various exercises of - I was reading in some yoga books where you - it's very much like visualization, but - well, I'd have to reread them, I can't describe them, I know that ...

S: I know what you mean.

Chanda: - different techniques, almost the same, of course, but there's a little difference.

[End of tape 3 tape 4]

S: - and where another kind of method or practice they feel it might be useful, by all means talk to people about it, and if it is in fact useful let it circulate generally in the Movement. Because the whole field is so vast, and no one person can possibly cover everything, so different individual Order members will make different discoveries, and we hope come back into the Order with those and say, 'I think this is going to be useful to all of us.' And then we'll discuss it and try it.

Chintamani: I'd like to get back to a more specific point. In my [51] experience, I've been with somebody and the superficial knowing-about has reached its tedious end; and in the despair I realized that that is totally unsatisfactory in the Order, yet there's nothing else. So is that the point to start noticing, becoming aware of the possibilities of something else, because as far as I'm concerned ...

S: I'm all the time talking in this context with regard to communication within the Order.

Chintamani: Sure, that's what I mean.

S: If that other person is an Order member and is doing the same kind of practices and is in the same kind of path and accepting the same sort of ideal, the best thing probably for you to do is just to stop that level of communication with which you've got really bored, cut it off for a while, and try to cultivate the more purely spiritual, from a distance as it were.

Chintamani: Because you see at the moment, as far as I'm concerned, it's beginning to be a matter of concern. Or it may not be, because ...

S: Well, perhaps you ought to go away some time, be by yourself and see what happens. I think if you are even moderately sensitive you'll start feeling that you're not alone; you are in contact with other Order members who are all on the same wavelength; you're not cut off, even though you're physically not with them any more for the time being. And when you feel that and experience it, you've got more confidence in these things and you don't bother so much about the more ordinary kind of contact.

___: You're considering there what really is more a feeling communication, an emotional communication. Do you think that same process, a physical process, can be used to transmit information? In other words, do you - have you experienced or do you believe in a kind of factual telepathy?

S: Oh, I think that is possible, yes. I think we shouldn't be misled by this or try to experiment with it. I'm not quite happy about that. I am quite sure it is possible, but it's not so much that that we should be concerned about.

___: I've experienced this with Sensei () Sometimes on retreats I get things that I wasn't clear at all about, I've received them in my sleep and they'd be very clear...

___: Well, assuming we don't go in for that, we'll have to rely on the Order news-sheet. [Laughter]

S: Well, a certain amount of transmission of information will take place, but it will happen quite spontaneously. But one shouldn't, I think, try to cultivate that. And what I call the spiritual communication, for want of a better term, I wouldn't call it emotional. It's not got an emotional oooooh 'together' - you know, 'we're close' - it's not like that at all. In a way, it's quite cool, quite factual. I can only describe it as spiritual. It's more of the nature of a sensitivity and awareness. It's not a strong, powerful, gushing feeling or anything like that.

But anyway, what were you going to say, Suvratta?

Suvratta: Well, ...

S: No, he hasn't!

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Suvratta: To bring it a little down a bit. Has anyone got anything to say about the Order news-sheet?

Ananda: Yes. I had a feeling about it some while ago. I feel that the idea that I originally had for that, what I said yesterday, was that it should be very much of material which is specifically concerned with the Order, which is unsuitable for the Newsletter, in other words not news reports of general events which are of general interest. And it should be biased, if at all, against the news angle and towards communicating spiritual experiences of some sort. That was my particular feeling about it at the time. Like there was a thing on Sangha Day, which maybe I felt wasn't all that appropriate, that was more of general interest.

___: I think it may be the Newsletter can ... by sending out news of actual things that are going to happen in time for Order members maybe to get to things [Laughter], and the news sheet doesn't have to - I'm not saying anything ... I feel Order members do need to know if things are going to happen.

Ananda: Oh I'm not suggesting there shouldn't be news about the Order. I'm just saying that things which are of general interest should be reserved for the general Newsletter.

___: I'm just suggesting practically Order members generally need to know when things are happening. If the Newsletter can carry that, then the Order Newsletter won't need to ...

S: We're really now into the question of the function of the news-sheet. So has anybody got anything to say about that?

___: I think that the Newsletter isn't sufficient in itself as a medium for news. We need a much quicker turnaround.

___: Yes, ...

Ananda: But then you need that for everybody, really, not just for the Order.

S: Well, inasmuch as Order members are rather at the centre of things and responsible for initiating things, I would say that they would need to know even matters of ordinary interest rather more quickly than other people. And then, in addition to that, there are items of information which concern the Order as such only, and therefore should be limited to the Order.

Ananda: In a sense, I feel we need to almost ...

Marichi: There is this promised broadsheet which is going to come out which will ...

Ananda: We need a business and forthcoming events sheet.

S: We're into a quite a different track now. We're talking about the Order news-sheet, so let's stick to that.

Ananda: I am talking about the Order news-sheet. That this really fulfils two functions: one concerns forthcoming events for the information of Order members, the other for spiritual communication, for want of a better word. And obviously both are necessary.

S: I think it is simply - to put it at its simplest - the Order news-sheet should simply be a vehicle for Order members to tell one another about things they want to tell one another about. If the secretary wants, for instance, that Order members should know about a certain function more quickly than through the Newsletter or word of mouth, then he or she will send it for [53] publication in the Order news-sheet. Or if someone has a wonderful experience they want to share with other Order members, they will write a little item about it for the Order news-sheet. Or if they have some comments to make on a retreat which are not suitable for the general ear, they will make them through the Order news-sheet. Et cetera. So I think it seems quite straightforward, then.

Anyone got any other ideas?

Vajrabodhi: I just thought that some news items may be very delicate or difficult to decide whether it's suitable for the general audience or all of the Order, for example Asvajit's visit to the Buddhist Society was about - I didn't know if it should have been public or not. What do you think about that?

S: Well, it was included with the Order news-sheet, and I thought that that was more suitable. I think it would have been a mistake to put it in the Newsletter.

Asvajit: I would not have written the same thing at all for the Newsletter.

S: It's not a question of someone deciding whether it goes in here or whether it goes in there. It's what the individual person is writing for. If he writes it for the Order news-sheet, it goes into the Order news-sheet. If he writes it for the Newsletter, it goes into the Newsletter. It's up to him to decide. Though, of course, the editor may say, if he gets something for the Newsletter which is suitable for the Order news-sheet, he might well say, 'I don't really think this is the right sort of thing to be saying to everybody.' But I think most individual contributors will just know, just as Asvajit knew; he had it definitely in mind to communicate only with other Order members on this matter.

Chanda: more of a personal...

S: Yes, he wasn't intending to communicate with the general readership of the FWBO Newsletter, so there is no problem.

___: It also might be a useful function of the Order news-sheet if, when you get hold of information about somebody moving from somewhere to somewhere else ...

Suvratta: That's a marvellous idea - the only thing is I don't get hold of that information because people don't tell me. So please take note: tell me where they move to.

___: Can we have your address? [Laughter]

S: Telephone number?

Ananda: - everybody's present address and contact telephone number, yes, this weekend. Everybody in the room.

Suvratta: Yes, could you all let me have your current addresses and contact telephone numbers, if I haven't got them already? 36 Wilford Road, London NW5. If anyone forgets that, I go to the Centre at Archway at least once a week, so you can just write to me there.

___: I've left my address there for you a couple of times, and I've had no ...

Suvratta: Well, it probably disappeared, because I have a look round every time I go there to see if there's anything for me.

___: I think it's very important that there is a central file or situation or person -

[54]

S: Yes, this is coming up in the fourth session. We've already started, in fact, something - you may or may not be aware of that, but we are going to go into this in our last session. This is very important, as you say.

Just one thing occurs to me now - I'd like to settle it - this Newsletter and news-sheet, it's all very confusing. Can't we give the Order news-sheet a name?

Voices: Yes. Good idea.

S: And then it's much easier to refer to it and know what we're talking about, and not confuse it with the Newsletter. Because it's sometimes been called the Order newsletter and sometimes the Order news-sheet and sometimes it's the communication sheet. So can't we just give it a name and be done with it?

Ratnapani: 'HUM'. (Laughter.)

Asvajit: Well, that's it, then.

: ...tion of the Order?

S: No, no, no. We're not having that. Let's think what it's meant to do, what is it meant to do?

Ananda: Communicate, basically.

S: Yes, it's basically that, isn't it? (Voices.) 'Conch', that's not bad. Now we're getting into - 'Conch', that's not bad. But conches are one-way, aren't they? Can't we perhaps have something more reciprocal?

Ratnapani: "Telephone"? (Laughter.)

S: You could have a Sanskrit word which is very beautiful, but they've adopted it for All-India Radio. It's called Akashvani, which means 'the voice of the ether'. Anyway, All-India Radio have got in first.

(Suggestions.)

Ananda: What's the Sanskrit for voice?

S: Voice: oh, you could say vacana, ghosha, sanghaghosa, sanghavacana. I think something maybe like that.

___: What's the plural of daka?

S: Dak... No, I don't ...

Ananda: I like vacana.

S: Vacana is speech or voice or communication.

___: Is there a word for spiritual voice?

S: Oh - just a minute - you could have antaravani, which means - vani is song, but it's used in the sense of voice; antara is 'from within'. No, that doesn't sound quite right. (Voices.)

Chintamani: Doesn't Manjushri mean soft-spoken, or Manjughosa?

S: Yes, manju is soft, gentle; ghosa is voice. Manjughosa. Oh, what about that, then?

: Why not ... ?

[55]

S: Ah, now you're getting really near. (Voices.) No, why not Vak? Vak? (Some titters.) ... primordial word. V.A.K. Not to be pronounced as 'bark'. Vak is simply speech, in the sense of the primordial speech.

Devaraja: What about Shabda?

S: Shabda, there's also shabda. I think Shabda's better, actually. Shabda, yes, shabda, not vak, sorry. Shabda.

___: What does shabda mean?

S: Shabda means word, voice, sound; mantric sound, also. And it has the connotation of the primordial sound, almost the logos. OK, Shabda, then. That sounds very good, yes, thank you. Shabda. No, it's S.H. If it's just an S by itself it'll be - yes it's Sh, Sh, it'll be an S with a stroke over it. So we'll spell it with an S.H. S.H.A.B.D.A.

Nagabodhi: Is it a Sanskrit word?

S: Yes. Yes, that's very good, actually, Shabda. Hm.

So I think we're clear now about its function: it's a medium for any Order member to say what he or

she feels like saying on any level ...

___: Usually within the Order ...

S: - to other Order members.

___: But briefly!

S: But briefly, yes. Whether it's pure and simple factual information, change of address or telephone number, or whether it's a spiritual experience or a comment or a criticism or a suggestion; or just something you just happen to have written and you want to share it; just that. And we need not bother too much about format and - maybe just be a bundle of sheets with a staple through, it may be simply that. I don't think it's necessary to spend much time and trouble about the production and format, provided it's just readable.

Ananda: What I do feel about it is that it should be really up to date and ...

S: You're happy about that?

Suvratta: Yes.

Ananda: And maybe we could have a date for receiving. (Laughter.) Well, the previous ones have come out in the middle of the month.

S: We've had three now, haven't we?

Suvratta: Yes. I decided not to do one this month.

Mangala: Is once a month enough?

Suvratta: Enough for me! Perhaps someone else could take it over ...

S: I think once a month is quite enough. But anyway, we'll talk about that bit in our fourth session.

Anyway, anything more about communication within the Order, on other levels, in other ways, etc? Or have we exhausted the [56] topic?

Chanda: The only thing is that I've more or less given time, at a certain moment of the day, not necessarily full moon day.

Ananda: Whatever activity you're into, almost anything, you can probably stop for a minute and just concentrate on ...

Chanda: It is any time, it's only about five minutes' concentration, as long as the time is exactly. (Voices.)

___: I don't know how much it already goes on but with London-centred Order members could write individually to Order members who are more scattered, especially to those ...

S: That's a good idea.

___: And not especially say to a particular friend of yours who's gone away. Write to somebody you don't know ...

S: I must say myself that letter-type communication is much improved. I mentioned to someone the other day that there are very few days now when I don't get two, three, or four letters from Order members, quite apart from other letters. That's a vast improvement on what it was before, even though, of course, we have more Order members, but even so the improvement of communication on that level is out of all proportion. There are very few days I don't get a letter from one or more Order members, very few days.

___: When you say 'improvement', you feel that people should write to you?

S: I don't say they should, but the letters that they do write are almost always very worth while. Yes, this is what I mean; they really do say something or communicate something.

___: I wonder if people who don't live in London could write to ...

S: Well, one or two Friends, of course, are absent - for instance, Karuna unavoidably. I keep in contact with her; she writes to me, but she is always happy to hear from others, obviously.

___: I was carrying out a slight experiment when I left, 'cause I wondered if anyone would write to me. And I did get one letter from an Order member. But that was all - I was a bit disappointed.

Ananda: Well, I only found out your address yesterday.

___: That isn't strictly true, because I left my address in about four places before I left ...

___: Well, if you leave it with me in future, with not less than a month's delay everyone will know it.

Vangisa: There are a lot of minor little things which - some people as I say who live in or near the Centre, and they assume because they know ...

(break in recording)

... communication to people who are not living in the depths of the country but are living a little bit further away than somewhere in Archway and Highgate.

[57]

S: Especially as regards the Order, it should not be difficult to communicate information and to so organize things that everybody does know; and if there isn't time to inform everybody of a change, well, don't make the change; stick to the previous arrangement.

Let's go into this question of correspondence and letters. It was suggested once that, for instance, newly-ordained people should write after their ordination to Order members with whom they couldn't very easily be in personal contact, just to inform them that 'I've been ordained and I'm So-and-so', and introduce themselves. For instance, it was especially mentioned that Akshobya in New Zealand would be very happy to get such letters. So would those to whom it applies please take note? If you have been newly ordained, bethink yourself: who are the Order members that I can't very easily see? and just write them off a nice letter. It certainly helps to keep up the communication, on that particular level at least.

___: It was those particular letters which made all the difference in New Zealand in contact with England when there were very few other correspondents. And these warm and friendly letters from newly ordained people made them feel that somebody cared... very, very grateful.

S: Yes, good. And also another point I'd like to make on this whole question of communication: I think Order members, especially those who are based on London and who are very much into things there and know what's going on should try as far as possible to do a bit of visiting, actual personal visiting, to Order members in more outlying parts of the country, and even prospective Order members. There will be a few ordinations quite soon of people who have been living outside London though being in contact with me and with the Movement over quite a long period; they are not going to move into London, and it will be incumbent upon Order members to go and see them whenever they can. They can certainly be sure of a good welcome. I think this has already been happening. A few Order members have made a point of going to see two or three of these people. But a bit of initiative is required.

And also - this is what we stressed before, but it becomes more and more important - if someone for any reason isn't seen or just seems to have dropped out, well, go and see that person, keep up the contact, find out what is happening. This will be looked after more systematically in future, with the help of what we call the kalyana mitra system, but that will be explained - I don't know, maybe we ought to do it now. I've got an idea that there's quite a lot going to be explained and discussed in our last session.

Maybe we should go into it now. Who hasn't heard about the kalyana mitra system? OK. All right, let's talk about that, because this is very much concerned with communication within the Order and the Order-to-be.

It arises out of consideration of the question of the current ordination class. We are rapidly approaching a situation where all those who were coming along to the Centre and the Movement - that is, especially in London - during the time that I was more or less in daily circulation have been, in fact, ordained, and there are very few left over from that period. And people are coming in now and thinking in terms of ordination, and even working towards it in various ways, who haven't had any personal contact with me, who might not even have seen me, who have merely heard my voice on tape; or maybe got a letter from me. So the question arises: what are we going to do with regard to the preparation of these people for ordination? Because formerly I was taking the responsibility myself, and there was a sort of [58] interim arrangement with the ordination class which is now almost exhausted now we've had these five ordinations today; there aren't many people left in that. So the question arises: what are we going to do next? And some of us have been thinking about this, and I've come to certain conclusions which I've been sharing with a few people.

One possibility is we could have much more regular and definite requirements; that is to say, no one is considered for ordination who hasn't been in regular attendance, say, for at least two years and they must have been on a minimum of two or three retreats and have gone through certain texts and perhaps even prepared a paper on Buddhism and read it. It could be done in this way. But I must say I'm not very happy about that. It would seem to be a little bit mechanical, and it seems also that even quite unsuitable people can wriggle through this kind of structure, and sometimes quite worthwhile people would be excluded. So I was thinking over it quite a lot, and the conclusion to which I have come is this: that we should have what I call a kalyana mitra system.

All right, what happens? Someone is coming along to the Friends; comes along to lectures or beginners' meditation class, comes along for a certain time; and then they decide they want to be really much more involved, they want to belong; even, they want to be ordained. So what happens then? They are asked to find two Order members to act as their kalyana mitras, two Order members who are prepared to take that responsibility. It will then be the responsibility of those two kalyana mitras to remain in very close contact with that particular person - that is to say, ordinary contact, actually seeing them, meeting and talking with them; spiritual contact, practising with them, studying with them; advising them what particular classes and courses to go on, even maybe going along with them and helping them in all possible ways. Even a group of kalyana mitras can get together and organize a special retreat for their particular proteges, and so on. So it will be up, then, to the kalyana mitras to say, as a result of their actual knowledge, personal and spiritual knowledge, of that particular person, that he or she is now ready for ordination. In other words, it will be individuals - I won't say judging, but sort of estimating, on the basis of their actual knowledge and experience, who is ready.

Now there are a few additions to this. When, for instance, someone is accepted by two Order members and they become his or her kalyana mitras, all three of them will come and see me, and there will be a very simple, almost like a little sort of ceremony, that this particular person is now with these two Order members as his or her kalyana mitras. And later on, it may be after six months, after a year, two years, three years, when the kalyana mitras feel ready, then they'll come to me either with or without that person and say, 'This person is now ready for ordination, Bhante.' And if I want to ask any questions or make any inquiries, I'll do that. And if we are all satisfied, then the date of the ordination will be fixed and it will be announced in Shabda.

Also - I should have mentioned this earlier - when someone is accepted by two kalyana mitras, that fact will also be published, that So-and-so is now a candidate for ordination with So-and-so and So-and-so as his or her kalyana mitras. And then that information will be known to everybody.

So this is the way in which things will be going on as from after the Convention. This is the rough outline. No doubt further elaborations or improvements can be made, but let's just hear what people feel about this - whether they foresee any difficulties or anything that hasn't been covered.

[59]

___: How will it apply to country groups with one Order member who - ?

S: Yes, I have thought about that. At present, it will have to be worked between the Order member in charge there and myself. We shall have to jointly be the two kalyana mitras, just as I was the one and

only kalyana mitra to begin with. But once we've got the initial nucleus and those people have got more experience, then this system can be introduced in other groups also.

Marichi: Could it be done by correspondence, or is that too distant?

Chanda: Does that also function for Friends of the Western Buddhist Order Surrey? I mean if we get big enough...

S: Just a minute. Could it function by correspondence? I would say that it would be preferable if someone could be in personal contact with both kalyana mitras, and this would be a factor to be taken into consideration. If you accept to be someone's kalyana mitra, you should be reasonably certain that it's going to be possible for you to be in contact and, for instance, both kalyana mitras should not be away for lengthy periods together, just abandoning the person for whom they are supposed to be responsible. If one kalyana mitra has to be away for a few weeks or a few months, well, that can be accommodated, and in that case correspondence would be very appropriate, but I don't think it could all be done by correspondence - in fact, I'm sure it couldn't.

What was your - ?

Chanda: The same facilities for the Centre would happen to any given new centres that have arisen, like Surrey or Edinburgh or anything like that? I'm talking about ...

S: Well, that's what I've said. It will then be worked between whoever is the person responsible there and myself. Just as, for instance, in Glasgow there are people thinking in terms of ordination: well, Gotami is the only Order member with regular contact with them; Vajradaka has had a week or so with them, so he's got some knowledge of them. So far I haven't met most of them - I've met one or two, but I'll have to go up and meet them all, and then we can come to some decision. But once there are some Order members there, and once some of them are more experienced, then they can start functioning as kalyana mitras for the new people then that come along maybe after two or three years.

___: You're not suggesting that immediately one becomes ordained one is eligible to be a kalyana mitra to somebody?

S: No, I think that will not be the case ...

___: So how does one know that one is - ?

S: Well, you'll have to ask me how I feel, and I shall say so frankly. Obviously, people will have to have a bit of experience and be relatively stable in themselves before they can undertake the position of kalyana mitra for others. And I think it's advisable to have two, because one may not always be available and three seems a nice little unit to get together for study. Of course, a kalyana mitra can be a kalyana mitra for two or three people - not more than that - so you may have, say, three or four kalyana mitras with between them seven or eight people for whom they are responsible, and then they can all go away for a retreat together, and work in that kind of way.

[60]

Ratnapani: Will this contact be maintained after the person has been ordained?

S: Yes, for so long as necessary. And there will always be a sort of, in a way, special bond between those people. It may be that after ordination, even though you don't need help or advice, maybe, as you did before, but you like to keep up contact; it's a good relationship that you've got, and you just keep it up. It just happens like that. In fact, after ordination, after years and years, it might even be that the positions are a bit reversed - that sometimes, even though you'd been someone's kalyana mitra in his early days, a time might come when you were glad to talk things over with him. That could also happen.

Ratnapani: I heard someone talking about this idea a little while ago. If someone sort of disappears over the horizon, and his two ex-kalyana mitras ..., is there any special responsibility for contacting him?

S: Right, yes. 'Cause we say that if someone doesn't come along to the Centre, or drops out, well, people ought to find out why; but if it's everybody's responsibility it becomes nobody's responsibility.

But if you've got two people who have got the specific responsibility, then it's much more likely to be attended to; in fact, I'm sure it will be.

Devamitra: There was one other point which I think you raised before, and that was the sex factor.

S: Yes, I also think that it would be better if at least one of the kalyana mitras was of the same sex as the person who is going to be ordained. In other words, you don't have a female candidate with two male kalyana mitras, or a male candidate with two female ones. It can either be both the same sex or one of each sex, but not both of the opposite sex.

___: How would the person interested in ordination get two kalyana mitras?

S: Well, the fact that there is this system will have to be made known. Even something can be written about it. In fact, I shall write something about it anyway, just for the guidance of Order members, and it's up to them to let it be known that there is this system and that such-and-such people are in a position to act as kalyana mitras, and they will then approach them. Also the kalyana mitra doesn't have to accept; you may feel that either it's too much of a responsibility; you don't have the time, or you may feel that that particular person wouldn't be very easy for you to handle. Or you might say, in a gentle, friendly way: 'I'm not able to take you on, but I think if you ask So-and-so he might be able to.' You could make that sort of suggestion.

Vajradaka: To begin with, do you want to stick with the idea that you mentioned at Tittleshall about having kalyana mitras - Order members being kalyana mitras - after they've been ordained for two years.

S: I think we can't think of it too much in terms of an actual period of time, but certainly there must be some sort of feeling, at least on my part, that that particular Order member is sufficiently experienced and emotionally stable to be able to function in that way.

Ananda: There's a question - ... the existing system - the present system up to now has been that people just come along, in a sense, to the preordination group, and that maybe after studying with this group for some time they say, 'Maybe I'd like to ask someone about ordination and consider it then.' So really [61] that part doesn't exist any more, does it? So the people who have been coming along to the preordination class who are not yet ordained will have to ...

S: Well, we'll have to decide on each individual case what is going to happen. Perhaps it might be just the time to raise that now. Do we know, in fact, who - could you tell us, Suvratta, who is still left over as it were, as yet unordained, who has been coming regularly to the ordination class?

Suvratta: Well, regularly, there's Liam(?), and Jacque's been coming - not exactly regularly, but he's been for half a dozen times. And ...

Mangala: Carol?

___: She couldn't come because she was studying.

Suvratta: She was going to put it off for a bit because she was studying. (Voices debating individuals, scarcely audible.) There's nobody as far as I know who is actively thinking about ordination...

Ananda: It feels to me like there's something going to be missing from the new system, ...

S: What's that?

Ananda: Well, this preparation period before people are ready to ask a kalyana mitra for the ordination training. There won't be this period in which people can have contact with the group and just say ...

S: Well, they can come along to the beginners' meditation class or the basic course. That doesn't commit them to even thinking about [ordination].

Marichi: Tuesday's going to be study.

S: Yes, Tuesday is also going to have a study period.

Ananda: So people who do not feel themselves ready to take on a kalyana mitra will just be asked to come to the beginners' class?

S: Yes, beginners' meditation class, they can come to a basic study course, they can come on weekend retreats, and they can join in on Tuesdays.

Lokamitra: Retreats should be quite small, and you hope that a third of the people will be Order members, so there should be a lot of contact there.

S: Right, that's true, yes. And as I said, I hope that we'll have fewer and fewer big, relatively unorganized things and more and more smaller intensive things.

But anyway, this is what has been thought about or developed.

___: What people living far away like, say, Gerald Stanton, in the new system?

S: Well, it'll just be up to some of us to keep in contact with him and go and see him. And he will come and see us when he can. He's always kept up correspondence with me, for years and years; he's a regular correspondent.

Devaraja: Gerald Stanton?

[62]

S: Yes, Gerald Stanton... at Southampton whom you saw.

Devaraja: ... !

S: Well, that's what I thought. I was very pleased you went to see him.

Devaraja: ...

S: Right. I'm quite interested you say that. I'm not surprised, but at the same time I disagree. [Laughter]

Devaraja: ...

S: It's true. In some ways he is, but in other ways he isn't. [Laughter] I've known Gerald for eight or nine years, and I've seen him change a lot. And he wrote to me - wrote about you too. [Laughter] He was very pleased to meet you, and he was very pleased to meet Asvajit and Druvah, and he's no fool. He takes his Buddhism very seriously. He's had a pretty hectic life. You might not believe it but he's led a very wild life, and he's settled down now a bit at 60 [Laughter]; and he takes everything very seriously, he's very ascetic. He apparently needs to be, because he's got a strong emotional nature. He feels that has to be kept within certain limits. And he's very strict about things like vegetarianism, about right livelihood, and so on and so forth. He's not the sort of person that we've got many of; we haven't got any like him. Therefore I think it's all the more good and useful that we don't just go by this personality thing. I know that there are some quite awkward corners to his personality, but his basic spiritual dedication is not second to anybody's. I'm also quite sure of that. And it'll be quite good for him to rub off on us and us to rub off on him. This is what I feel.

And anyway, what he wrote was that Asvajit and Druvah he'd met, he was very happy to meet them, he'd met you; he was very happy to meet you as well. You were a very different type from the others, he said, but he was quite sure that he could get on well and positively with all the other Order members if he was ordained. That was how he felt. And I'm sure he could.

Vangisa: There's one point here that strikes me because I don't know him and it might well be that I would have formed exactly the same reaction as Devaraja, but the fact that he said that does suggest that there is the possibility of a stereotype developing.

S: Well, this is what I feel. I've got two or three of these odd people who are going to be ordained, that you don't know [Laughter], and that have had a lot of contact with me and whom I do know. And they're not all going to be nice, comfortable people who fit in easily with all of you. Because some of them are going to be very different, and some of you might not like them very much, but they're just as

dedicated as you are - to say the least! [Laughter]

Devaraja: I'd like to give my impressions of him on meeting him, (Devaraja's comments are not transcribed here) He needs us!

S: I agree.

Devaraja: But I don't think he's necessarily in a sense making a positive contribution.

S: But I also think that in a way we need him. I'm quite convinced it's mutual. All that you say is true, but it's also true that we need him too. Because there is an emphasis there which many people in the Movement lack. True, he does go a bit to the other extreme, but many of us go to the opposite extreme.

[63]

And I think it'll be a bit corrective that we do have here in the Order people who are of different - for want of a better word - types, and that we are not all of the same happy, comfortable type that all get on well together. I'm sure that there are certain things that are accepted by most Order members that he probably will disagree with, and say why he disagrees. I think that will be quite good. Whether he's right or wrong, that's a different matter.

There are one or two others like this up my sleeve, as it were.

Devaraja: I slept out on Southampton docks because of him!

S: But I know him, so I know that your impression is quite an accurate impression. But I'd also say it's not a complete impression. There's a very good, very sweet side to Gerald that doesn't come out much - he's a bit gruff, you know ...

[end of Side 1, Side 2]

S: - he's got a bit of a beard, and so on. I've also seen some of his writings, which are really good. Though he's got no experience of writing, but it's very clear and very much to the point. And he's going to circulate some of them among Order members. There's one I really liked, called 'The Illusion of Youth'. And it is an illusion! And he's told us why, so we'll just await the instalment.

Dharmapala: It is very important that there is this physical contact. I know when I was up at Findhorn and I had some letters come through or when Gotami came up there, I just really got a lot of energy from that and felt very strongly linked again with the Order - I was feeling a bit distant.

S: Well, letters, even, can be very important, especially a good letter with something in it.

___: ... he lost contact ...

S: But the point I'd really like to emphasize in this connection is that, if someone Goes for Refuge, if he is devoted to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, whatever his personality we must have something in common. And it's on that common element that we have to take our stand.

Vangisa: I think actually ... I think there's a great danger of not just literally developing the idea of a stereotype kind of person that's a common denominator ... a certain general attitudes to life go with it as well, to the extent of being suspicious or perhaps hostile to others on the assumption that ours are right and ... just need not necessarily be so. After all one of the things that as individuals ... is an openness and flexibility, a practical lesson, for instance with anyone who has lived in complete isolation from others is that we would develop our own kind of colour and texture of Buddhism, which would be something completely personal. We would assume that this was Buddhism, of course it's not; it's our particular subjective group. Now the fact that we can come together means that we ... problems or difficulties learn to - not just learn we just quite naturally and easily accept that there isn't one particular little group in Buddhism which is completely ours, we take this for granted, we're used to it, it's part of the whole Buddhist atmosphere in which we live. But then we may in fact be excluding anything which isn't - any attitude or approach to life which isn't included in the sum total of us, and this I think we can be losing out on a great deal, and getting just as cosy and comfortable about what constitutes - not so much what constitutes the practice of Buddhism - but what constitutes for us [64] the most comfortable, easy way of approaching it.

Devaraja: I'm talking about this particular case because obviously this sparked off what you're saying. What I felt was that this man needed considerably more physical contact with the Movement and some basic training in meditation.

S: He has been on retreats. He has meditated on retreats, quite definitely, because I remember him very well. He came at one time very regularly and faithfully, but he stopped coming when the retreats got too big and too noisy, he said, and he felt that they became not very Buddhistic; it was too much of a sort of holiday for people, and that's why he stopped.

Lokamitra: He came on the last Keffolds retreat.

S: Did he?

Lokamitra: I seem to remember that. (Voices: Yes.)

Asvajit: He was known as 'the vegan'.

S: Yes. He is very strict about all these things.

Lokamitra: There won't be any more retreats like that soon.

S: He hasn't written about that one - I didn't know he'd been on that - but for about two years he hadn't been on retreats after coming on them in the early years very frequently. And this is what he wrote to me, that they weren't suitable for him, and he wasn't very contented. It may be he is a bit too serious in perhaps the wrong sort of way, but others perhaps are a bit unserious also in not quite the right sort of way. People have to adjust and, as I said, rub off on one another.

Vangisa: We've had a number of cases, too many cases, of exempting Order members who have left when, as it seems to me, they have begun to feel that the whole Movement was developing in a way that didn't completely suit them, and this is unfortunate, because the whole point of the development [obscured by creaking chairs] ... those individuals takes part...

S: I think there might even be a case for suggesting that when new people are ordained, instead of making a beeline for those that seem just like you, or very compatible or with a strong resemblance or for whom you feel affinity, you just think, 'That person isn't the sort of person at all I would have chosen to be friendly with: all right, I'll make a special effort to get to know that person' - rather than the other way round. Otherwise we are really just following likes and dislikes - even though they may be spiritual likes and dislikes. But if everybody's got that common commitment, we should be able to get on quite well with anybody. Maybe not pally and chummy in the worldly sense, but with a good positive feeling and a working relationship with them, at least. Whether it may be a great difference of age or of outlook or social background or education or interests or anything.

Asvajit: It almost seems as if there's really more opportunity for growth when things are a bit difficult than when they are easy. You're more on your toes.

S: And also, after all, we're not going to do it too drastically. If it was a question of ordaining twenty people like Gerald, I'd say, 'No, it's too much' - I'd agree. But I think one - because I am convinced he is basically sincere and has been a Buddhist for many years, I think it would be quite a positive thing for the Order as well as for him.

[65]

Marichi: It's obviously quite a step for him to want to join us too because we're so different.

S: Yes, right, he's 60, and he knows us - he's been on retreats, as I've said, and he hasn't altogether approved sometimes, but he's very loyal to us. He's always been in contact with me by post, and he has sent dana regularly for quite a while. And he'd like to have a Centre in Southampton. He's trying to get a council house with three bedrooms, and he's just one, and he would like to have something going on there. Suppose that does happen and we just ask another Order member to go and stay there with him - well, it might be a bit difficult for that Order member, but it would perhaps be quite a positive experience for both.

Devaraja: Just as a matter of interest - is Margaret going to get ordained ... ?

S: Yes. Though no date has been fixed. It may be within the next year.

Devaraja: I don't know if this is the right time - what's the situation about Geoffrey?

___: Shall I tell you? You know, after the meeting I rang Geoffrey Stokes ...

S: Oh, good!

___: - and just said 'How are you? and I hear you want your kesa', and I'll send it to you, and he said that if he'd known about this meeting he would have come. And there was a very friendly, warm feeling there, and he's now starting back to walk and he's feeling very friendly towards things that are going on. He definitely regards himself as an old ... He's asked to be put on the circulation for the news sheet, and I think we might see him back soon...

S: Geoffrey's case has simply been ...

___: He'd certainly like people to go and visit, particularly ...

S: Oh, good. Because it seems Geoffrey has simply been out of contact getting over psychological difficulties. He has even been in mental hospital, hasn't he, and had treatment? But he seems to be emerging from all that.

___: It was a very positive ...

S: Good, well, that's fine. And someone who went down last - who was that? - reported much the same sort of thing. Well, that's very good indeed, if he is out of the wood.

I think many of you know Margaret. She's also been going through it, she's had her ups and downs, but I must say quite frankly that I've got a very high regard for Margaret, and she has had quite a tough time in many ways but she's always been very very loyal to me personally and to the whole Movement, right from the beginning. I've known her since long before the Friends were started, in the pre-Friends days. I would also say she has a very good understanding of Buddhism; though she's only an ordinary housewife, she's got a very good mind, and she understands quite a lot. So I think people have to be quite open-minded and not write off anybody for what are really just conventional reasons. And once people are ordained, the fact that they are ordained and they are in the Order makes a great difference, and they will change. And others will change, too, through contact with them.

[66]

What did occur to me - I've wanted to refer to this for some time past, and I think we are going to incorporate it maybe at the time of ordinations - there's - I have to look up the text, but I remember - I think it's in the Majjhima Nikaya - there is a sutta where the Buddha goes through all his disciples one by one, saying what they are distinguished for or what they are best at. And every single one is praised. With Sariputra, who is said to be the greatest in respect of wisdom; Moggallana, the greatest in respect of psychic power; Kassapa, the greatest in respect of asceticism; Ananda, the greatest in respect of memory and popularity; somebody else greatest in respect of collecting almsfood; another greatest for meditative attainment; another greatest for capacity to preach the Dharma; another greatest in respect of patience; another greatest in respect of the amount of money he gave up when he became a monk. Everybody is greatest for something, the best at something, and I think this is very, very important - that in the Order we've got all sorts of people with all sorts of talents, all sorts of backgrounds, all sorts of differences, but they are all best at something, every single type of person and talent is to be appreciated. I think this is a very important attitude. So I feel if this sutta wasn't too lengthy or repetitious we might even use it on the occasion of ordinations as a reading, if I can find it; as far as I remember it is in the Majjhima Nikaya. So this is the sort of attitude which should happen. We don't want to have this sort of - I'm not suggesting you were thinking of this, but I'm only going now on association of ideas. We shouldn't just aim at having one sort of person or two or three kinds of people in the Order. We might have a very strange variety, but all united through basic things.

Gosh, time has gone quickly, but let's carry on a bit longer.

Gotami: I can't quite remember if we ascertained if all the people who aren't at the moment ordained

have to go through the kalyana mitra system...

S: No. What I said was, talking now about first of all the people who are left in the ordination class, we'll consider each one individually. If some of them definitely still have ordination in mind, we shall ask them to select a couple of kalyana mitras, and no doubt their ordination will come fairly soon if they've been coming for some time and their kalyana mitras are satisfied. In the case of those in the outside groups, like Glasgow, it will have to be myself in consultation with whoever is on the spot; in the case of Glasgow, you and to a lesser extent Vajradaka. And then with regard to the isolated people, it will have to be me plus Order members whom I ask to go and see those people, as I have done in the case of Gerald and in the case of Margaret.

Ananda: Bhante, I take it some time this weekend we should discuss the question of the Order members who are not in contact and are in doubt about whether they are actually in the Order or not.

S: Well, Suvratta and I have got together about that and we've been corresponding. It might be a good idea for Suvratta to tell us what happened.

Suvratta: Well, I've written to these people who were in this position and asked them what their current attitude was. (Starts again.) I've written to all the people whose attitude was in doubt, in other words people who weren't in regular contact and apparently have expressed at least some doubt as to whether they were really interested in the Order or not. Of the people I wrote to only one replied, and that was a pretty equivocal reply, and that was ...

S: That was Roy Brewer - Ashoka.

[67]

Suvratta: Yes. And he answered to the effect that he still considered himself an Order member, but he didn't want to participate in anything, at least in the foreseeable future. So I don't quite know what to make of that.

S: And the others you didn't get any reply from? I was thinking about this for some time, obviously, and everybody knows that we are going to have this Order register so that we can have up-to-date information about Order members, their addresses, telephone numbers, also the date of their ordination and when they have kalyana mitras who their kalyana mitras were, and so on. So what I feel is this. In the case of someone who drops out, doesn't answer letters; if this goes on, if he is out of contact in this way for more than two years, then his name is simply omitted from the register of members. We don't as it were expel anybody. If someone resigns, of course, then of course their name is removed automatically, but if they are not in effective contact with us for two years then we just quietly drop their name from the register. It's then up to them to re-establish the contact and ask to be reinstated if this is what they want. But so far as we are concerned, the path of return is always open. But I don't think we can tolerate a very ambiguous position.

For instance, in the case of Ratna, who is at Throssel Hole now, he's been out of contact for some time, and he originally assured me personally very strongly that he would definitely still be an Order member and that the experience of Zen would be of use to the Order, etc.; but he has been away now for, what? three or four years, and I asked Buddhadasa to write to him and he wrote a very nice letter asking him just how he was getting on and how he felt about the Friends, and there was no reply at all.

Suvratta: I wrote to him as well, and got no reply.

S: So this seemed, I'm sorry to say, just discourtesy, if nothing more. So under those circumstances we just drop someone's name from the register.

Suvratta: It's been suggested that this dropping process might be in some way tied to the annual Convention, in that if somebody didn't either come or write and say why they weren't coming then they weren't effectively part of the Order. Do you think that's - ?

S: Well, yes, if someone doesn't communicate at all in any way for two years. If they wrote to say, 'I'm sorry, I can't come'. Sometimes people go through quite extraordinary psychological things, we know that, so we have to give full allowance and full rope, even, in that way. But at least they must write and say, 'I'm sorry, I can't come, I'm not into it at the moment', or something like that. And then we don't drop their name from the register. But if they remain silent for, say, two years then I think we should

just drop their name from the register.

But then, if some time later they do want to reinstate themselves, yes, there won't be any re-ordination because we haven't withdrawn the ordination, but they will be required to give some sort of explanation of what had been happening and why they were out of contact, and if that is satisfactory they can be readmitted if they wish.

Ananda: Do you feel that a period of two years is appropriate?

S: Well, this is what I was thinking. What do other people feel? Is two years long enough? Is two years reasonable?

___: I think it's a little bit short, actually. (Voices inaudible.)

[68]

Mangala: I thought it might be too long, in fact.

S: Well, I'm all in favour of giving people quite a bit of rope.

Suvratta: One thing it depends on is how frequently the register is updated. If it's only updated once a year ...

S: Well, no, this will be from their time of not being in contact. If they haven't been in contact for two years, when a new edition of the register is compiled then they won't be included in that new edition, if at the time of compilation two years has elapsed since their last communication with anybody.

Asvajit: That could give them nearly up to three years, actually.

S: It could, but anyway, never mind. I'm a little bit, I must say, disappointed with people like Ratna, because, as I said, it would seem to be just a matter of courtesy that he would reply to a letter of that sort. So I'm not very happy about that at all.

Devaraja: Well, he did say in a letter when ... enquired about going up to do a sesshin at Throssel Hole that he'd resigned from the Order.

S: Well, he has never resigned, no.

Devaraja: He said he felt that she should if she wished to come to Throssel Hole she should as it were leave the community and her commitment to the ... in the same way that he ended commitment.

S: Well, he has certainly never written - in fact, he has seen me; last time he saw me was about two and a half years ago, and he was assuring me that he was definitely still with us, and this he assured me personally. And he has certainly never written to hand in his resignation, nor has he ever handed in his kesa, this is quite certain.

Ananda: Is the question relevant as to whether you accept their resignation or not? Does resignation on their part constitute removal from the Order?

S: Yes and no. From a point of view of ordinary courtesy and social whatnot, yes, you have to accept someone's resignation. But spiritually, I don't accept, in the sense that I do not break off my connection with that person, whatever might happen; so that if they eventually decided to come back I would not consider it necessary to re-ordain them. They would simply be put back on the register. They may resign, but I don't cut off connection spiritually with that person, whatever might happen. But you can't say to someone: 'All right, you resign, but we don't accept your resignation.' That might put their back up, so you accept it; but in your heart of hearts you don't break off the spiritual connection. You still wish them well, and you're happy to see them again if they ever do want to come back.

Mangala: Does that mean that I could still continue sending these Order members order-sheets presumably for - ... ?

S: No, once they're off the register they wouldn't be sent this material, no.

Mangala: I'm not thinking of ones that are off the register, I'm thinking of people maybe whom we haven't heard of for a long time.

S: Up to two years, yes, you go on sending it, to the latest address that you have. But if for two years they don't reply, don't [69] communicate with anybody, then they come off the register and they are not sent Shabda or other such communications.

Mangala: It seems like a very long time to me to keep sending stuff. If, say, after a year - as long as it's open to them to come back in if they wanted to, you know?

S: Well, sometimes I've really noticed from my experience with people that they really go through things, sometimes for quite a long time, they can't bring themselves to come into contact with you and see you, but at least if something comes through the letter-box, they know that you haven't forgotten them. But they might have been almost forced, maybe, because of something psychological they are going through, to break off contact for the time being, but if they know that you haven't broken off with them it sometimes helps. So I think we have to be quite careful in dealing with this sort of thing.

Subhuti: Sounds as if two years might not be long enough.

S: Well, as Asvajit says, it could even go up nearly to three, because the register will be revised only once a year.

___: Did you write to ...?

S: It's always open to the Order to extend it in any given case; it's not a rigid thing. This would have to be brought up at least at an Order meeting before someone is dropped, and you'd ask the Order to approve that, and someone might say, 'No, I know we've not heard but I know from other people he's going through this and that; let's give him another year.' Well, fine, give him another year.

___: Would we do this at Conventions?

S: It could be done, yes.

___: I'm sure - there's a case coming up of somebody resigning and asking to be considered for re-ordination? ...

S: He sort of - no, he didn't ask to be re-ordained. He sort of indicated that he'd be happy to come back and attend Order meetings. But I felt that there were certain things that should be clarified first, but he didn't seem willing to have any clarification. In fact, he wanted to insist upon his previous point of view - that is, especially his point of view about Sarum House and what happened in his time, which I felt was completely wrong. And I felt if he wants to come back sticking to those old views and insisting that he was right after all, that's a false basis, and on that basis he can't come back.

___: Milinda(?) rang up ...

Ananda: Yes, I told Bhante. He rang up saying he would like to come to the Convention, but then he would consider himself an Order member.

S: He did resign.

Ananda: So I didn't really know what was the correct thing to do, but I invited him to come down on Friday, yesterday, and he said he would do, but he hasn't turned up. I always get the feeling from Jim that part of him really wants to come back and have contact, but that he wants to be really assured that he is really wanted, and that every time we say that we would like him to come back, then he always puts an objection up.

S: Well, I think there might be, then, a case, in this sort of instance, for a couple of Order members going and really sorting [70] him out; saying, 'Look, do you want to come back or not?' So why not be more direct? Why shouldn't you be straightforward and blunt? Say, 'Look, Jim, where do you stand? Here you are going around in this ridiculous robe and you're trying to set up a sort of one-man Order, and sometimes you say you want to come back and then, when we say, 'OK, come back', you say no, you don't want to. Where do you stand? Come on. Do you want to come back or not? If you don't, fair

enough, goodbye. But if you do, come on.' Let's talk to people more bluntly and directly.

Ananda: I'm not sure that would work with him, because I think there's something else going on ...

S: Well, whatever has been tried so far hasn't worked! [Laughter] Let's try something different! I'm only saying this by way of example. Don't take me too literally. But be more direct, more to the point. There's been too much sort of shillyshallying and people not speaking very directly to one another. If his Buddhism can't stand a bit of plain speaking, maybe he's not fit for the Order after all, or even for Buddhism. It's friendly plain speaking. So maybe two Order members should go and see him; just go along. I think you'd be pretty good ..., you and one other. You see what I have in mind.

Devaraja: Asvajit and myself should go, because he's got a car!

S: OK, you do it, then, you two: go and see him. And just talk as you feel the situation calls for. You may decide to speak in a completely different way, but ...

Vajradaka: I must say when I used that technique on him, it didn't work.

S: Well, you're a bit positive, you are! [Laughter] They'll have to play it by ear. It's a sad thing that you can't be too positive with people, they don't like it.

Devaraja: I'll be all right then!

S: Is there anybody else that ought to be visited in this way? We did try about ...

___:

S: Oh, Devendra. Yes. Did we hear from him? (Voices inaudible.) Anybody seen him or heard about him? Yes - he's a very nice chap. I think he is in a bit of a rut. I think it would be a good idea if - I was thinking, in fact, of seeing him myself in some quite other context, but maybe it would be good if two others saw him anyway, even if I did. But anyone feel like seeing Dave and ... ? One. Who else? Two would be good, I think. Go on then, you two. He's on the phone, you can just invite yourself along for a meal one day and that's that, you know. He's always friendly. He's not difficult to talk to. OK.

What about Manjughosa, up in Cambridge? Two Friends wanted to go and see him, but he was having a bit of domestic trouble at that time; but it may be I'd better do that. I know him. I think I'd better write initially.

___: Manjughosa?

S: John Hibson.

: He said he didn't want any more stuff from us.

S: Did he?

[71]

___: Yes, he was quite rude, quite firmly said that he didn't want any more communication with the Order.

S: He didn't write anything to me. I'll write to him. We'll see, all right. Who else is absent? (?). I saw a bit of her down in Cornwall...

___: Which bit?

S: Pardon?

___: He wondered which bit.

S: Well, there's quite a lot of her! [Laughter]

___: She came to the end of the summer retreat, didn't she?

S: She did. She does turn up every now and then. She's a funny girl.

___: ... when she turns up, she always complains about how things have been done, anyway.

: Really, we need her type too!

S: She's settled down a bit again in Cornwall; I don't know whether that's got anything to do with it. But anyway, she has been a bit in contact, so she's not in the same category as the others. Maybe we can leave her for the present, though it would be good if people could write to her - even see her if they go that way. You probably could. You know her quite well, anyway, don't you?

___: Tara? - Penny Neilsmith?

S: Yes, she did resign. Though, again - sorry, she did resign from the Friends, but she never technically resigned from the Order in so many words. She certainly didn't send back her kesa or anything. But I don't think she regards herself as an Order member. Could you give us any information about that, Mike? - whether Penny Neilsmith does regard herself as an Order member or not at all?

___: I should have thought she regarded herself as out of it.

S: Yes, this is what I felt, though she didn't actually resign.

Marichi: Do people actually send back their kesa?

Ratnapani: We could do with some spares! [Laughter]

S: One or two did, yes. That was quite a while ago. Usually a bit grubby!

Marichi: ... [not] worth sending back!

Ananda: And, what's happened to Vajira?

Vajradaka: I went to see her a couple of days ago, spent an evening with her, and asked her if she was going to come here, and she said that she wasn't. She's going through a very bad period, at the moment. She can't meditate, she's feeling semi-suicidal, her work's deteriorating, and this all happened very quickly after what she calls a very good two years - it happened in November. She really appreciated me going out there and being with her. She appreciates contact with individuals. But I [72] think she has a lot of problems in herself which she has put outside on to the group and on to Bhante and on to individual people, and onto other teachers as well, on to ... and all kinds of people. And this is the time when she really does need the Sangha, but she isn't willing to make the effort.

S: How would you think she would respond if one or two others went to see her?

Vajradaka: I think it would be good.

Ananda: I'd like to go and see her.

S: Well, could you?

Ananda: I could, do yes, for a weekend. I'll write to her.

___: ... correspondence ...

(Voices inaudible.)

___: Dotty - Dorothy Bayley.

___: Have you had contact with her recently?

___: Yes, I've had a letter. One of the reasons, what you were saying, she needs to share it with the Sangha, ...

Ananda: She needs to express her feelings to the people that she feels them about.

Vajradaka: She can't do that, not easily. She finds it much easier to talk to someone whom she has an affinity with, and then she gets free of this great burden ...

S: You don't get really freed unless you can talk to the person to whom the feelings relate. And in the past there's quite a bit of this on the edges of the Friends: A saying something to B about C, instead of saying to C directly. And now, luckily, things are much more direct, and that is very good.

Ananda: I spent most of a Saturday having dinner with her, a Saturday afternoon, and she was very negative and quite abusive of certain people. It just poured out of her. But I couldn't have suggested why don't you just try and say it to them. She wouldn't accept it, she'd reject it.

Vajradaka: What in fact she's doing this weekend. She felt she had a very big grudge ...with Terry Gibbs. So she's gone to have it out with him.

S: That is quite positive, then, good.

___: It's not the first one. [Laughter]

S: Maybe it won't be the last one.

___: That's the way their relationship is, a great deal of growth has come through that. I'm like that myself.

S: I saw him the other day, by the way. We had quite a good hour.

Anyway, - oh yes, I know what I was going to say. Somehow an expression has crept into the Friends: 'active Order members' and 'inactive Order members'. That's really nonsense. You're either an Order member or not an Order member. So I'm not at all happy about this division of the active and the inactive. So I think we'd better just drop that, and - they're just Order [73] members. If someone is out of contact for two years or so, well, he ceases to be an Order member, or ceases to be on the register - that's that. But we assume that all Order members are active in their own way. To be an inactive Order member is a contradiction in terms.

Vangisa: There was rather a beautiful one on the last list. 'This is not a definitive Order list'! (Vangisa Roars with laughter.)

S: It only means that the chap who compiled it wasn't sure, you know, because they hadn't been telling him, that's all.

Vangisa: It was just a turn of phrase - a non-event.

S: Any further point on communication within the Order? Or have we covered everything? Because it is - I hope it's teatime.

Vangisa: Do we want to get in touch with Roy Brewer? Do we think it's a good idea or not?

S: I don't know.

Vangisa: ...sounds very odd, and it seems quite in contradiction to what I had understood to be his attitude previously.

S: Do you think it would be a good idea for you to have a chat with him? You know him - and say, 'Why or what is this? You're either a member and therefore an active participant, or not. If you don't want to have anything further - '

Vangisa: I think what he really meant to say is that he doesn't want to go so far as to say it right now.

S: I think - you see him; you see him, and then let us know.

Vajradaka: Is Roy the person who has the job in the boys' club?

Vangisa: No, that's Stephen ...

(Voices inaudible.) ... quite a useful chap to have around.

S: Except that we haven't been having him around! Well, didn't he bring out the first Newsletter?

Ananda: Yes, ...

S: It was only about two sheets, but he started it. Anything else? Any suggestions for improved communication, or anything of that kind?

Vajradaka: Maybe when we can afford it we'll get a teleprinter.

___: One in each cave! [Laughter]

Asvajit: While we're on the subject of money, Bhante, can I just bring up this question of the country retreat centre? (Laughter.) It's really nothing to do with communication, but it's very important. I think some of you have got this form that I've made out already, but just to put you in the picture, Bhante has found a suitable cottage or house in Castle Acre in Norfolk which would make a very suitable retreat centre ...

S: A small retreat centre.

Asvajit: - a small retreat centre, yes. And we've already put some money down on it, but due to certain difficulties in securing immediate payment I agreed to try and get a mortgage for this [74] myself, but naturally I don't want to be personally responsible for paying the whole lot off my own back. So I'm hoping that I'll be able to persuade some of you - you shouldn't need much persuasion - to commit yourselves to paying a little for the next six months, or nine months, or a year, whatever you can manage, to cover the cost of these mortgage repayments, which will ...

___: ... the next year?

Asvajit: Well, we're hoping that we will be able to pay off the whole sum in about that time, all being well, so that we shouldn't have to ask for anything beyond that date. But if we do, well, we'll just have to put out another appeal.

Vangisa: Have you actually got the mortgage?

Asvajit: I'm in the process of getting one. There seems to be no difficulty. What exactly the repayments will be I don't know yet, but my guess is about \$7 a week. Now if you all agree to pay a little, it doesn't amount to very much, clearly. So I'd like to pass these forms around, and if you could fill them in, if you feel so able, and return them to me, before ...

Ananda: It seems incredibly little to pay. A \$6,000 mortgage?

Asvajit: Well, a \$5,000 mortgage over 25 years.

Ananda: Ah, 25 years!

Marichi: Does that include all the interest and everything?

Asvajit: Well, it might be a bit more, it might be \$10. I just don't know.

Vangisa: How did you work out this?

Asvajit: How did I work it out? Er, the interest on the mortgage would be 50% overall.

Vangisa: ... - a rough approximation, at least. A 25-year mortgage should be well over \$40 a month - over \$40 a month.

Padmaraja: That's still less than \$5,000.

Asvajit: That's ten pounds a week, yes. Perhaps that's nearer.

Vangisa: It always works out - to us who haven't got this economic analysis of these things, it's always twice as much as you can possibly work it out to be with pencil and paper.

Asvajit: Well, there you are, then, \$10, that's what we need; \$10 per week assured for the next year, it may be less. So please give what you're able. There are 27 of us here, I think.

Mangala: What would happen. Why would it be less?

Asvajit: Well, if it's paid off before then if the fund that we have in our name is cashed.

Devaraja: I'd say Mangala's good for two quid a week! [Laughter] Talk your way out of that one!

(Voices inaudible, laughter, chat about money and forms.)

Asvajit: I've given him a form anyway so I'm just waiting for the results. Please return them to me before you leave.

(More chat)

[75]

S: That isn't known yet, but we hope beginning of February. I consulted the solicitors there who are handling it on our behalf, and they said about four weeks is the average to complete all the arrangements. And we have paid the securing deposit, which is \$625.

___: As long as squatters don't go in there.

S: It's well locked up. And also it's subject to surveyor's report, but as far as we can see we don't do anything, but we called for that as a precaution.

Vangisa: The only thing that seems to me if you're going to distribute these around and get as many people as you can to put in whatever, it would be better to try and work out exactly how many people are in a position to contribute and how at this particular point they can even make a guess how they can share it between them. Someone might put down \$1 a week, for instance, or something like that, and be well able to pay considerably more than that only he thinks that everybody else puts down \$1 a week that would be enough.

S: If more is put down than is actually needed, this can go into the fund to pay off the whole thing. It can just accumulate. If everybody gives as much as they possibly can, then it'll work out all right.

Marichi: : Presumably if there isn't enough...

Asvajit: I'll have to make a further appeal.

(Chat about mortgage payment contributions continues)}

[End of tape 4 Tape 5]

(Chat about mortgage payment contributions continues)

S: Actually, it's in good condition, but there are a few things which will be needed, like bathrooms. OK.

(End of session 2)

[76]

Session 3

S: In our first session we dealt with the spiritual development of the individual Order member, and then in the second session yesterday afternoon with communication within the Order, so today in this

session we start going out a bit. In this session we are concerned with 'The Order and the World'. That's rather a big topic. We're not going to discuss the current economic situation or the question of oil, or anything like that. What I have in mind is this: that we have to try to see those sections of the world which are as it were more open to attack from the Order at the moment, where we might establish some sort of reach and do some sort of useful work.

The sort of thing I have in mind just to give you an example is this. Some few months ago I had a letter from the chaplain of the Gloucester prison asking us to recommend someone in the area who could be available if needed for prison visiting; that is to say, visiting Buddhists or those who profess to be Buddhists, in the prison, who wished to be visited by some representative of their faith. So I was thinking about this, and it occurred to me, well, here's a useful area of work, as it were, that perhaps we ought to write, or somebody ought to write to the chaplains of all Her Majesty's Prisons informing the chaplains that there is a Western Buddhist Order and that the members of this Order will be happy, if called upon, to visit people of Buddhist faith in prison. So here's some sort of sphere where we could operate, somewhere where we could reach out, as it were, and do something possibly useful and helpful. This is the sort of thing that I have in mind that we should discuss in today's session. So I am wondering if anybody has been thinking about visiting, or even if they have got any suggestions of this kind or have thought along these lines to any extent, whether with regard to prison visiting or anything else of that kind.

Chanda: ...

S: Yes, hospitals are a bit different from prisons; you can wander in there more freely, as some patients know to their cost. They are visited whether they like it or not. But, yes, this is something that could be done in a tactful way.

Chintamani: First of all though, is there official recognition for the Order nationally in the same way as the Catholic Church or Islam...

S: Well, they appear willing to recognize us. The chaplain, for instance, of Gloucester prison wrote to me two or three years ago asking me to recommend someone in the area, a Buddhist, and I recommended Peter Twilley. He did some visiting, but then he went off to New Zealand, so therefore the chaplain asked me to recommend somebody else; so Manjuvajra has now taken up that responsibility as he would sometimes be in that area. He hasn't been called upon to exercise his duties yet, presumably because there are no Buddhists at present in Gloucester jail. But I am quite sure there are Buddhists of various kinds in sundry jails around the kingdom, and it would be a good thing if we could visit. I don't think there's any difficulty about getting recognition. I think things are pretty liberal, and the - what do you call them? - the chaplains are, it seems, all Anglican and only too happy to have a list of ministers of different religions and denominations upon which they can draw as convenient for this purpose.

Maybe I should explain here what the system is; I don't suppose most of you know that. Apparently, when you go into prison, they take your particulars, they want to know all about you, and they ask among other things your religion. And sooner or later you get [77] a visit from the chaplain. If you are a member of his Anglican flock, he ministers personal comfort and spiritual consolation to you. If you are not a member of his flock in the narrow sense - if you are a Catholic or a Jew or a Muslim, or a Seventh Day Adventist - there is a whole long list now - then he asks you, would you like me to arrange for you to have a visit from a minister of your religion? And if the prisoner says yes, then he just consults his list - ah yes, Buddhist! Here we are, Mr So-and-so or Upasaka So-and-so, and he writes off that we have in the prison a Buddhist prisoner, Mr So-and-so, who would like a visit from you if you are able to come along. So you just fix it up with the chaplain; you write back and say yes, I'll be able to come on such-and-such day if that's all right. Along you go, you see the chaplain first; he usually has a little chat with you in his office, and then a warder goes and gets the prisoner, and you usually see him in the chaplain's office. The chaplain is present throughout the interview, because there has to be a prison officer present, but he just gets on with his own work and doesn't listen in, and you can have a little chat with the prisoner. I've been myself to Pentonville and to Wormwood Scrubs and one or two other places, and this is the procedure that's always followed.

So I think - or it was occurring to me - that it would be a good idea if one of us would write to chaplains of all these prisons, just giving them a few particulars about ourselves and saying that we

would be quite happy to do what we could in the way of visiting Buddhist prisoners. So that's the procedure which is followed there. Of course hospital visiting is a quite different much more flexible, sort of thing.

Anyway, what do people feel about this suggestion?

___: I think it doesn't also necessarily have to be in a particularly religious capacity.

S: That's up to you entirely.

Gotami: ... and they have arranged that she shall go and visit Millie(?) in prison, and give them what she is doing in schools, which is a kind of class in self appreciation and developing positive emotion, which she says is just pure Buddhism.

S: But she doesn't visit as a Buddhist?

Gotami: She is known as a Buddhist. If they wish to talk to any particular person who is a Buddhist, and she is ... talking to people, relating themselves to Buddhism ... This seems to me a useful kind of ... Also ...

S: I know some people feel a little awkward about meeting prisoners and don't know quite what to say or how to behave. I must also say that sometimes the prisoners are a rather sorry lot. You won't find some young idealist, usually, to talk to. Sometimes those who give their religion as Buddhist are in a quite difficult sort of state, and it isn't always easy. But if you can do it it's very worthwhile.

Ratnapani: On lines of what Gotami said I don't know how easy that is to set up when you don't know any Buddhists that have been involved, but if members of the Order could cover a more general field, because there are a lot of young people in prison today who are generally mystically inclined and possibly suffer more from prison than many others. A sort of mystical mish-mash is quite common, and if members of the Order could somehow visit a wider field rather than put down specifically Buddhist. A friend of mine went in and put down 'Sikh' - he'd met some Sikhs and he liked them. He was then going to change to 'Buddhist' in order that I could go and see him, and it's quite easy to do that [78] sort of thing. He would have been glad to see anyone with whom he could talk about anything serious.

S: Yes, but what I'm describing is a particular system - that is to say, the official system under which a chaplain puts you in contact with a minister of your religion. But I'm not suggesting that we should confine ourselves to that. We may be able to get in contact with prisoners in other ways and other capacities. About that I don't have any information, but it could be gone into.

___: Going through the official channels initially they put you in contact with one person and they'll get in contact with the other prisoners, and so ...

S: The other prisoners could then ask to see you, but then they'd have to change their faith if they weren't Buddhists.

___: Yes, or they could let you know privately, they could just ...

S: How would you visit them?

Subhuti: They'd send a letter. They're allowed one visitor every fortnight. They have to use an official form. That would be on a personal basis rather than ...

S: Yes, right, and that would be in their quota of visits, whereas a visit from a minister is not included in the quota, that's extra. Also there's the question of corresponding. You can keep up correspondence with people whom you visit. Also you sometimes see, in some of the underground papers, little announcements that So-and-so is in prison and would like to hear from someone in the mystical scene, sort of thing. You get these little ads sometimes, and maybe someone should keep an eye on those and just write in.

___: With regard to hospitals, general hospitals don't like it very much but they do have a lot of people who go into mental hospitals these days who are suffering as the doctors say from overdose of too much ... (attention) ...a lot of people from that sort of area in mental hospitals ..., and that's the sort of

area where people could really do with a visit from someone who really knows what they're talking about.

S: I remember an incident in the early days of the Friends when I visited Victor Bradley in a mental hospital, and there were three other Friends there in the same ward! [Laughter] I mean Friends with a capital F. Quite surprising! [Laughter] But in this particular case they all seemed to be having a very jolly time indeed, and they were quite reluctant to leave. They weren't getting any actual treatment - a few pills which they quietly threw away - and they were just happily there. They could do whatever they liked, art therapy, and just sort of messing around and talking and reading books and they really enjoyed it. But it isn't all like that, by any means. And it would be good, yes.

___: To put yourself on the visiting chaplain list...

S: But could someone, then, go into this? Could you do all this, Manjuvajra? Or would you prefer to stick just with the prison thing?

Manjuvajra: Well, initially I'll look into both because mental hospitals are quite good. [Laughter] ...

S: Oh yes, I'm afraid so. I think it's mainly a question of ascertaining the procedure for visiting in that way - whether you [79] have to put your name down, or whether anyone can do it, or whether you have to be approved or recommended by anybody and so on.

(Chat.)

S: Yes, quite. But I think also perhaps one should go into this question - going to something we are going to talk about in the afternoon - of the status of Order members from a more official point of view, because it seems that in a sense Order members could correctly say that they were functioning as ministers and should be entitled to the official consideration which is usually extended to ministers of religion; not lay Buddhists in the sense that the average non-practising Anglican is a lay Christian, but something much, much more than that.

Vangisa: ... more details ...

S: Yes. Let's talk a bit about it now though it pertains more to the afternoon. We had thought about some sort of certificate of ordination. It was mentioned some years ago, but I am quite aware of the fact that among some Order members and Friends there is a very strong resistance to anything that smacks of another form to fill in, or certificates, or anything of that sort. But what do people now feel about this, from this particular point of view, or within this sort of context? How do you feel about that?

(Approving voices.)

Vangisa: Yes, within this kind of context, definitely. I don't think you could function without ...

S: Well, I did raise it some time ago, but there was very strong resistance on the part of some members ...

___: Would it have to be an official certificate, as it were, or would ... ?

Vangisa: If you were doing this kind of work ...from any organization of any kind, you'd have to have a card proving your identity.

S: I would say it should be an identity card issued by the Order. Not even by the Friends - by the Order. Like an identity card, stiff, which was folded over; with your photograph and your name and address and your status, to make it clear that you were an ordained person and a member of the Order.

Ananda: I think increasingly it's going to be a necessity to have something like that.

S: With probably the signatures of the Head of the Order and the registrar. Purely for this sort of purpose. Anyone not happy about it? Do speak up if you aren't happy.

___: I can understand the objections to it.

S: Oh yes, I can too, yes.

___: I think if you're trying to deal with someone who's hardly ever heard of Buddhism, let alone the Western Buddhist Order then...

Ananda: Well, what might be the objections? I can't really think of any ...

S: There's no valid objection, but it's people's feeling in some [80] cases that it becomes very official and it's as though even a religious movement becomes just like another department of ordinary, secular, highly controlled bureaucratic existence. Some people are very sensitive to this.

Ananda: I can see no real foundation for that.

Vangisa: In this case we're dealing with bureaucratically controlled organizations ...

S: It may interest you to know that all through the middle ages in China, Chinese Buddhist monks carried identity cards with the names of their monasteries and the signatures and seals of the head monk, because there were so many people going around pretending to be Buddhist monks, it was found to be necessary.

___: ...

S: That's true, yes.

___: Identity card sounds better than a certificate with names on ...

___: I think a valid objection is that it increases the schism between Order members and non-Order members. It's one more thing that an Order member possesses.

S: Yes, but presumably Order members won't go round flashing their identity cards. [Laughter] Just keep it ... required, you know? If you go into a prison and someone says, 'Excuse me, sir, who are you?' you say, 'I'm a Buddhist representative' and you just pull out your identity card, and it works wonders!

___: ...

Ananda: It could be very useful outside prisons as well.

Vangisa: It's quite likely that in many cases we're going to be talking about having made a particular arrangement or appointment, but if we were doing this thing continuously ... but they won't always be ..., perhaps for most of the time, yes, but ...

S: I must say in my own experience I've been quite fortunate, but at that time I was always wearing my robes and went along in my robes, so that itself is a certificate, I suppose. But if you're not actually wearing robes in that way, you need something - a rather meticulous or fussy chaplain might conceivably say, 'Excuse me, I'm very glad to see you, but who are you? What is your status? Are you a minister?' ...

Ananda: We came upon this problem a little bit in Cambridge.

Subhuti: The strange thing is that it doesn't really prove that you are that, anyway - just showing a certificate with a signature on it.

S: Even a passport is not accepted as evidence of any statement contained in that passport in a court of law. But you get by with a passport.

Vangisa: There's another point of relevance, to carry it one bureaucratic step further. On each card you have to have an expiry date like a passport, ...

S: Right. There would be a section for renewal, or something like that. We'd have to work that out ...

Ratnapani: Endorsements. (Laughter.)

[81]

Vangisa: Issue a new one every year or two years, and just not issue it to people who have dropped off the register. It is issued valid up to such-and-such a date.

Ananda: Can we get some decision out of this?

Vajradaka: If people move into an area and go and start a Centre somewhere they'd contact the jail in that area as soon as they get there.

S: That's a good idea.

Vajradaka: Let the group in that area take responsibility for ...

Subhuti: And the mental hospitals.

(Chat.)

S: I was just wondering, Bodhisri, in your case in Finland - would it be useful to have an identity card as an Order member in that sort of way?

Bodhisri: I don't know, because I wrote to the church and they told me that it's not possible to be a Buddhist officially. [Laughter]

___: But you are one!

S: Well, officially.

Bodhisri: Officially.

S: In other words, there's no state recognition. What would happen, then, if someone of a particular religion in prison said that he wanted a visit from a member or minister of his religion? What would happen?

Bodhisri: They would probably say that it's impossible. But of course they don't know about it.

S: But, for instance, suppose a Christian wants a visit from a Christian priest, what happens?

Bodhisri: He'll get one.

S: He will get one? So presumably it's only a matter of time.

Bodhisri: Yes, and Jews as well, all the others.

S: You'll have to get some Buddhist prisoners first! If you're all good Buddhists, it might not arise.

___: What steps can we take to make Buddhism official in a country?

S: I think just by representation. Say that there are now Buddhists in Finland, and we are hereby informing you of our existence, and therefore could we be included on such-and-such - whatever might be useful.

Chintamani: Maybe it might be worthwhile finding out. certainly in Europe the countries that are even hostile to Buddhism.

S: Yes, Spain is. I had a Buddhist friend some years ago who went from France into Spain on holiday, and all her Buddhist books were confiscated at the frontier, and she was told 'Such literature is not allowed into our country'. And she was a [82] well-known scholar.

Devaraja: I think that's changing now ... translators, publishers ...

S: In Spain?

___: ...

S: I know, a few years ago at least, Buddhist magazines were not accepted through the post in Spain and Portugal. You couldn't get copies of the Maha Bodhi Journal in for instance.

Anyway, are we taking a decision about the identity card? What is the decision? Is it felt we agree we should have them?

Voices: Yes.

___: It should be printed on our machine?

S: No, I think it should be more official-looking than that. (Chat.) Anyway, what information should be included? Photograph?

Chintamani: Same as the registry.

S: Photograph with kesa; yes? Photograph with kesa.

___: If it's going to be a renewable one, that would be a bit of a nuisance. You'd have to do a new photograph every year.

S: No - it could be a stamp, a date stamp of the office, as it were. Or another signature.

Ananda: If you get your hair shaved off, then you'd have to have a new photograph taken.

Mangala: Passport photographs last for 10 years.

S: All right, what other information?

Subhuti: Date of ordination.

S: Date of ordination. Date of birth?

Subhuti: Place of ordination.

S: Place of ordination, yes.

___: No, I don't think that's necessary on an identity card.

S: Date of birth?

___: No, nothing like that. (Chat.)

Asvajit: The name and address of the registrar, or the headquarters ...

S: Oh yes, certainly, so they can check up if necessary.

Ananda: It should be signed by Bhante and the registrar.

S: Yes. Another thing I've been thinking of is a sort of seal for the Order. I feel that this should be the identical seal of the Sangha in India all through the history of Buddhism there, that is to say, the Wheel of the Law, the Dharmacakra, supported by two deer, which is reminiscent of the 'First Sermon', inverted [83] commas, at Sarnath in the Deer Park. And the Dharmacakra stands on a sort of stand, and it's surmounted by a trident which represents the Three Jewels. I thought we should have something like this for the Order, as distinct from the FWBO, letterhead and bookplates, and also have it as a sort of stamp on our identity card and other such documents.

Ananda: That means someone has to actually design it?

S: Yes, there are such designs in books on Buddhist art and archaeology. I think it would mean just a simple line drawing of the old Nalanda seal, something like that - which is quite a beautiful and simple and meaningful design. I think what I shall do, I'll make a sort of dummy or draft, and I'll circulate it. Maybe a photostat copy could be made and it could be circulated through Shabda as an enclosure, and then people could write and give their comments on it. Then everyone will have an opportunity of saying what they think. OK.

Ananda: So we're going to go ahead and design it.

S: Yes, well, I'll draft the material and when people have had a chance to say what they feel about that then it can be properly designed. And it could be a yellow card or an orange card, and so on and so forth. Like a yellow ... certificate...

All right, what about other areas of contact?

___: Were you thinking of other countries ... ?

S: What I have been feeling quite strongly of late is that we tend to preach to the converted. We don't go out enough. Do you know what I mean? We tend to confine ourselves to the fringes of the mystical scene - you know, noble people as they get a bit disillusioned with the Maharishi and Guru Maharaji and - you know, they've read all the right books and they know their I Ching and their Tao Te Ching and Tibetan Book of the Dead, and they're looking for a nice friendly group of people and they've frequented the dope scene for a while and got a bit fed up with that. We tend to confine ourselves to this sort of section of the community, but what about all the millions of the unchurched, as it were? - just people in ordinary jobs, working in factories, with wives and families and so on. We tend not to consider that whole vast majority of the population at all. What about people in trades unions and things like that?

Gotami: If you actually go there, people would start being attracted to you. I just went to stay with my parents for week and two people from the town came and asked me about Buddhism. And I'm sure if ... people would come ... And I'm sure, whatever area you would actually go in, ...

Vangisa: You get a certain amount of interest in that way ... curiosity ... all that much interest ... The whole point is the basic message of Buddhism so much honed if you like to the underlying philosophy that you find in the factories and trade unions. It's very difficult even to suggest, to imply in any way that there is an alternative way of life. You're dealing with very entrenched attitudes. And one big thing - and this is even getting worse - I'm sure it can't have been so bad 10 or 20 years ago - the basic underlying philosophy of life at the present moment is that material prosperity in itself is not only a good thing, that it is the essential basis of leading a satisfactory life. If you look at a newspaper now, there's hardly anything in it, apart from catastrophes and murders, that isn't connected with the economic situation.

S: Yes, that's all true, but there is a minority everywhere, and we [84] tend to look for that minority in one particular field. We have a big enough turnover at the Centre as it is; we always have had. Out of one person who stays, 20 just come and have a look in and then go away. That happens everywhere with all sorts of ... What I'm saying is, we should fling our net just more widely.

Vangisa: I've really raised this point not as an objection, as something I think we should consider, and the question is what do you do about it because my basic question in really, because I've never found an answer to this, how do you in a comprehensible way get across this attitude to life to somebody who finds it incomprehensible?

S: Gotami has already answered it: you just go somewhere and people will come and you'll get talking to them and you'll find ways and means of putting it. Maybe you won't be able to make it comprehensible to everybody; you have to accept that. But you do what you can with whom you can.

Ratnapani: I think with the personal contact there's Gotami's story and Manjuvajra's done the same thing in Cornwall. You arrived and immediately people are attracted. That's easy enough if one is going to be in particular places, but we're not personally really attractive to them. Vangisa works in a factory

but he's a rarity. One is then left with literature, really.

___: The personal contact is important...

___: I find that too, but I do feel it is very superficial where there's just a curiosity, and when a certain point is reached they're not interested. I find this with the people I play music with or at University occasionally.

Subhuti: That's the one in twenty perhaps.

S: ... but you have to have contact with 20 who are just a bit interested to find the one who is really going to be committed.

___: You may be lucky to find one with the second person you talk to but you may have to go through 20. I think it's just a matter of being yourself and giving all the time, and eventually somebody will pick it up.

S: Right. And I think we shouldn't do that, or function in that way, just within the apparently more easy sort of areas, the more sympathetic areas. I think, broadly speaking, that almost any section of the population will yield about the same percentage of interested people.

___: I think it would be useful to - in terms of, say, factories and that sort of thing - to express the ideas and aims of Buddhism in a trade union language. Because I think those people, if they pick up something that's got religious-sounding words in it, ... But if we talk in terms of contradictions and exploitation and conditioning, people understand.

Ananda: We must be prepared to drop the label and go to them.

S: Again, Gotami has already answered it: be yourself. You don't have to start talking about pujas and sunyata and so on and so forth.

Vangisa: I've worked in a factory now for a year and I got a great deal of interest from Indians. But all they did was tell me the advantages of Hinduism or Sikhism [Laughter], as the case may be. Now I haven't gone around advertising Buddhism or religion or anything. I've never - anything that has come out has just come out obviously and naturally. What I have done is just been there. Obviously I've got a certain amount of relationship [85] and communication of different kinds with different people. And this business of trying to just communicate a certain attitude to life, without any labels whatever, to people outside whose entire area of comprehension this is - either they accept you as a harmless eccentric or they think you're quite positively dangerous to the working class or something like that ...

Gotami: I found it quite ... I must admit for instance say when I was in Glasgow first, I did an office job and I didn't tell anybody I was a Buddhist - I mean I didn't not, but I didn't specifically say anything clearly about what I thought or - I didn't try and put anything over at all.

Vangisa: Neither did I.

Gotami: And eventually people just said, 'Gosh, how can you keep so calm in all this furore that's going on?' and they started asking me what I was doing, and ... Bhante's books being sold, a couple of them coming along to meditation classes.

Vangisa: Yes, but you're talking about [people who] at least read books ...

Gotami: It was just an ordinary office.

(Chat.)

Vangisa: You suggest to somebody - Well, let's take an example. I walk in, I'm carrying a book under my arm, and somebody says 'What's the book?' I show him what the book is, and he says, 'That's over my head, this is my limit', and he holds up a copy of the Sun. And the idea of intellectualism is the Telegraph and only Indians read that! (Laughter.)

S: It reminds me of a little incident. George Orwell said that he was interested in people who were

going to take commissions and who weren't particularly intellectual, and he asked them if they'd ever read anything, and they said, a bit nervously, 'I've read a bit of Dickens', as though that was the height of intellectuality!

Chanda: You've got to also remember trade unionism is ... trade unionists, what they say goes, and if you have a strike you don't worry about poor Mrs Jones who can't get her tram - ... you just want an extra few shillings a week. But you don't see what you're doing to the masses - the whole of the trade unions. You absolutely spoon fed and you're absolutely brainwashed to think that way, and you're dead scared to be a but in a firm. So if you're a member of a trade union, don't ever try and preach Buddhism to them, please, because you'll get a slap right in the face before you start!

Vangisa: Well, I'm not trying to preach Buddhism to a trade union or trade unionists. The point is that the underlying motive for industrial disputes, as far as I can see, is the frustrating way of life. It is the vague feeling that somehow or other they've been taken advantage of all their lives by something - call it the system - or whatever - it can't be identified, it's associated with management, the middle class, the churches, all these labels, but it isn't actually identified. And there is a strong feeling all the time in all the mental processes of the average factory worker, in my experience, there is just a strong feeling of aggression, hostility. And this applies to one another as well as to the vague power areas that they've been exploited and ... The aggression that they feel towards one another is based on the idea that if they don't take advantage as much as they can of the others the others will come and do it to them. So whatever you say to them, even if it's only good morning, there's very often a feeling that really if you got your way you'd do something, you'd get the easy [86] job and get them on to the hard one. And if you just smile at them you're trying to con them into something. This is obviously not in this extreme way universal, but it's a very, very noticeable underlying ...

S: Yes, that's true. I think though if we're not careful we'll get a bit off the track. What I wanted to point out just at the moment, before we get back onto the track, is this. I've listened to a few trade unionists on the radio, and I think that one of things that we'll have to recognize is that there are in this country and probably in other countries too quite a large number of very articulate, very intelligent, very active, very pushing and quite well-meaning people in, say, the trade unions, mostly in positions of some responsibility, who are completely devoid of anything that we regard as culture; who don't have any sort of cultural background in the ordinary as it were middle-class sense; who are not acquainted with literature, apart from maybe the Sun, who have no appreciation of the arts, who have no particular refinement of lifestyle or language, but who are very intelligent; no less intelligent than the so-called cultured person, no less sincere, no less well-meaning; but does not speak in that sort of language at all. I think it's that sort of person that we've got to try - amongst other persons - to get across to. They're not going to be impressed by any fripperies, as they regard them, of culture. They are going to be very practical, very much down to earth, very much wanting to know how it works and what is going to be the practical result, and so on and so forth. And if we are not careful, we shall impress them as something very effete and dilettante and airy-fairy, and so on, and maybe their impression in a way will be quite justified. And this whole very, as I said, articulate and intelligent part of the community we've just got no contact with at all, and very often don't even care to have. But there is intelligence there, and there is energy, and there is a certain amount of awareness, too; but completely divorced, as I said, from anything that we would regard as culture.

___: There's also a sense of values, but it's the kind of values to the middle class's values, too.

S: And I don't agree it's purely materialistic, not at bottom, as it were.

Vangisa: But its expression ...

S: The expression, sure, is materialistic, but I don't agree that it is basically materialistic.

Chintamani: In that case, you've got - What Chanda says is true about Trade Unions, that it's a religion in itself for the people who are members of it, and it seems that the only way to infiltrate, if that's the right word, is to go from the top, and let it filter down. Because if they accept what is told to them by their leaders, it's obvious that you've got to go to the leaders.

Vangisa: They tend to be the most violently convinced ...

S: No, I wouldn't agree with that, no. Sometimes the leaders are much more moderate than the ...

Vangisa: But the ones that you hear addressing trade union meetings, including ...

S: Well, maybe - out of the many, many millions of trade unionists, it's not easy to generalize - but the sort of thing I have in mind, let's be a bit practical now. Suppose there's the Trades Union Congress - they have their annual get-together, don't they? somewhere in the country, at the seaside rather? This is just a suggestion, the sort of thing I was thinking about; it's not a [87] positive proposal, but it's more sort of food for reflection. A group or party of Order members should go off to the same place, and be around with literature and just buttonhole some of them and talk to them - maybe starting off with some of the things that they have been talking about in their sessions and deliberations - and say, 'Well look, you're just looking at it from such-and-such point of view, that's a bit limited. There are much more important issues.' And just see what sort of response you get. You may get a complete blank, but if you're persistent you might find one or two who are quite sympathetic, and you start establishing some sort of contact.

I think one thing I feel, especially after getting all those letters from Vajrabodhi, is we have it in some ways very easy here.

[End of side 1 side 2]

It's not all that easy in some other parts of the world or in some other parts of this country. We tend to function in the south-east, in and around London, with nice cultured people who don't contradict you rudely, who aren't blunt or brusque or anything like that, and who let you get away with all your nice little spiritual patter, who never really challenge you. So we get it and we tend to avoid any situation of confrontation and challenge, and people saying, 'No, I'm really convinced that spirituality is a lot of rubbish.' But they're not basically even, in a way, non-spiritual people. It's not that they haven't got something which you could ...

Ananda: It's a label they just stick on.

S: Yes, it's partly that, and it's partly because perhaps it's never been put to them, or they've never encountered it in their experience in a form that they could really take to. And there is so much identification in the minds of working and ex-working-class people of culture with the middle classes and all that they stand for. The church is another tool of oppression, it's another way of keeping you down; the priests are the allies and friends of the bosses. And you get that everywhere. And this is how they feel, very deeply, and with great justification. So you've got to be able to appeal to them directly, bypassing all that and making it clear you're not part of that; otherwise you're just another little fancy fringe of the whole big ecclesiastical thing. That's how you seem in their perspective.

Devaraja: What about a method of preserving the salon?

S: Salon?

Devaraja: They used to call them salons, yes.

S: Did they?! [Laughter]

Devaraja: Yes. They used to be a centre for the exchange of ideas amongst - well, often it was basically the kind of middle class, but in those days it certainly wasn't the elite in the sense of the aristocracy; since the middle class were the people then who were fighting against the elite. And they used to become very great centres for the expression of ideas.

S: I'll tell you something I was reading about some months ago, and that was Edward Carpenter and his work. Anybody heard about him? Well, what struck me was this. Edward Carpenter, in the latter part of his life, settled down in and around Sheffield, and he spent most of his time going into working men's clubs and working men's associations of various kinds, and giving his lectures; and he had an enormous following. And he was into things like yoga, vegetarianism, food reform, sex reform - and this [88] was all in the 90's of the last century and the beginning of this century. And he had a strong following among the working classes, especially in the Labour movement and the Socialist party. And he did it on an entirely personal basis; it was just him, and they respected him. And he really got around, and really infiltrated that whole area, and his influence still persists. I am sure that some connection could be re-established.

Subhuti: That aspect of the working men's club has died out, hasn't it?

S: I don't know.

___: Not in the north.

S: I suspect it still lingers.

Subhuti: I did wonder about yoga. It's very good we have got quite a few people doing yoga now, because it seems to be a neutral way of infiltrating.

Ratnapani: I think karate's far better if you're talking about what we call the working classes. Thursday night at the centre is 75% working class, the rest of the centre is 90% middle class.

S: That's quite interesting.

Ratnapani: And they're becoming - I mean, Sensei George is not divorced from meditation; he's not just a grunt-groan man, as they call it. [Laughter] And they're becoming interested in meditation. Meditation in action ... willing hand ... there could be a quite strong link there.

S: We talked about that a couple of weeks ago somewhere - about it being a good thing if some Order members were around on Thursday nights - you know, even if it was just making tea for the karate people when they finish and having a bit of a chat with them; so they didn't just remain a completely separate sort of thing, that's happening to meet at the FWBO centre.

Ratnapani: They feel, I think, a lot more unconnected with us than we do with them.

S: That could well be, yes; but it's a bit sad, too, that there is that deficiency on our side.

___: ...

S: One or two people have undertaken to do that. Maybe a few more could.

___: This may be a spin off but people who are into karate and working-class people generally cough up a lot more in the dana bowl than the middle-class people do. And that's the experience at the Centre, isn't it? It's certainly our experience too. And three members of our class who are into karate and meditation class who come up on Wednesday regularly cough up ...

S: There's food for thought there, I'm sure, but I'm not quite sure what the thought is.

Lokamitra: Another direction was sixth forms and schools.

S: Ah!

Lokamitra: We could approach this quite easily, especially in a place like London, where you've got the Inner London Education [89] Authority, which is very very large and has a magazine which goes out to all teachers in all schools every week. And several people could work out something here and work out a plan which - they could put forward, say, we could visit the school one afternoon a week or so many weeks devoted to certain courses. This could be worked out.

S: I think that's very good.

Lokamitra: And also to universities. There are quite a few Buddhist societies in universities, but when they leave the university they're lost, and if we could get in contact with these societies then we could maybe establish contact there.

S: Yes, why not? As regards schools, especially sixth forms, is anyone able to take on this responsibility? I know everybody's got a lot to do at the moment, but is it possible for anyone?

Lokamitra: I'd be interested in helping with that. But I'd like some help.

(Talk, inaudible. Microphone noises.)

Lokamitra: Maybe a small course, maybe for four afternoons in four weeks, or something like this. Maybe certain schools would like different things.

Ananda: On a regular basis rather than just a one-off talk.

Lokamitra: Well, some schools might respond to a one-off thing. In sixth forms they have a lot of - they often have options, and they can quite easily set aside afternoons for things or longer periods ...

Ananda: Could we get hold of a copy of the ILEA magazine?

Lokamitra: I get it sent every week because I'm on their staff.

Ananda: Oh great, I'd very much like to see it...

(Talk.)

___: What it needs is a programmed course, doesn't it, like a Buddhism package that we could offer schools.

___: I think you'd find it difficult to get in with a course, but an awful lot of them do comparative religion, courses concerned with religion, where somebody in the school usually reads something out of a book to work out for themselves. But in that situation I think we could produce one or two lectures on Buddhism which wouldn't overweight what they're getting from elsewhere. I think they'd be pretty worried about a several week course ...

(Talk, inaudible.)

___: I've just thought of one other thing: that preparing a set like that in isolation is very good. I think it would be very good to prepare it in conjunction with some sixth formers. Des (Devaraja) has got contacts.

Devaraja: ... experience so far. I feel there are two things here. One is the communication of Buddhism as a religion among a group of other religions, which is a very non-experiential thing ...

___: Comparative religion ... ?

[90]

Devaraja: - and I'm beginning to wonder whether ...

S: I'd like to write something here. A bit of experience of my own in this connection. Some of you might recollect from references in the Newsletter that I attended some meetings of an inter-faith committee on religious education, and a couple of little essays I produced which appeared in the newsletter. So there were meeting about seven or eight of us. There were two Muslims, there was a Jew - a rabbi - there was a Catholic priest, and a nun, and an Anglican, a Sikh and ..., and we sat around talking. And it struck me very very strongly that all these people were much of a muchness, and that the differences of religion among them were comparatively unimportant, even though they thought that they were very important; but they had all basically the same outlook. They all wore the same kind of suits, for instance - to give you an idea - and their basic outlook was almost identical. And their main concern seemed to be carving up the kids among themselves: if you don't trespass on my lot, I won't trespass on yours. And I felt that I just didn't want to be part and parcel of that. I was quite glad I went along as a sort of experience, but I certainly wouldn't want to be included in any inter-faith sort of thing on that sort of basis or with those sort of assumptions. I'd rather remain completely separate from the whole 'other religion' thing.

Devaraja: I absolutely agree with that, because when I went along to give a little talk to these clergymen who were teachers of religion, I realized from the previous contact with ... that they didn't want really to experience anything, they didn't want to experience anything at all. They just wanted to talk at a very safe distance and not be affected by anything, and I found it better if it was just treated as a meditation class.

S: I personally feel not at all happy about being in situations where you've got a Buddhist speaker and

a Hindu speaker and a Christian speaker, isn't it all nice, all on the same platform? - I feel this is an absolute abomination. I don't feel I've got anything in common with those people on that platform. I felt that with the other people on the committee: they were just not into the same thing. I'm not saying that in the other religions there aren't elements that are very much in consonance with Buddhism; I'm talking about the people that you associate with, who stand for these religions, and the whole atmosphere of these occasions is completely different from anything that we're interested in. And I personally feel as though I want nothing to do with that, and I don't want to be identified with that in anybody's eyes. I'd much rather, therefore, have a bit of contact with a rugged trades unionist, or some militant Marxist, or someone like that; or someone in prison. But for us to be associated and listed along with groups of that sort, on occasions of that sort, I think would be fatal to - for want of a better term - our image. We don't want a respectable image. I'm sorry to say Mr Humphreys has sought for a respectable image for 50 years, I'm afraid now ...

Lokamitra: What I had in mind was - a lot of schools have comparatively enlightened headmasters these days; a lot of schools don't in fact have any religious education teachers any more as such. And I think we would be able to approach it in our own way, and we could write something for schools that are interested, but I think much better is if we can go along there and if we can get, say, an afternoon for something, and really - then I think we stand a chance of ...

S: I'm quite in favour of independent penetration. What I was talking about just now was something rather different.

___: I feel what's much more important in this school [91] business is the fact that a group of people at that age should actually meet and talk with - it doesn't matter what about - a real live Buddhist, that they should actually have met one, so that when they think about Buddhism they think about what they felt about that person. It's a very much more ...

Ananda: Not the cardboard replica.

___: Yes, it's not that they should remember the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Marichi: At the moment I'm getting inquiries from the Midlands. I can't find anyone who wants to go to the Midlands.

(Talk.)

S: You mean for lectures, or - ?

Marichi: No, schools who are doing Buddhism as part of their CSE projects.

S: That you could deal with post presumably.

(Talk.)

Mangala: What it was, again, it was a group of sixth-formers and they had a liberal studies programme, and there were several things they could have chosen. This group as it happened had chosen comparative religion, and they asked people along from Hindus and Sikhs, Muslims, and so they wanted somebody to talk on Buddhism. So I went along, and it was really good, actually, because they were very interested.

Lokamitra: They really are interested.

Mangala: In fact I went along twice. They asked me to go along again, and they were all very interested.

Chintamani: I have actually had an inquiry from my stepmother, who is a teacher, for general book lists and things, and that was for kids of about 10.

Vajradaka: There are some books recently come out for children of about 10.

Ratnapani: I feel that what is sent to the younger kids say doing CSE, just a study course, should be very carefully written, something could be prepared by somebody very seriously. Because if something

of the spirit is got across with all this information; and they might be inspired, something might sink in.

Vangisa: I have actually been working on this for the past few weeks, and have worked out - based on a format of starting off with the Buddha and going on to the Dharma and the Sangha, the Dharma, following more or less, simply and briefly, the outlines of what I might call your teachings, starting off with the essentials and moving up to dhyanas, dividing the Sangha into Bodhisattvas and Arahants... difficult approaches, and ending up with a general outline of Buddhism in the West and a more detailed account of ourselves, for this particular purpose. And I thought also that if you thought it was all right this might also serve as a basic outline for the beginners' course.

S: Well, when you have completed it, send it along.

Vangisa: I've just got to type it out.

Mangala: I was thinking - I think this has been suggested before but when we get inquiries from schools and things it may be [92] better just to send somebody along rather than - The thing is if you just send them a course, it's almost like the kids are just learners, and they're just given the exam, like ... They just sort of learn it and write it down. But if you actually send somebody along, ...

S: I think that would be much better.

Mangala: What comes off isn't for the exam materials, it's much more the spirit, ...

Vangisa: ... just to have something that when needed could be used. It was an expansion, at Bhante's suggestion actually, of the original idea of a brief handout, to something a little bit more detailed.

S: I think what we should avoid getting caught up in - this is what occurs to me at the moment - is just providing a Buddhist item in a structure which is completely opposed to what we are in fact trying to do. For instance, I've completely stopped going along to inter-faith functions for some years. I think they are completely useless, where you're all on the same platform and all say your little bit, 10 minutes on Catholicism, 10 minutes on Protestantism, a 15-minute burble by a Hindu, and another 10-minute talk by the local Buddhist - these are completely useless occasions now. They might have had their value at one time, when people were very rigid and had never heard of these other religions, but we don't want to get caught up wasting our time and energy in that sort of routine. And in the same way, people will be including a bit of Buddhism on the curriculum in future, along with other religions, comparative study, but I think we don't want to get caught up in that either. But if a real live Order member can go along and meet people, then at least they get an impression that was a Buddhist, and that was a really live person. Well, that's good enough, even if, as someone said, they don't remember the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path and so on. And this is more what I have in mind - after all, this isn't a meeting of the Council of the FWBO, it's an Order meeting, and in this context I'm thinking much more of penetration - of the world, if you like, or the bit that we can get at - by Order members as such, more than necessarily just FWBO activities. And if Order members can sally forth as a spearhead, the FWBO will follow. But I think the initial penetration has to be done by individuals.

Subhuti: So perhaps the best response to those sort of inquiries that Marichi gave is to give sources of information - maybe not even give the information ourselves, say where it can be found - and then say we will send somebody if you wish.

S: I think a short handout like she has in mind - a short sketch of the life of the Buddha, a summary of Buddhism - though not a sort of doctrinal precis - and a short history of Buddhism in the world, and then a bit about the Friends - that as just basic information, followed up - we may have to be selective here - by a personal visit from an Order member; and say there is much that cannot be explained in writing, but a member of the Order will be happy to visit your school if you would like to have a visit from him.

___: I think what Marichi was saying was that members of the Order are not terribly happy to go ... schools.

S: Also you could mention about travelling expenses. That is sometimes obviously a point: if you're going up to Birmingham, it's a few pounds for the Order member. So the point could be made that if there were some provision for travelling expenses an Order member would be happy to visit you.

[93]

Chintamani: I think on a more specific level, as far as the approach goes, it seems to me, if I think back to my school-days, the whole thing about religion for us was that we all found it profoundly negative, it was all negating what we wanted. It was all give up this, get rid of that, do not do this, because it's all sinful. No matter what the religion maybe. And I remember my first experience of Buddhism was of that one, too, ...

S: I remember the two Muslims on this committee - what they were most concerned about was that Muslim girls shouldn't be allowed to wear short skirts in school. They were more concerned about that than about anything else.

Chintamani: Anyway, so the approach should be an affirmative and a positive one, something that encourages, rather ...

Marichi: It all depends on what the school's attitude to religion is, because in most ...

Lokamitra: I'm pretty sure that a lot of headmasters would be very willing to have this. I know that a lot of kids would respond. I think the ideal situation is where we could have a continuous thing maybe four weeks or five weeks, or once every two weeks or once every month for a few months. One person going along, a small group of people, and - I know that. It would be part of an option course, because most sixth forms work, I think, on the thing of options where they often have afternoons devoted to one particular thing. And I just know that the response would be good - I'm not saying they'd join the Friends or anything, but kids at that age are interested, and ...

___: ...?

Lokamitra: Eventually, but I'd like to work with someone on it. I don't want to do it by myself at all, but I'm interested...

(inaudible talk) I think when Order members move out of London they could write to the education authority there. And also I think that once we have done this we can prepare something written, using our experience.

Devaraja: I think all these things are great, are terrific, but the point is that we seem to be very concentrated in one area, and it can only really seem to affect a few schools around us. I think for anything like that to be really effective we need a really concerted effort. It needs people to be located, active Order members to be located, in various parts of the country. But Marichi's talking about what we might be able to do, not what we are going to do.

S: Well, what is done in one area can serve as a pilot project, as it were, for the Movement generally as it spreads to different parts of the country.

Devaraja: Well, maybe that's the thing to do then: to pick particular areas and schools in north-west London and to really do a concerted thing in that area as a pilot project; rather than attempting to produce something that would be suitable for all schools throughout the country ...

S: Yes. And presumably it wouldn't be very difficult for Order members to pay visits in the north-west London area. It's near at hand, after all. Obviously, if there is a choice between giving a talk in Archway, giving it in a school in Archway, and giving a talk in a school in Birmingham, well, why not go to the Archway school? If you can't do both, do the one that is nearest. That would seem to be common sense at present.

[94]

Devaraja: This thing of following up seems to be very important ... picking one area...

Dharmapala: And it also gives them a chance to follow up if they're interested. I think this is very important. It could get very dispersed if you keep trekking out all over the place rather than concentrating on one area, and let it build from there, and then if groups establish themselves somewhere else they can do the same ...

Mangala: There's another point. Apparently adult evening institutes. If you offer a course they may accept it, a course of lectures.

Subhuti: I think it should be part of the package of going to prisons, mental hospitals and schools. Adult education institutes are very receptive.

S: Good idea, yes. I did just one thing for an adult education course, I think it was a course. It was a thing on shape. I don't know if anybody's heard about that - about three, three and a half years ago? I went along to some evening institute off Tottenham Court Road. Anyway, it was that area - a very seedy sort of area, and there were about 50 or 60 people, and they were mostly elderly people, both men and women. I gave my talk, which started off by being really metaphysical - on 'The Metaphysics of Form in Buddhism'. And I think, probably, I've not had such concentrated attention from any group that I've addressed in London, not even at the Centre; such concentrated attention and interest, and good questions afterwards. They were 40 or 50 - yes, about 50 - very ordinary, very nondescript-looking middle-aged, mostly working-class people, but real intensity. It was quite remarkable.

___: Do you ever have any inquiries or people coming to the Centre who have already been to courses on Buddhism? I was looking through the City Lit. handbook, and see that Fred () holds a course there. Well, presumably those people will go to the Buddhist Society, but there are a number of institutes like that that do do courses on Buddhism. Presumably they don't know of our existence. I wonder whether any of the others have had anybody from courses like that?

S: I don't recollect anyone, but I would say there might be a very good case for just running a regular course like that, even in preference to running a course at Archway, because the facilities are laid on by the local authority, and people aren't committing themselves by going along to a religious centre; they just enrol as at a course, but you are taking it ...

Subhuti: It's paid!

S: Yes, [Laughter] and it's up to you to cultivate any seeds of interest in them. If people do express interest in meditation, then say there's a meditation class at our Centre.

___: This is another cause where an identification certificate could be very useful because maybe we could bypass the normal need for a degree.

Subhuti: I don't think you have to have one for adult education. (Talk.)

Ananda: What they would need - they would definitely need some kind of degree or qualifications for somebody to give a series of talks on Buddhism, ...

S: They have had at the City Lit. some pretty awful people in [95] the past. I know that. I know the people who have been, ...it's terrible, some of the givers of courses on Buddhism. I'm pretty certain practically any Order member here could do better. Or, yes, looking around, every Order member here could do better than them. [Laughter]

Lokamitra: I think that out of London also the adult education departments are a big thing. They are the only real cultural ongoing thing. Getting into those would be a good thing.

S: I'm sure it wouldn't be very difficult for a few Order members to prepare a regular course which could be used in various ways, either for an adult education evening course or for a course at the Centre. It's the same basic material.

Devaraja: It really seems to be the best way to get through to intelligent working-class people.

S: Yes, indeed.

___: Also the people who go to adult education institutes are usually very mixed. They come from all kinds of backgrounds, which is a good thing.

Subhuti: I did two lectures at an adult education institute. They were very sharp, some of them.

___: They go because they're interested, they want to know something.

S: This was recently?

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Was there anything about it in the Newsletter?

Subhuti: No. It wasn't on Buddhism, officially. I went as a psychologist which is a bit of fraud, that's what it was called.

S: I think it was worth a note in the Newsletter.

Ananda: An Order member doing it.

Subhuti: I've been offered a course next year on Buddhism or on whatever I wanted.

S: Is this in 1975?

Subhuti: Oh yes, 1974 - this year.

___: I was thinking maybe at universities one could maybe do meditation classes. I know that at the London School of Economics Norma (...) took yoga classes which were very popular, and the following year they had to have three yoga classes. So maybe rather than giving a talk in a place like that where people have lots of books and lectures anyway, it might be a good idea to just ...

S: You'd have to be invited to teach that.

___: Well, one could go through the students' union and say, look, put on your noticeboard there's a meditation class available, and just see who comes along.

Manjuvajra: My experience of that is that you go in there and they'll show incredible enthusiasm - it's happened to me now in about three colleges - and - oh yes, yes, great, great, we'll get in touch with you in a week, come in in a week. And you go in a [96] week and they say, oh, no, I've got to put a notice up. You go back in another week, and so it goes on. And finally the thing just peters out.

(Talk.)

___: TM seem to manage to organize meditation classes, don't they, in universities and keeping in touch afterwards as well.

S: The Transcendental Meditation people seem to be having constant meetings in the Muswell Hill public library. In our territory I suppose!. Well, we don't seem to do anything there.

Devamitra: Have you any idea how much it would cost to hire something like that?

S: I don't know. It's a very small place, it might not even cost anything.

Vangisa: A room in a public library? A couple of pounds for an evening.

Subhuti: They've got their procedures very well worked out indeed. I was quite impressed by their system. They have an introductory talk, which is just a general discussion of meditation, and then they have a preparatory talk, which is much more detailed and which you come to them - the first one is in the library, the second one is in their centre. And then after that you'll pay up and you're in it. [Laughter] But I was quite impressed by the way in which they had it worked out, they'd obviously tried it out and ...

___: I think one of the problems with the Order is that it's still very small, it's got very limited resources, and ...

(break in recording)

___: ...

S: I think we should keep all the university Buddhist societies informed about our retreats, and just

send them copies of the things that go up on our notice boards to go up on their notice boards. I think it's as simple as that. I don't think we can do much more at this stage. Just get the names of all the university Buddhist societies - there aren't more than 10 or 12 in the whole country, at the most - and just send them along, the posters and things that we put up ourselves.

___: One thing in general I'd like to say: if we're going to be contacting a lot of ordinary everyday people in ... universities, schools and so on, it will make a very very bad initial impression if we are slapdash, if our printing is bad, if don't keep appointments, if we don't answer letters, and - you know, one unanswered letter can do more for the bad name of the Movement than two or three people going to give good lectures. And I think it's very important we should be efficient in our dealings with everyday people, especially people who are used to it and appreciate efficiency.

S: (murmuring agreement) I think we should be efficient anyway, as a matter of spiritual principle.

Dharmapala: I think in that connection you have to be careful that you don't start off on too big a scale. There should be those things that are in and around London and open up as many channels as possible and see how well you can do that efficiently before you spread out further.

Ananda: There are millions of people in London who haven't [97] even heard of the Friends, potentially ...

S: Well, what about south of the river, we've never tapped them? Darkest Tooting! [Laughter]

___: There was a community in Clapham for a while.

S: Yes, it's a pity that that couldn't be continued, really.

___: There is still a community there, and one of the people who were in the Friends is there. I can't remember his name now.

Subhuti: Could almost do with a Centre in south London, a mission to south London.

S: Oh yes, very definitely. Sooner or later.

Devaraja: I think Mamaki's place at Crystal Palace would be ideal for that.

S: I was thinking of somewhere much less respectable. That would be good, too, but I don't regard Croydon as south London, really. I was thinking of Balham and Clapham and Tooting and Battersea. It is a huge area. But why not a Centre at Croydon? I'd be fully in favour of that. Crystal Palace: I used to go there as a boy, to see all those big animals, monsters. Well, why not? The more the merrier, quite literally.

(Inaudible talk.)

Mamaki: The problem would be finance as far as my house is concerned, because if I own the building it would be empty. Be has the right to half the house. So that my husband wouldn't really be ... enough to buy himself some place outside, and he would need proceeds from the sale in order to do this.

S: He needs one of these nice big expensive houses.

Mamaki: Yes, it's a big house.

S: I've never actually seen it. Maybe one day?

Mamaki: It's bigger than this one. There are six very large bedrooms, and two very large reception, a very big kitchen, ...

S: And it's quiet?

Mamaki: Very quiet, much quieter than here.

S: Sounds very nice. A big garden?

Mamaki: Yes. [Laughter]

S: Sounds ideal! But as you say, there is the question of money, which I'm afraid with the Friends is always quite a question. They're a poverty-stricken group.

Mamaki: I'd be very pleased to show you.

S: Right, OK, yes.

Mamaki: I don't know what sort of ways there may be of raising money. Des did suggest mortgaging half the house so that Jim would have that amount of capital, and then finding, or rather find the people first who would be willing to live there and pay rent to cover the cost of repayment of the mortgage. But I haven't gone into the business side of it, the practicalities of it, at [98] all. It's a possibility.

S: Do you think it could be an Order house?

Mamaki: Well, I think that would be a fine idea. We've been hanging on to it for a long time, really, because we didn't want to give it up to somebody who was going to just ... it and ... a block of flats or something. So if it can be worked in any way, we would all be very happy about that.

Ananda: Is there anybody in this room that could consider moving into a community possibly in that area?

Mamaki: It's quite convenient for London. It's 20 minutes to Victoria.

S: Well, that's very reasonable, isn't it? That means you can be up to Archway - (several people talking at once)

Mamaki: The air is excellent because it's facing the South Downs It's very comfortable [Laughter].

S: Well, looking at you, Mamaki, we can believe that.

Mamaki: It's quieter than ... quite convenient.

S: I think, if anything of this sort is seriously considered or is possible, mortgaging half the property and so on, it might be a good idea if you just work out the details and the figures, how many Order members could be accommodated and how much each one would have to pay for that arrangement to be possible, and then draft a proper circular and send it out to all Order members through Shabda. I think that would be the way to handle it. With concrete facts and figures, so that then people can consider it. But it does sound perhaps, if it could be managed, a really wonderful opportunity.

Ananda: I think it's the only real possibility that I can see of the Order getting an Order community in fairly central London in the foreseeable future, whether ... I can't imagine any other possibility or opportunity coming up again.

___: Something permanent, in fact, not a squat.

S: ... because even this isn't permanent; there's the lease to be renewed and rent to be paid.

Ananda: It's a golden opportunity.

Mamaki: I'll look into the business side of it then.

S: Right, good.

___: There's probably more that people could do locally in terms of setting up their own little local study groups. I had in mind something like putting an ad in the local paper saying, 'Buddhist study group once a week, inquiries welcome', something like this, and see what you got. If you got too mixed a bunch, you could even start stratifying, you could even advertise a young people's Buddhist group, and then specify certain age groups. You wouldn't need very many - say, half a dozen; just come along once a week or once a fortnight and work through one of the straightforward, very elementary books,

and just have a discussion on it.

S: We've got visitors, by the way. Is there anyone to deal with them? (Movement.)

[99]

___: ... waylaid me in the drive, ... quite a ..., he's a poet, rather an individualist. I told him there's a Convention on this weekend and that it wouldn't be the best time to come and have a look round, but that at probably any other time they would probably be quite welcome. Obviously something rang a bell in his mind, ...

(Talk; laughter.)

Subhuti: We could probably do what Vajradaka did. I'm doing the next one, ...

[End of Tape 5 Tape 6]

- and drawing on his experience, I'm going to draw up a folder which will have the basic skeleton of a complete course.

___: I think this would be very useful, to have something so that if anybody wants to do it at least they'll have something to start on ...

Subhuti: Yes, so it could be mounted within a week.

___: - not necessarily having to be typed slavishly, but it should save them having to work it all out, and help them to avoid missing out anything important.

Subhuti: It seemed like that sort of thing would be a good thing to run locally, one Order member ...

___: ... if you had a smallish room, somewhere about half this size, it would be no trouble to ... sit on the floor, on cushions ... If you get a bigger group, then you start needing either to have a very large lounge in your house or you could go outside and hire, and it starts putting a ... on the whole thing. Whereas you could run an initial thing - you could just make a short thing, maybe a 10-week thing just even if you sifted off say one or two out of a group of 60 you're doing quite well, I think, ... go on.

S: What was the percentage of involvement, Vajradaka, from the first study course? What sort of percentage of people got regularly involved afterwards?

Vajradaka: ...

S: Really good. That's quite unusual. Yes. It shows what can be done. How many was that?

Vajradaka: Thirteen.

___: In fact, they said that at the end of their first weekend retreat, which was in the third week, wasn't it, Vajradaka? ...

Vajradaka: Yes.

___: - they said, oh well, now we're Buddhists we're not doing a Buddhist course, and from then on they acted as if they were Buddhists.

___: They also want to go on the next course [Laughter]. A lot of them feel like going on the next course so they can do it all over again.

___: Is this sort of thing offered to some of the other groups that we've got connected. Brighton, for instance? I think it would be useful -

[100]

S: Well, once Druva and Buddhadasa get going there, the possibilities are quite limitless; whether they take such courses themselves or invite another Order member especially for that purpose.

Vajradaka: What I feel about courses is that you've got a group of people and what I felt about the total three-month experience was that they could be put through three years of Friends' experience in three months, all the things that we've been through in three years they could go through that in three months, in the course of retreats and the one night a week. And it seemed to work like that as well. A lot of information being passed ...

S: Well, it seems to me as though the momentum of the whole Movement is very much increased, and - for instance, in Glasgow Gotami seems to have got started in about three or four months what took about two years to get started in London, roughly. And everything seems to be corresponding. It's all getting sort of - not just quicker and quicker, but gathering momentum. And more seems to happen within a shorter time. So this means a definite possibility of expansion.

Vajradaka: The idea of having a course in just places like Holborn and Ealing - just a couple of Order members perhaps hiring a place - getting together some sponsors to pay for the advertising and the initial, the first day of the course until people start booking, to get some money.

Marichi: Didn't you have that idea, Subhuti, ...?

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Yes, I think this is very good.

Vangisa: Mike and I have been planning to do that in Ealing, and Ealing is more or less the centre of that west London area, ... adjoining ...

S: And corresponds roughly to Crystal Palace, I should imagine!

Vangisa: Yes. But I was thinking of hiring a place - not trying to do it in a room. But I think it is ... to charge people money in advance if you haven't already got a centre going.

Subhuti: I think that if you hire a hall, and the whole thing is worked out in advance, you've got every reason to charge, and it's even an incentive to come. It commits people to the whole course ...

Vangisa: This is the great advantage of charging people in advance. They are less likely to drop out.

Lokamitra: Would it be better, perhaps, to ...

(Talk.)

___: You can hire school halls very cheaply, ...

Vangisa: The point is, what I was thinking of, ... is that having got something like this started, it seems a shame not to use it as the basis for starting a centre for that area. When you've got your initial group in the beginners' course, you can use them to start the work on building up a centre from which they can operate - we can all operate afterwards.

S: Right, yes. That would seem to be the procedure.

Anyway, we have practically finished our time. I feel people are [101] a little bit tired; is that true? You don't seem so lively as yesterday?

(Sounds of assent.)

Ananda: I don't think it's because we are tired - I don't feel tired; I don't feel quite so lively, ...

S: What is it, the weather? Lying in the sunshine? Were you all up late last night talking?

___: No, I was up early this morning. (Laughter. Talk.)

Ananda: ... What I'm picking up, on an entirely feeling level, is that people are much more interested in themselves and their development - getting themselves together and getting their own lives sorted out, rather than going out. Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know, ...

S: Yes, sure, that is true, but at the same time the antithesis between the two is to some extent artificial.

Ananda: Yeah, I know, yeah, but that depends on one's level of consciousness, doesn't it?

Devamitra: I kind of feel that there's been such a vast area discussed, we can't do all that now, and I feel a little overwhelmed. I can't quite see which direction I should be heading off in right now, and so I feel a little bit confused on that point. I don't know if anybody else feels that? (Murmurs of assent.) There's been so many things brought up, we can't possibly follow them all up now. Well, I think we need to bring a few things together and really get them on.

Ananda: I feel so many topics have been brought up and very few have really been followed through to the end in a sense - and I think we should, as you say, take up one or two and really follow them through and concentrate on them.

Devamitra: Well, could we come to some kind of decision about ...

S: Well, a few things have been - we have taken decisions on a few things. And the rest has been just discussion, just to give people some idea of perspective. We did take a decision about identity cards. We took a decision about prison visiting, about writing to the chaplains and so on. We also took a decision about schools. Who is responsible for that? Yes. So we've taken three definite decisions. Any more?

___: I don't think I mentioned it, but I'd like to write out a little leaflet or pamphlet particularly aimed at trades union people.

S: That's really good, yes.

___: Buddhism for Marxists, Buddhism for trades union ...

S: Yes, why not? I think that's very good.

___: Either Marxists or trades union socialists.

S: 'Buddhism for the Working Man'? No, that ...

___: Yeah, that line - I think that sort of thing would appeal -

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S: 'Buddhism and Socialism'?

___: Yeah, 'Buddhism and Socialism'.

S: Something of that kind.

Subhuti: Buddhism for the lathe operator - {(Talk.)}

___: Have you got a new book on Buddhism and Communism, haven't you... one of the books ...'d be interested in ...

S: Yes. There was one in the library, but I saw this very cheap one, so I picked it up for the bookshop. It deals mainly with the Buddhist countries of the East, but it is quite ... Yes, I think if people just look at all the possibilities at the same time, they get overwhelmed, but then that isn't necessary. It's like, for instance, you've got, say, 100 letters to answer - 'Oh, I've got 100 letters to write!' but you haven't; you've only got one letter to write. You put it to yourself in the terms of 'I've got to write 100 letters', as though you've got to do them all today, but you haven't. You write one letter, and then you write another one - you keep on till it's done. So it isn't really that there are all these things to be done now - no. They're there as possibilities, yes, but you select this one, then that one, and so on.

Ananda: I do feel in the past there's a general feeling, general trend almost, that so many ideas have been discussed in Council meetings and Order meetings and just not really followed up.

S: Well, no, just a minute. Some discussion without decision is quite in order. We have taken certain definite decisions, and the rest has been allowed to remain as discussion. If, later on, individual Order members feel the urge to take up, they will do that and they can do that.

Marichi: If you do that, I'd like to be told, please.

S: Well, yes or no - it may be something which doesn't fall within your sphere at all, but if it is something which may tie up with ..., well, sure ...

Marichi: It often does. I find out months later that somebody's done something, and I'm trying to repeat that unnecessarily.

S: For instance, what I had in mind was if someone suddenly decided, say, to go off to Manchester and start a group there. Well, it's nice to inform us. But they need not until they've got it well under way. If they want to keep it as a surprise for us.

Asvajit: Perhaps I ought to say that I'm thinking of starting a group in Bristol some time - when the right opportunity comes up.

Subhuti: Booking your place.

Asvajit: I'm thinking about it, anyway.

S: Staking out your diocese. [Laughter]

Asvajit: If anybody wants to come along and help me, they can. I'd be very happy.

Vajradaka: In regard to what you said, many of the things that we've talked about this morning have been talked about in different Order meetings and council meetings a year ago and two years ago. In a sense, there's nothing new. But now it's got so much more impetus than it had. Things are being done now. [103] When we talked about going, talking to schools, sixth-formers, we all agreed it was a good idea but we couldn't do it. But now we have the facility to do it. And we'll probably carry on talking about these things for years until they're all being done, because every time we talk about them they gain more momentum.

S: That's true, yes. Also I must say I've noticed recently, that is in the last few months, I'm turning over things in my mind and then I think it would be a good idea to do so-and-so; and then I mention it to someone who comes to see me, and he says, 'oh yes, we started doing that last week.' It wasn't ever like that before. So it does show that a momentum is gathering and that things are being done more than they ever were before.

But don't just let yourselves get confused or feeling all impotent, just seeing how much there is to be done, because it's not going to all be done at once. You just keep all the possibilities steadily in mind and you tick them off your list one by one, when the good time comes, when you feel ready.

Asvajit: There's a whole world of difference in attitude between saying 'I can only do one thing at a time,' and 'I can do one thing at a time.'

S: Yes, right! Will someone put that in the Newsletter? Well, you never in fact ever do more than one thing at a time.

Anyway, it is just 12 o'clock, so let's say it's lunchtime - unless anyone wants to add any last words, anyone who hasn't piped up yet?

Vajradaka: Some time I'd like to start a centre in Hawaii. (Laughter.)

S: I notice no ladies volunteering to go with you!

Subhuti: They've already been asked!

Ananda: What sort of topics are we discussing this afternoon, Bhante?

S: The Functioning of the Order.

Ananda: Intercommunications and that?

S: No, some of the things we've discussed by way of anticipation. I was going to discuss the identity card, but we've dealt with that. But one quite important thing is, for want of a better term, the organization of the Order as such, and there being a need for - well, I'm afraid the term is office-bearers, but it isn't quite that. Just certain specific people to do specific jobs. This is the main thing to be talked about.

Ananda: I'm just wondering if it would be worth while reserving a few minutes at the end of the last session for general impressions about - I mean, there may well be people feeling things that haven't come under any of the existing categories.

S: Maybe.

Ananda: I don't know if people want that to voice general feelings about the Movement, about future possible alley-ways of expansion - I don't know; it's just a suggestion.

S: Well, there was some other provision - what was that? No, sorry, that was on the day retreat, we had 'Review'. We could have a sort of review at the end ...

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Ananda: And also summarizing the actual executive decisions that we have made.

S: Sure - in each of the sessions, fine, yes. Or what there is to be done, even if we're not quite sure yet which of all those items we're going to be personally responsible for. OK, then.

(Discussion on timing arrangements and lifts after the convention)

Session 4 _

S: All right, this session is 'The Functioning of the Order', and under this head I had several things in mind, of which the first that springs to mind at the moment is the fact that we really need a few more - I don't like calling them office-bearers, I don't know whether 'dignitaries' would be a proper ... - or 'functionaries' or 'Order chaps' (?) or something like that. We have one at the moment, that is a Registrar, whose function is simply to maintain the list of Order members with other relevant details, and at the moment he is sending out the news-sheet which will be called Shabda. He is here, by the way, isn't he?

Suvratta: Yes.

S: Yes, there he is. I don't know whether he wishes to continue to discharge that particular responsibility or not, but no doubt he will declare himself shortly. But in addition to a Registrar, who is clearly necessary, I think we need also a Convenor, an Order Convenor. By convenor I mean simply one who calls Order members together when required, especially for the Convention - who gets that together every year - and who is also responsible for organizing purely Order functions such as retreats. This should, I think, from now onwards, as much more is going on within the FWBO, now be the responsibility of someone appointed by and responsible to the Order as such. And that should all be arranged quite separately and not arranged by the Council of the FWBO. So, a convenor - at present there won't be very much to do, but later on there may be.

I think we also need a properly appointed librarian-cum-archivist. The books which I personally handed over, as you know, were handed over to the Order - it's the Order Library - and also a number of images and things which I brought from India: all of [105] those are now being kept here at Aryatara, but they are in fact the property of the Order. And there are various records and archives accumulating, associated with the Order, which are not, strictly speaking, the property of the FWBO - or I should say now, of any FWBO. So I feel that we also need someone just to look after our books, images and records, who will maintain a proper list of them and be accountable for them to the Order.

In addition, I feel that we need someone for whom I can't find a proper term; the nearest is Master of Ceremonies, or it could be Mistress of Ceremonies, of course: the person who is responsible for

making the arrangements for ordinations - for instance, for seeing that the shrine is properly set up, for seeing that the kesas have been prepared in the right numbers, and so on. All that side of things.

So, four, really, we need: the Registrar, the Convenor, the Librarian and Archivist, and the Master of Ceremonies. There may also be the question of the editing of Shabda. It may be, of course, that either the Registrar or the Convenor is willing to take it on, but it may be also that we need someone separate from that; let us see. So these are, I feel, the office-bearers, if that is the term, which are actually needed for the Order as such to function more effectively.

Chanda: Would the Librarian have to reside at Sarum House seeing that the things are here?

S: I think that's a bit putting the cart before the horse. We have to decide first of all where we want to keep the library. I assume that it is most convenient to keep it here, but that's for the Order to decide. And in that case, whether the Librarian should go with the library or vice versa, or whatever.

So any comments or inquiries on this?

___: It seems a good idea to have someone to do these things.

___: Are there any positions at the moment?

S: Registrar. Suvratta has been functioning as Registrar. He's the chap who's been trying to get all these names and addresses, not with great success in all cases.

Dharmapala: Is there anybody particularly talented in those areas?

S: Well, either a trained librarian or a good ritualist, or someone who is accustomed to calling people together.

Vajradaka: I think all those posts need someone who is solid, not liable to go skipping off all over the world at a moment's notice.

S: Yes, and also possibly not with any specific responsibility at the moment. We want to try and distribute the work load quite evenly.

___: I think it might be a good idea to consider an editor of Shabda now as well.

S: Right. Perhaps we could deal with that first. Is there anybody who would feel like doing this - to edit it, or put together (it's not really much of an editorial job) the Order monthly Shabda?

___: What does it actually involve?

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Ananda: Collecting information.

___: Just getting the important stuff together, getting it duplicated and getting it out on time - and sending it out.

S: You haven't seen one yet, have you?

___: No, I haven't.

S: Is one available? Ah. So you can see there isn't much actually at present involved in it. My own idea is that it's mainly just to circulate information of various kinds on various levels, and one can dispense perhaps with the refinements of editorial work and production. If you get a few extra sheets, well, just staple them up together. You don't have to organize layout and things like that.

Ananda: I think the primary objective is that it should be immediate and up to date, and contain all the relevant last-minute details of events, and ...

S: Things of specifically Order interest.

Suvratta: I don't mind carrying on if nobody else wants to.

___: It seems as if there should be a good connection between the Registrar and that person - because ...

S: Yes, because the editor of the newsletter can get quite a bit of information, or most of it, even, from the Registrar. Is it much of a job for you at present, Suvratta?

Suvratta: Well, the main difficulty is that I don't seem to get to enough meetings to pick up the gossip, so to speak...

S: But do Order affairs come up in that sort of way?

Suvratta: Well, sometimes I seem to have missed things which I think deserved a mention.

___: Is that the main problem? It's not actually the time in putting it out?

Suvratta: There's not much time involved, because other people tend to write articles more than I do. I just go round nagging people to produce something at that time.

Ananda: Doing what an editor should do really.

Dharmapala: Does the Registrar collect all this information ... or is that the function of the Registrar?

S: The Registrar collects all the information about Order members - that is to say, their current addresses and telephone numbers, and if possible - if he knows or if they tell him - where they are at any given time.

___: You're saying that another post then, is what would be useful - someone at the Centre, possibly - whatever's going on they can at least inform them, so that anybody can contact what's going on.

Vangisa: It's difficult to think of somebody as being permanently at the Centre. When you give somebody this job he may be... I think really what we're talking about is whether the job of Registrar and the editorship of Shabda should as a matter of principle be considered as a job for one man, or whether they would normally, irrespective of personality, best separated.

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S: I feel that it would be better on principle if they go together. I don't think we need much in the way of general information which should appear in the newsletter - it's more a question of information pertaining to Order members, and it's really, I would say, their responsibility to send that in. It is not the responsibility of the Registrar to hunt around asking people 'Where do you live now? We've been trying to get in touch with you.' It is the responsibility of every Order member to send in their change of address to the Registrar. Shabda is the medium of communication for Order members, and I would say the editor of that is just the postman. And it's not like the editorship of the Newsletter, where you are perhaps trying to get information from reluctant writers and so on, but Shabda is just the medium of communication for Order members. If they don't want to communicate, well, all right, fair enough. We can discuss it at the next Order Convention - why communication hasn't been taking place. But it's not really the - well, we don't envisage it as the task of the registrar or the editor to have to hunt up information. It should be supplied to him, that is, through him.

Mamaki: I think it's a good thing here, because you're not likely to move, are you? At least, not for a while. And we can just get used - if we want to write to the Order, just to write to you instead. If we have this idea in mind, it will come about automatically that all the news around the Order will go to you.

S: I would say, Suvratta, just don't take it as your responsibility, if you are able from other points of view to edit the newsletter, don't take it as your responsibility to collect information. That isn't your responsibility. It's the responsibility of every Order member to tell you what he wants to tell everybody else, so that you can circulate it, that's all, including especially his current address.

Suvratta: I'm perfectly happy to carry on like that.

S: And if someone says 'I never got the last four newsletters' and so on, well - 'Did you send in your change of address? Well, why not? It's not the editor's responsibility or the registrar's responsibility to go chasing you around for that. You should be sufficiently responsible to supply it as soon as you change your address.' So I think this is how we should look at Shabda, at the Order newsletter.

Ananda: It's the responsibility of the whole Order, really, isn't it?

S: Yes, quite. And the editor is only the postman, nothing more than that. Though that is quite important, because if the postman doesn't do his job, the whole thing falls to the ground. But he is only the transmitter. If he has something to say on his account, fine.

Ananda: I'll be quite happy to go on printing it, if someone could type the stencil, that's the only thing.

___: All right, I'll do that.

S: Are you happy about being registrar, then? That seems to go together.

Suvratta: I'm quite happy about that ...

S: That's fine, that's really good.

Suvratta: - as long as everyone else is happy.

S: Anyway, as I said, originally when this question was raised at Tittleshall, we need someone who is geographically stable - I [108] think that is quite important - whose address isn't likely to change for a few years. I think most Order members are pretty fluid, and it's quite right and proper it should be like that. But it's also right and proper that there should be a few stable points here and there.

Now what about that convenor? Who feels like being the convenor?

Ratnapani: What was this for, Bhante? ...

S: Well, convenor means the person who would be responsible for calling meetings of the Order, especially the annual Convention, and arranging especially Order retreats.

Devaraja: That should go - the person who is organizing would be organizing retreats anyway ...

S: No, I'd rather separate it. Because I think in the case of Order things we can often do things at very short notice, like I'm doing the study retreats. I think it'll be a bit cumbersome if it goes through the machinery of the Council and all that. And I want also that the Order should have its own quite definite existence, apart from the various FWBOs. Otherwise, if it's organized by the FWBO, it's by one particular FWBO, whereas there are several FWBOs. So the common things which concern the whole Order, not any particular FWBO, should be organized directly from the Order.

___: Would the work entail organizing the weekly Order meetings?

Ananda: They shouldn't need any organizing, although they have been moving about a bit. The only movement is that the first meeting of every month is here.

Vangisa: I think there wouldn't be any harm ...

Subhuti: That's a local matter, isn't it? It's not an Order matter in the wider sense.

S: Yes, it is only a particular group of Order members. Admittedly at present they are the biggest group, but it may not remain even like that very much longer even. No, I think it probably would not effectively include those weekly meetings. Suppose you had, for instance, as you soon will have, Order members up in Glasgow, they will organize their own weekly meetings, that particular group of Order members.

___: What about - suppose I'm coming down to London, say for a couple of days, and I think, ah, I know that the London group has their Order meeting on Friday, who do I ring up to find out where it is? Presumably ...

S: It should be just the Centre. All that information should be there.

Vangisa: Which centre?

S: Well, she said London, coming down to London, ... Archway ...

___: Presumably if you were going up to Glasgow you would ring the Glasgow centre, and they would know. And Auckland Centre in the case of - .

Asvajit: What would be responsibilities of this post be, apart from the annual Convention?

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S: And the occasional Order retreat, and any purely Order occasion of that kind. For instance, I'd arrange my study retreats through that person, and say, here's a list of people that I'd like to invite on the study retreat; please contact them and check up that this is a convenient week for everybody.

Hridaya: That seems to be one of the jobs that I might be able to do, living so far away, because I'm excluded from most of the things except registrar, as I live 250 miles away...

___: Are you on the phone?

Hridaya: I'm not now ...

___: It would seem to be ... on the phone if you want to organize things quickly.

S: That's true.

Asvajit: I would volunteer for it, but I'll be going to New Zealand, so I won't be around for six months.

S: Well, is there anyone who is on the phone but who doesn't have much in the way of work load for the Friends or the Order at the moment?

Vangisa: I'd like to suggest Sudatta.

S: Ah. Well, how about it, Sudatta? Do you feel like taking it on?

Sudatta: Not particularly ... I'm making my contribution in other ways.

S: OK.

Manjuvajra: I wonder whether I could do it. I'm on the 'phone during the day.

S: I think you could actually. There's not going to be very much at present, but it could be quite a bit in two or three years' time. I think during the coming year there won't be all that much. Certainly I'm going to be away for a few months during the coming year anyway, so you can lie low then. And the next Convention won't be until after I come back from New Zealand, so - even study retreats - I am quite able to do them off my own bat if necessary, because I'm in quite close contact with local Order members. So it might not be much more for the present than the next Convention. Really that is perhaps all that you're taking on - that you'll fix up the venue and see, through the newsletter, Shabda, that everybody gets proper notification. And you get the agenda and all that from me and see that it's circulated and so on and so forth. So I doubt whether in fact there would be much to do in the course of the year before that; so that is in effect what you would be taking on.

Manjuvajra: I can be reached by phone during the day.

___: Do you have the number on you?

Manjuvajra: No. You could find it out easily. Truro ...

S: OK, then.

Suvratta: You can send it to me. (Laughter.)

S: All right, then there's the Librarian and Archivist. Ananda's been doing that, haven't you? So could you be reconfirmed in [110] that, or would you rather give it up?

Ananda: I think, I feel, at the moment, at least, that both should be by somebody in the community, since most of the things are staying here And I have been cataloguing a library and I would be quite happy to continue. I don't envisage that it's likely to be very demanding in terms of time.

S: Right. Is there, by the way, a sort of inventory of Order images and things?

Ananda: Yes, we have made a catalogue; it's got to be updated.

S: Good. Well, what I suggest is that when that's done a copy is deposited with the Registrar.

Ananda: Yeah, good idea.

S: So he has everything, all information of various kinds, with him.

Ananda: Everything that is the property of the Order in fact.

S: Yes. So that also there's another copy somewhere - suppose there's a fire or anything and all the copies go, something like that.

___: When you say it's got to be updated - does that mean that there are continually new things coming in, like images and so on?

Ananda: No, but it wasn't completed - like the thangkas haven't been catalogued. The images have ... been done, but we didn't get round to the older thangkas.

S: I have a few more books to give, anyway. That's very good. That only leaves the Master of Ceremonies. Who would be happy to look after that?

Devaraja: I'd be interested.

S: Would you? OK, fine. At present it's mainly the organization of the sewing parties for kesas [Laughter] - the organizing, get the work done. And also you'd be responsible for checking up - though you wouldn't have to be actually present yourself - but making sure that all the ritual requisites and so on were available for any ordination; to know where those things were, what was required, and so on. OK, that's fine.

Chintamani: ... can actually be the last - ... librarian and archivist. The idea just occurred to me - do you think there'd be - all the new work that is produced for Order members should be communally available?

S: The new work?

Chintamani: The new thangkas.

S: Oh, the new thangkas. What do you mean exactly? ...

Chintamani: At the moment, each painting is done for a particular person, and that person pays for it, but I thought that maybe we could somehow have a system of knowing who has got what painting, and if it is needed for a particular occasion it could be available.

S: Right, that's good. Because on one occasion, for instance, we wanted to borrow a Padmasambhava image, and luckily our Friend Mike Kennedy was up in London at that time and I [112] happened to know that he had one - I think we borrowed it, didn't we? So if in that way there were some sort of list, even, of thangkas and images, especially anything rather exceptional, with Order members, that too could be kept, maybe a copy with the Registrar and one with the Master of Ceremonies, so that we knew what was around and available and what could be borrowed. That's quite useful.

Vajradaka: So we then submit all those things that we have to the ritual master - sorry, the librarian and archivist - that is, Ananda.

S: That's very good. Right, anything more on these functionaries?

Asvajit: Tapes will have to be reallocated in six months, or five months.

___: That isn't Order business.

S: No, it isn't.

All right. Now, any other question that anybody can think of, or suggestion, with regard to the functioning of the Order?

Subhuti: You did suggest at one time that one of these functionaries should look into the status of the Order.

S: Ah, that's very good, yes, I had meant to bring that up. Yes, that's very important indeed. We did touch on this earlier in connection with the identity cards and the prison visiting. I would very much like some Order member or other to go into the question of the legal status, if there is such a thing in this country for ordained people, of Order members; for instance, recognized or registered (I don't know what the word is) clergy are exempt from national service. And I'd also like to find out where Order members, especially full-time Order members, stand in respect to, say, what is it? - I don't even know the names of these things - national insurance stamps, things like that? I am afraid I have just ignored all this since I came back from India [Laughter], but I think maybe we ought to know where we stand and how we can perhaps regularise our position while not committing ourselves to any more than we are committed to at present. I know so little about the field, I don't even know what inquiries will have to be made about what. You may know more about that than I do. But I feel that we ought to know where we stand.

Nagabodhi: I'll take that on.

___: Will you? Right, OK.

Chanda: You see, Bhante, even the national clergy get a weekly wage, so if they get a weekly wage they are also members of the National Health, so they have to be automatically insured. It is covered in fact ...

S: Yes, but don't forget there are Catholic monks in monasteries - what do they do?

___: ... once a year or whatever ... ?

S: I don't know. So you've got the idea. I think you know what I'm getting at.

Nagabodhi: I can try. I know quite a lot of people who ...

S: This whole area. And could you perhaps draw up, even, a report? And that could be circulated for the information of all [112] Order members: just where we stand in all these matters.

Marichi: There's another kind of area into which we could go. For instance, I recently discovered that - as far as I know, and I was checking up on this for myself - if you are in Scotland you can conduct a wedding ceremony without having the people go and have a registry office wedding afterwards. And so on. All this kind of thing, which is useful to know.

S: Ah. Don't forget Scottish law, by the way.

___: Yes, it's quite different from English law, and you can do thing up there - For instance, up in Scotland, your ordained name is your legal name.

S: Oh! Even I can't have my ordained name as my legal name unless I change it by deed poll.

___: Whereas I can sign a bank account in that name, hold a lease in that name, and that is my name.

Vangisa: You don't have to change your name specifically by deed poll. In this country you can call yourself legally anything you like to providing you call yourself by this one name. Various bureaucratic institutions like some document stating that this is your one name, a birth certificate or something. The easiest way of doing it is to get a document known as a deed poll, but it is not in fact essential. And ...

S: In India I couldn't, for instance, put my monastic name on my passport; it wasn't accepted by the British passport authority, even though I was known only by that name.

Marichi: I don't think you can easily change your Christian name.

S: I don't want to change my Christian name!

Marichi: You can change your surname, but not your Christian name.

Vangisa: It's a question of - whatever you are normally known as, you can call yourself anything you want to or change your name to anything you like, as long as that is what you are normally known as. That is legally your name.

S: I hadn't bothered about it, because I felt for certain slightly non- spiritual - I won't say unspiritual - purposes I'd rather use my secular name than sort of soil my monastic name with it! [Laughter] Just keep my monastic name for good pure spiritual purposes, for lectures and classes and literature and so on. Though I must admit I put it on cheques. But then the Tantric attitude towards money - you see?

___: You could find out about petrol coupons as well. [Laughter]

S: Yes, that is another point.

___: This is quite important, ...

___: What about free baby-sitters?

Nagabodhi: It could be an ongoing thing, because apart from an original survey as soon as something comes up I could phone up and say, what are our chances of exemption?

S: In the United States ministers of religion get concessional [113] fares on airlines, so if an Order member went to the States it would be possible, if he was properly identified, as it were, as a minister, to get him concessional air fares.

___: Then he could go to the various embassies ...

___: There is the point of Buddhist holidays, (?) ...

S: That's another point. I did it in the Army: I demanded Wesak day off, and I got it.

___: It's quite important, ...

S: Offer to work Christmas Day? For treble pay? [Laughter] (Excited talk.)

Devaraja: We're entitled to ask for our holidays, as it were?

S: I think the position is - I'm not quite sure - that certainly so far as certain religions are concerned, you are entitled to demand time off on your religious holiday. I think, for instance, Jews would be entitled to that, and Muslims. I don't know whether any Buddhists have got around to it yet. The policy of many Buddhists in this country has been not to be different, to go along with everybody else, sort of thing. But let's just find out what the legal position is, or whether one could in fact claim it or not. Whether we exercise that right, if we have it, that's an individual matter. But let us at least know where we stand.

___: I think it might also be quite useful to have a different category for this information, so that - suppose, say, somebody from here goes to work in New Zealand or Scotland or Finland, they can just

look up the differences in the legal position in the new country.

S: For instance, Akshobya in New Zealand is authorized to perform marriages. He doesn't have to have a registry ceremony afterwards; he is authorized - or recognized as authorized - to perform those ceremonies.

Devamitra: Do we in fact have any plan of official state recognition - as the term used, 'ministers of religion'?

S: Well, this is what he's going to find out. (Talk.)

Chanda: ... in New Zealand the law is very similar to England, isn't it? ...

S: Right. For instance, a test case would be the question of conscription: clergy are not conscripted, monks are not conscripted.

Ratnapani: Nobody is in this country, anyway.

S: Except in time of war. (Talk.)

___: Find out now!

S: Right, [because] if there is by any chance ever a war - there will be one sooner or later, I suppose - and you start claiming this thing as soon as the war starts, that's very suspicious. You must establish it well in advance. So this is why I feel we should go into all these things before even there's any need, so that it's all there and it's clear beforehand.

Vangisa: Jury service. Ministers of religion are exempt from jury service.

S: If they wish to be exempted.

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Mangala: What about things like ... have a job, you've got to give your name, things like that - is it best just to keep your usual name or use your ordained name? I suppose most jobs have got forms for ...

S: My feeling is to keep one's secular name for secular purposes where one's religious name just isn't appropriate. This is my feeling. But if someone felt so strongly about their new religious identity and wanted to drop their old name completely and only use their Buddhist name, I certainly wouldn't see anything against that.

Ratnapani: I find writing letters - say, to the council - I automatically sign my ordinary name, and to inquiries about meditation sign my ordained name. It happens quite automatically, so as not to confuse the council ...

S: If I write to Order members not at the Centre I usually write their secular name on the envelope but say 'Dear So-and-so', using their ordained name, in the letter itself.

Devaraja: I've found it's really useful at school using my ordained name, because the headmaster's really keen that I shouldn't use my religious name, so I made a point of telling all my pupils this. It's getting to the point where nobody asks for me by my ordinary name. I think it's really good, because it establishes the fact that there are different possibilities, and the kids find this very interesting.

Ananda: The headmaster was against it, was he?

Devaraja: Yes, in fact felt quite threatened by it.

S: I think this is something which each individual Order member will have to decide for himself or herself in accordance with that particular occasion.

Nagabodhi: When I write to an embassy, for example, asking them about the legal rights in their country, should I sign with my secular name or my Buddhist name? I think my Buddhist name, for a purpose like that, in fact.

Vajradaka: What was the beginning of the sentence?

Nagabodhi: If I am, for example, writing to the Home Office or an embassy about the legal rights of Buddhists in their country.

Vajradaka: I was just going to talk about that, because I remembered hearing something that Steve Burckhardt(?) said about Duse(?) monastery in the States, about people going from Canada into the States to her monastery needing visas, and she wanted to have her monastery as a college; so that means that people would be able to get a visa with no problems ...

S: I think it's a seminary; it was of a seminary, I've heard about this.

Vajradaka: Well, what the United States authorities said to her was that she had to prove that after someone had been to her monastery in the capacity of a student, i.e. a monk, that he could go out and earn a living. So she had to send out two of her best monks into San Francisco to start up a centre to prove that they could earn money.

Ananda: A Buddhist centre? ...

Vajradaka: Yes.

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S: I think, from their point of view, it wasn't quite like that. The authorities - I think what they had in mind was that after you're trained in your seminary, which is what happens when you are a Christian, there is a congregation waiting to give you a call, and that becomes your employment as it were, so you are not just then dependent on the community at large. I think this is what they were really getting at. Because most sects have their seminaries to train up priests, and they've got churches and congregations which need to be ministered to.

___: Maybe they don't know it yet.

Vangisa: Talking about names ... kind of a compromise there, and she could call herself (Jiu) Kennett, the title page of a book (?)

Devaraja: That's the Japanese tradition anyway. That is the family name; you have like the family name and the religious name, and that's usually followed by the family name.

Vangisa: Yes, but wherever it originates from it is a possibility. You're talking about ... one name. One difficulty about using a Buddhist name is you just have the one name, which is unfamiliar, an unfamiliar type of name.

(Chat, laughter.)

Vajradaka: Vangisa O'Regan! [Laughter]

S: Or O'Gotama for all Irish names, and Mac Vangisa for the Scots! (Laughter.)

___: In the name ..., if one's taking a class and you know some of the people in that class, then they're likely to call you by your Christian name, and yet I somehow have the impression that it's better to use your ordained name for a class.

S: I think so, yes. Because if it was announced or publicized it would be 'Conducted by Upasaka So-and-so', wouldn't it?

Manjuvajra: Do you think one should insist on people using the Buddhist name in classes rather than the more familiar name?

S: I think it's more a question of encouraging than insisting. Not making it a rule and enforcing it, but encouraging people to use that, in a nice sort of way. Not ignoring them if they call you Mike, sort of thing, and only responding if they call you Manjuvajra.

[end of side 1 side 2]

S: All right, if there aren't any more queries or comments with regard to the functioning of the Order, maybe we can just go back and review the whole Convention.

Ananda: There's a point, Bhante, which you said you were going to bring up later, which I mentioned, about a Buddhist calendar.

S: Oh yes, that's very good. You know we celebrate various festivals. What I feel is that we should ask somebody to draw up a standard list of festivals which would be celebrated by all branches - or chapters, I should say - of the Order, and all branches of the FWBO, so that we've got more or less the same pattern. So I think it would be a good idea if someone could do some research into this, and just draw up a list of all the festivals that we celebrate; with a few notes on the significance of each. And then this can be sent out to Order members in distant parts who want to have celebrations, or to branches of FWBO and so [116] on.

Devaraja: This really came from an inquiry that was made to me by an education department, and that was they wanted to - they'd got this technique now of getting somebody from a particular religion along to celebrate one of their festivals in a very small way, with the children participating, to get them into some understanding of what it is to celebrate somebody else's festival. But the thing was - the inquiry was really about the birth of the Buddha, and is that traditionally celebrated in Buddhism?

S: Well, I'll tell you what the general tradition is, or rather the two commonest traditions. In the south-east Asian Theravadin countries they celebrate Vaishaka Purnima, the full-moon day of the month Vaishaka, i.e. April-May, as the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, Enlightenment and Parinirvana. But this is a quite late tradition. It was originally the celebration only of the Enlightenment, and that is the big day for Buddhists, that is the big day of the whole Buddhist year - Vaishaka Purnima as the anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment, because that's where Buddhism comes from. But the Theravadins also regard that as the anniversary of the birth and the death. So this is why it's sometimes called the threefold great Buddhist festival. So they don't have separate celebrations for the Buddha's birth or for his Parinirvana; all three are celebrated on that one day. In the rest of the Buddhist world, that is Tibet, China, Japan and so on, they celebrate Vaishaka Purnima, yes, as the Enlightenment day, but they've got different anniversaries for the birthday of the Buddha and the Parinirvana. We have also been celebrating that to some extent. The birth anniversary is, I think, April 8th - according to our calendar - and the Parinirvana day, according to the Far Eastern calendar, is more towards the end of the year. So that is the position with regard to Vaishaka.

(Two voices at once) :

S: I'm not quite sure. The Japanese Buddhists nowadays have agreed to celebrate it on April 8th. Whether they have always celebrated it on April 8th, or whether they've translated their lunar calendar into the modern solar calendar, I don't know.

Vangisa: Surely it used to be December 8th, the Japanese celebration of the birth?

S: I think that was the Parinirvana, wasn't it?

Vangisa: I assure you that it's from them that we get the 15th February - for the Parinirvana.

S: ..., that's right.

Vangisa: It's a calendar date. It's nothing to do with days or anything. In fact, when we borrowed that particular Parinirvana custom here, I think it was the Japanese date.

S: I think it was, yes. It was the Japanese date, ...

Vangisa: There was also the birth which we haven't actually, as far as I know ...

S: We did once. I think once we did.

Vangisa: I think it was December 8th. I don't think we celebrated it on the right date, ...

S: Well, obviously, it is something that should now be regularised.

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Vangisa: I could be wrong about the December 8th, but that's how I remember it.

S: So I think what it is, it's a question of us deciding more or less which main Buddhist festivals we wish to observe, and appointing someone to research them a little, check up the correct dates, and write a few lines on each one, just produce a sheet which can be circulated to all concerned. And even a calendar for the ensuing year, with the dates of all these according to the English calendar.

Ananda: What about even a Buddhist diary some time?

S: Some time in the future, yes, but obviously we can't think about that yet. So Vaishaka obviously we continue to celebrate.

(Chat.)

___: ...our relationship with other Buddhist groups in this country.

S: Right, yes, OK. Could we just settle about the festivals first? Well, perhaps could we just ask someone to go into this?

Ananda: It struck me that it might be the Master of Ceremonies ...

S: That's a good idea! [Laughter]

Ananda: If he wants to do it, that is.

Devaraja: I wouldn't mind...

S: OK?

Devaraja: That's all the principal festivals?

S: Yes. No, perhaps not all. We just can't hope to celebrate them all, not even all the principal ones. But I think there should be six or eight Buddhist festivals. We can as it were take our pick - those which are especially relevant for us, which we feel.

Devaraja: When do we celebrate Padmasambhava Day? I read somewhere that the 10th day of the 10th lunar month is considered to be the best. I just wondered why we celebrated it in May.

S: That was the 5th of the 5th.

Devaraja: Ah, I see.

S: And it happened to be that date, as far as I remember, on that particular year. But again this is something to be researched if we decide to celebrate Padmasambhava's day - well, how do we calculate it? Do we continue to follow the Tibetan lunar calendar, or do we appoint a particular date for that? This is something to be gone into. Or whether we wouldn't rather celebrate Tsongkhapa's day and not Padmasambhava's, and so on; we have to consider these things a bit. I think we have to celebrate mostly things which are common to the whole Buddhist world, together with two or three festivals which link us with specific great areas of Buddhism in the East.

Devaraja: Like, presumably, Wesak.

S: Wesak is absolutely common to all.

Devaraja: So that should be the full moon. And Dharmachakra Day and Sangha Day?

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S: Yes, because that links up with the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. And then I think myself, even if it's

only observed within the Order, the birthday of the Buddha and his Parinirvana, according to the Far Eastern Buddhist tradition, and I included Padmasambhava because he is spiritually significant for me, inasmuch as most of my Tibetan teachers are Nyingmapas; so I include it from that point of view - that's sort of Guru Day, if you like.

But I also would like to establish a definite link with Chinese Buddhism. I think that is a very important tradition for us, though it's rather neglected; but I think there is a very great deal that we could learn from in Chinese Buddhism - I mean classical Chinese Buddhism, non-differentiated into schools, because Chinese Buddhism is non-sectarian, unlike the Japanese Buddhism. It was just Mahayana Buddhism. There is a lot for us to learn there. So I would be very happy if we could have some sort of day or celebration which linked us with the Chinese Mahayana tradition.

Devaraja: Could we not ... we celebrated the winter solstice which seemed like a relevant festival to celebrate? And maybe we could - it's just purely an idea, but the closest figure that is very popular in Chinese Buddhism seems to be Hotei. Is it Fu Tai or Hotei? The fat laughing monk ...

S: That's supposed to be an embodiment of Maitreya.

Devaraja: Maybe we could celebrate that ...

S: But it's not particularly Chinese, really.

Ananda: No, I think he's talking about another one of those. It's not the same one as the 'laughing Buddha'.

Devaraja: Well, anyway, 'laughing Buddha' is a misnomer anywhere.

S: That particular one with the big belly is usually explained as being a medieval monk who was popularly regarded as an incarnation of Maitreya, and therefore his image came to be regarded as an image of Maitreya, and since he was laughing it was called the 'laughing Buddha'.

Vajradaka: It think it's also a Chinese version of Jambala. This is what I came across in Japan. He usually has a sack, and everything comes out of the sack.

Asvajit: Is it generally known when Bodhidharma went to China, would that be relevant?

S: I think it's not generally known, because some scholars are of opinion it's a purely legendary figure. We don't really know; we can't be sure that he wasn't.

Dharmapala: I think Sensei George might be able to fill us in on that. A lot of scholars in Cambridge that have worked and he's got a lot of ... probably Chinese ...

S: I'd be quite happy if there was something linking us up with the Tien-tai school or Tendai school, which was the encyclopaedic school of Chinese Buddhism out of which in a way Ch'an and Pure Land school and all the rest sprang by process of differentiation. The great master was, of course, Chih-I, who wrote Dhyana for Beginners.

Asvajit: Would Mr Chen be able to help us there on some significant...?

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S: He might. He wasn't particularly into festivals, but he should have got some general knowledge. And there are a few publications that one can consult.

Chintamani: Following on what Devaraja was saying, ...

[break in recording]

S: ... in the East bhikkhus don't wear anything under their robes. It's not permitted, and so on and so forth. But that's the answer to that one.

Ananda: At last we know! [Laughter]

Chintamani: I'd like to say that I'm not very happy about this, because I think it creates yet another 'them and us' situation, and this may be applicable in some countries but I feel there is so much of that and it puts so many people's backs up. It may be on a purely symbolic level very appropriate, but from the point of view of the way I feel things are in this particular society ...

S: What do you mean, what puts people's backs up?

Chintamani: Well, to begin with in the present situation where there are quite a few spiritual organizations going round, many of them talk about - I heard a quotation from one where somebody said he was a member of the organization and the majority of humanity are moving this way and we're moving that way. And the phrase 'them and us situation' was not ... yet another 'them and us' situation and there are too many of those.

S: I am inclined to disagree with this, in the sense that I think you can't automatically dismiss any such way of looking at things from the point of any organization, on the grounds that there is intrinsically no such thing as 'them and us', in the sense of intrinsically no such thing as spiritually committed people and spiritually uncommitted people - that everybody is just the same. I think we can't accept that. We may put it tactfully and not insist on it in an egoistic way, which would be wrong, and automatically put us in the other camp; but I think we can't derogate from that principle that, yes, some - I mean, you can say that is the whole story of the Higher Evolution, that a lot of people, the majority, move in that way, a minority move in that way. We hope that we are included in the minority; we're not going to make too much of a point of it, because we know how easy it is to slip. But we mustn't deny the principle, even though we are not sure exactly where we ourselves individually stand.

Ratnapani: Well, Bhante, I found that before taking a class on Tuesday, washing, changing, putting on particular clothes to take that class every week was very helpful in my own preparation and then surmounting the whole thing with a kesa I felt ready to take the class. I think putting on a robe would be probably a bit more powerful. The only danger I can see for myself is getting into an ego-trip; that ... individual ...

S: Other Order members will deal with that! [Laughter]

Chintamani: There is the second point, and that is the monk's robe was just traditionally the dress of the day.

S: Right, yes, that is true.

Chintamani: - adopted in a different way. And so it would seem not quite in the tradition.

S: The monk's robe is not a robe, really.

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Chintamani: It's only by tradition. So ...

Subhuti: Well, it was different from the dress of the normal populace - (Voices.) Yes, but it was different, that was the ...

S: It was different, that is true. It was basically the ordinary everyday dress, just dirty; not even dyed, just rubbed with earth, so that it was different and ...

Ananda: That was a symbolic act.

Subhuti: Yes, they accepted the symbolic significance of dress.

Ananda: Which made it, that act of dirtying it really made it, into a spiritual garment.

S: But it wasn't a robe in the sense of something beautiful and glittering, or anything like that.

Chintamani: So should we not be in the same tradition if we do have something different?

___: Dirty jeans?

Chintamani: We have that anyway.

Ratnapani: I think a smock I heard suggested - probably one of your suggestions - was a top sort of white smock affair, like a French shirt sort of thing, which ...

S: Well, it wasn't so much a suggestion as an idea.

Vangisa: Actually, in a sense, ... I have seen Ananda and Vajradaka on one or two occasions putting on for such functions a Tibetan monastic shirt, a red shirt. And I've seen Ananda, a couple of times at least, and he'd obviously done it specially to take this Puja - and his kesa on top of it - and it did, it looked right. He wasn't making any effort to put on anything extraordinary or outlandish or anything, but he had put on something for the purpose of conducting the Puja that was suitable and that looked good, and it did to my mind conduce to his presence. Just a simple little thing like that.

___: There's a slight difference between this - sort of cleaning yourself up and preparing yourself and putting on clean clothes, or even the same clothes each time, and getting yourself in the right frame of mind and dress suitably to the occasion - and having an Order robe, which would seem to me to be a different thing, and ...

S: You see, this is why I said at the beginning that to me it seems part and parcel, in a way, of the whole Puja-type set-up, with that archetypal appeal of the lights and the altar-cloths and the image and so on and so forth. It seems to me more in keeping with that whole approach if you have someone in a robe. It is, of course, open to you to question that whole approach. But I think that, having adopted the altar and the candles and the image and so on, you can't really very logically object to a robe. But you can ...

Subhuti: You could object to the lengths. You could feel that it should only go a certain way.

___: That's why there's a kesa.

Subhuti: Well, maybe; logically that isn't implied by the acceptance of the altar.

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S: Well, you could even say that there was a limit to which you ought to go with regard to the altar: that there was a certain question of degree.

___: Particularly in relating to other people not of the Order, you know? A lot of them have enough trouble accepting the fact of having a rupa, never mind anything else. And we are dealing with people where they're at.

Ananda: Yes, but we're not here to compromise our own particular situation to other people outside the Movement. They are coming to our meetings to absorb something of our beliefs and ...

Vangisa: We do make use of ritual and symbolic objects and movements and gestures and all this kind of thing; we make use of this regularly and continuously all the time, not only in our Pujas but all the time in the shrine room. And it seems to me that something like, for instance, a kesa has got a value in itself which is both symbolic and ritualistic; a significance the same as bowing in front of the shrine, for instance. It indicates a similar attitude, a similar state of mind. It is putting on something that is not only a symbol of purity, purification, the Dharma, whatever you like to call it, but in fact an expression of it - your expression of it.

___: Try explaining this to the people we were talking about this morning - trade unionists into all this. You'd have problems. (Voices.)

Vangisa: We're talking about the people coming into a shrine room for a Puja. These things, used integrally, ...

S: I feel it personally more from an aesthetic point of view - that if I see a nicely-decorated altar and I see someone officiating who is dressed in a quite incongruous way; it doesn't seem to go with the altar furnishings and all that kind of thing. It's rather as though you go into, say, a Church of England church or a Catholic church, and you see the priest officiating not in his robes but in a sports jacket etc. I think you would find it aesthetically displeasing. And that perhaps would disturb your devotional response.

Lokamitra: You needn't do it for the beginners' class. The shrine at the Centre is covered up for the beginners' class, and if one can ...

Subhuti: The individual needn't do it if he doesn't feel like it - if it doesn't suit him.

S: No, I think it's something upon which there should be general agreement, otherwise I don't see much point in it.

Vajradaka: What I feel about the robe idea in connection with the colour also which you felt would be a good colour like the colour of the Chinese robe, and the idea of having something rather like Gotami's robe, which doesn't have either a men or a women feel about it and either could wear it; and it is something which would cover you totally, rather than the kesa which is just a little thing - you have this whole - in a way, this being covered totally by this coloured cloth. And I feel that it would be quite a meaningful symbol in one's mind, almost rather because of the colour also, rather like your robe, the colour of your robe symbolizing flames burning up desire and negativity - orange, sort of goldy-orange. It's quite powerful. Especially if you get right in it!

Devamitra: Do you just envisage the person actually taking the [122] ceremony as wearing the robe, or all other Order members present as well?

S: I hadn't really thought it out in much detail. I think, as far as I have got in thinking about it, I have thought only in terms of the person actually conducting the ceremony. I would say if you asked me about it now, probably, the only occasion when all Order members would be wearing their robes, if that was decided upon, would be at, say, an Order Puja when only Order members were present, or on the occasion of Wesak; possibly one or two other occasions. But otherwise I was thinking only in terms of the actual officiant.

___: ... one or two ...

S: Yes, just one point also. I am thinking about this; I don't feel myself personally, as regards the Order, at all strongly either the one way or the other. This is why I asked people what they feel or what they think. But I feel it's something that should be unanimous; I think it would be very unfortunate if there were some people wearing robes and others not wanting to wear them. So I think either we remain as we are, or there's a general agreement about a robe. This is what I feel.

___: Couldn't we just leave it for a year and see what happens after a year?

S: We could, surely, yes. There's no hurry.

Gotami: I've got this robe which I think most people know was given to me to wear and sometimes I wear it; I meditate in it, and people regard it in a way as my meditation blanket, if you like, but it also looks suitable and ceremonial, and people where I am at the moment are beginning to accept that kind of thing. But it's taken quite a bit of work to get them to accept the fact that I wear something looking like a robe when taking a Puja.

S: ...

Gotami: Yes, but there's a lot of resistance to this kind of thing ...

S: I think it's also custom. Because I was wearing only robes for a long time; when I started wearing other things - oh - I started, even when I was at Hampstead, very much on the quiet, - word got round I'd been seen wearing a jacket, and it shook people so strongly ...

Vangisa: It was the trousers that shook them! (laughter)

S: I think their trousers would have shook me even more. So then what struck me was: how much importance already is being attached just to external things like dress. Even though Buddhism's only just started in this country, but here are people who are not really even Buddhists; they're not shocked about all sorts of other things, but if I just grow my hair a little bit long, I don't wear my robes when I happen to go out shopping, they get really deeply shocked. So I felt Buddhism is already very much on the wrong path in this country. And then I started thinking about a new movement. This is one of the

things that really decided me.

___: Why did you wear ordinary clothes in the first place?

S: Why did I? As I went around, especially as I went around in London, I found that wearing the robes - and I wore a sort of long cloak over them as well - attracted a great deal of negativity, [123] and I found that quite a lot of people directed towards me looks and even sometimes words, of real hatred. And it was simply the robes. The only time I got a positive response was when I was mistaken for a Franciscan. And I got really tired of this, and it was a regular barrier to any communication - at that time, even within the Buddhist movement itself. And I felt, this has to be broken, as it were.

Also, one other matter: Theravada robes are extremely inconvenient to wear getting on and off buses. You can't carry anything when you are wearing them. They are not fastened. Etc. etc.

Vangisa: There's one point about your robe in those days, and that was that when you came into the shrine room to conduct a Puja you were not only wearing a robe, you were also wearing your ordinary clothes. This did in fact have an added significance.

S: Sorry, I don't quite follow.

Vangisa: The fact that you came in wearing your ordinary street clothes and conducted a Puja and a meditation, whatever it was, but it was also a suitable robe. Once you stopped wearing the robe, then you'd come along to the Centre and you'd change to signify your change ..., ...

S: Right!

Vangisa: - and to me there was actually something - something important about the fact that you were wearing your ordinary clothes when you ...

S: Mm. Yes. Quite a few comparatively newer people, who may not now be newer people, mentioned this to me, and they found it in a way quite reassuring, they said, that they also encountered me wearing ordinary clothes and they could relate and talk much more easily then. Certainly quite a few people, quite a number of people, made this point.

So it means that the wearing of a robe does something, but I was only thinking in the context of Puja, whether it couldn't be utilized positively. That was all. To enhance a certain effect of the Puja and the ritual, and so on.

___: Well, maybe we could just try doing this gradually, by just individually making sure that when we're taking Puja we are wearing something suitable ...

S: What does one mean by suitable - other than sort of ritual and archetypal? Well neat - certainly.

___: Ritual robes have played a very important part in the Buddhist ritual.

Devamitra: Is the main reason that people object because they are afraid of the response that there might be to it, or is it because of some more sort of personal - ?

___: My main objection is the fact that most ordinary people who come along to the Buddhist Centre have some association with robes, and these associations are Roman Catholic church, ordinary clergy. They are connected with dressing up, with the theatre. They are connected with monks and suchlike things. And the associations that people have with those are not the kind of things that one wants to have floating around when one is taking a Puja. And these things, as far as I can find, are with at least half the people who come along to the Centre and to ordination classes - half of them even they have [124] very very negative things against Puja in general, against shrines in general, and it's just one of those things that I would feel would be helpful to getting people to understand Buddhism right at the beginning.

Devamitra: But, for instance, at the Centre in Archway, Bhante was sitting there in robes and yet people accepted Bhante sitting up there in robes. Why shouldn't they accept an Order member sitting up there in robes?

___: But this is a particular bhikkhu who has a particular traditional robe. People will accept a Buddhist monk, walking around in black(?) robes. OK, he's part of another tradition of a different country, and we accept that. And you probably get a lot of romantic projections.

S: No, not quite that. I've talked a bit with oriental bhikkhus. They don't get much of the negative feeling, because in their case it's just accepted - that he is some foreigner, wearing some funny dress, so it doesn't matter.

___: (interrupting) That's right. But we are British, and we are also ...

S: ... recognize you as English, walking down the street in what seems to be a very un-English costume, and they don't know really what you are or how to place you; they turn towards you very negative expressions, and even as I said sometimes words. And I got really tired of this.

___: And if I felt this was useful, then I wouldn't mind people being hostile, but I just don't feel it's useful for getting over Buddhism and positive associations ...

___: Do you get a positive response to your kesa? I feel my kesa is like a dog collar and I'm not at all happy with my kesa. I don't like it at all.

Lokamitra: If people are going to react negatively to Pujas, they are going to do it anyway, I would have thought, to the devotional side of things. It seems quite common. I know I reacted for a long time.

___: But sometimes you can get people to simply watch how they feel, say, meditating, with nothing at all, and then watch the fact that after a little while a candle and a stick of incense creeps in - because they feel better doing it that way, and then - it's a gradual thing: but if there is an Order robe which it is generally regarded as necessary that one wears when taking classes and so on, then I would feel obliged to wear it, and have a lot more to overcome initially. Just the feeling of relating to more ... (several voices at once.)

Lokamitra: Couldn't ... beginners' classes, if the person taking that beginners' class feels that the situation isn't right there?

Mangala: Couldn't the robe also be an inspiration for the person wearing it? And in that sense be able to rub off on the people he's - I know whenever I've taken classes wearing a kesa I feel much more appropriate, much more right, much more able to give, and I feel my influence is stronger and better than ...

S: I suppose I ought to say a word or two about how we came to have the kesa. It may be this is ancient history to most of you, and you haven't heard it; or maybe even some of those who have heard it have forgotten it. We did have, in a way, in the very early days, just this same sort of discussion, and the kesa is really the sort of compromise, in the positive sense of the word, which [125] emerged then. It's traditional, because we've taken it from Japanese tradition, and the Japanese apparently had the same sort of problem, perhaps, and the kesa is nothing less than an abbreviated robe, which is worn over ordinary dress. The word kesa is a corruption of the Sanskrit kasaya, which means the yellow robe. The word kasaya comes in the Dhammapada, where it says that he who is not free from impurity etc. has not merited the kasaya, the yellow robe, as it's translated. So it's white because it's the Upasaka ordination, and that is the colour of the upasaka tradition. In India the upasaka wore a white robe. So instead of vesting our upasakas in a white robe, they have a white kesa, which stands for the same thing, and is traditional, being already known in Japan for hundreds of years.

So there's no difference of principle between the kesa and the full-length robe. It is ... a twofold question - one, the effect on ourselves, and, two, the effect on others. So, having been going now in the Order for six years, I think it's time we just reconsidered the question, and whether the time is ripe, both from our point of view and the point of view of the public that we may have to meet, for a robe.

Vangisa: There is also the question of what is worn as well as the kesa. In fact, dressed like most of us dress most of the time now, the kesa doesn't hang as well as it would if you had underneath it what was originally worn in Japan, and you yourself said it would go well with a dark suit, I remember.

S: Yes, right. Those were the days when all our Friends and members wore dark suits!

Vangisa: Sure, and even I did. The point is that what most of us wear now, with or without a kesa, doesn't - it's all right for ordinary purposes, sitting around talking, but when you are actually taking a Puja I don't really feel - you were talking about the aesthetic point of view, and this is important from the aesthetic point of view, doesn't go with the shrine or ... It isn't really just a question of a robe, it's a question of whether you're wearing an old sweater, which doesn't look right, or something else, whatever it may be, that looks right.

S: An intermediate development was that I eventually got Gotami to make me a yellow kesa, which I wear sometimes when I'm lecturing to outside groups, where the full robe doesn't seem appropriate. And I have taken to wearing that quite a bit when giving lectures. Oh yes. When did I wear it last?

Vajradaka: You wore it at the formal Puja recently.

S: That's right, at the Old Rectory, yes. Because the robes were thin and it was a cold day, so I didn't want to change, so I wore my yellow kesa.

Devamitra: I was just going to suggest maybe one could try at least to have an experiment, and see if there was any adverse reaction at the Centre.

Vangisa: There's bound to be some adverse reaction.

Devamitra: Well, I mean over a period of time. Obviously there is going to be some kind of adverse reaction, but there might also be a much more positive response from certain areas which you just can't feel unless you actually experiment with it and find out. And then assess that, and take a firmer decision on that experiment.

Vangisa: This brings us into a slightly different subject, and this other subject has come up, in other connections, before now; and [126] that is whether in fact we are presenting something as it is, as we've got it, or as we understand it, to people who can make use of it or take advantage of it, or whether we are going to adapt it and mould it to suit the tastes of everybody who comes in. We had the same thing a couple of years ago over the question, for instance, of putting up a notice saying 'No Smoking'. A number of people have said, 'Oh, lots of people will be put off; people won't come in; half the people will never come back again.' So it was postponed for weeks or months until finally a majority at an Order meeting decided to go ahead with it. And nobody grumbled, nobody complained, and nobody smoked there! [Laughter] During the hours it is publicly open.

Marichi: I'm sure most people who attend the Archway Centre do in fact enjoy seeing that.

Ratnapani: At what point is one catering for people's neuroses, to use somebody else's phrase? I think you have to believe in a robe quite strongly to say not having it would be doing that.

Ananda: But you can always change a neurosis into a positive quality, as long as you get the person there. But if they don't come - . And if they come for the wrong reason, by your effort you can always influence them to make them come for the right reason.

Nagabodhi: Unless they come they won't see you are wearing the robe! [Laughter] If they're already there ...

Ananda: I don't think it matters, really, whether they come for the wrong or the right reason, as long as they come.

Devamitra: But why does it have to - someone mentioned the fact that it would be wrong to have a robe in London and not in Glasgow, but we seem to be at perhaps different stages of development as a branch of the FWBO - maybe we can, if you like, get away with more in London, at the moment - and that's part of an expression of the particular London Movement, and therefore it might be right to have it in London for the time being, and not in Glasgow, until perhaps the group in Glasgow has reached a particular phase in its development.

___: What do the Finnish people feel about all this?

S: What would you feel about it, just yourself?

Bodhisri: For me, it's quite all right, but ... I'm quite sure about it.

S: But there you're in a rather strongly secular, anti-religious environment, and that is the question there.

Bodhisri: Yes.

S: I think, though, that what is involved here is really a much wider question, which involves even the Puja and several other things: the extent to which we project ourselves, to use that word, as a recognizably religious movement, or whether we have a sort of double identity - keep the religious and traditional things more or less within the Order and don't have them too much outside.

___: I think you might even have two approaches, so that somebody can come in through the religious, devotional and so on thing, or they can come in through the other way. People either seem to find it completely acceptable straight away and really find that the most positive thing, or they find it a terrible hindrance.

[127]

S: You see, I find it, for instance, with regard to some of my own lectures. There's that series on the Higher Evolution of Man - I know there are some Order members who just can't stand those lectures, and don't like them at all.

___: Yes, and there are other people to whom these are the only ones relevant.

S: There are other people who really like them very much. Nell, for instance, is one: they are what brought her in, But there are certain other people who say that if they had heard just those lectures they never would have joined. So that illustrates this very different approach.

Asvajit: I wonder what Nell's response would have been had she not seen you in your robes though or ever seen you in your robes, and whether she would have felt the same response. It's a very powerful thing.

S: She of course came onto the retreat, where of course I was in my robes, and she mentioned at the time that whenever I passed behind her at the communication exercises, shivers went up and down her spine. So there was something going on! Whether it was due to the robe or not, I don't know!
[Laughter] You just can't separate one factor from another without experiment, and even then you can't be sure. But I must say that my own quite frank feeling is I don't care very much either way; I'm quite able to function through a 'Higher Evolution of Man' type of approach; I'm also very happy with Pujas and colourful ritual - I quite enjoy them. But if I can't have the one or can't have the other, I'm quite happy, so long as I can have at least one. I'm quite happy about the idea of different branches of the Movement being either much more definitely religious and traditional or much more definitely secular, as it were, and catering for different groups of people and different types of approach. We might conceivably, for instance, have a group of Order members functioning somewhere, running some kind of Centre with courses and classes, and no sign of a kesa anywhere; no image, no shrine; doing things on a quite different basis. But they've got their own inner connection with the Order. This is quite conceivable.

Nagabodhi: The thing I see about that is that when I first came along if there'd been such an organization or such a branch of the Friends, catering for a more secular bias, that is the area into which I would have been attracted. But I feel I would have missed an awful lot.

S: Well, hopefully, if one at least gets into one, you eventually explore all the others too.

Nagabodhi: I'm not sure whether unless I was confronted with it I'm not sure whether I ever would have done. This is the thing that strikes my mind. It was because I came to a Wesak celebration, suddenly it was there, I was confronted with it, and ...

S: I must say myself, just as a question of upaya, skilful means, I sometimes don't feel very happy about the purely religious approach, in the sense that it tends to align us with certain groups and attitudes and people I just don't really care to be seen dead with, as it were, frankly.

Ratnapani: Yes, there are a lot of groups at the moment dressing themselves up, aren't there, as this and

that?

S: I feel - some people might feel a bit aggressive about wearing robes, but I feel a bit aggressive in the other way, rather [128] aggressively wearing my everyday clothes; just to say, well, you're not in that sort of category.

___: I found that my approach, my way into the Friends as it were was the non-religious approach, and yet I find now that when I'm in a class in Truro or I'm talking to people I take a religious approach, almost without really being able to help myself.

Ananda: How do you use that word religious there? I'm not quite sure ...

___: Well, for example, when I first came to the Friends I had a great deal of difficulty accepting the shrine; I didn't like the shrine at all ...

Ananda: The devotional aspect.

___: Yeah; and I didn't like Pujas very much. And now, one of the first things, if anyone asks me about Buddhism, I immediately get on to Pujas and things. Like in the meditation class, I take along and build a small shrine. It's almost a kind of shock technique, to make people realize that this is something different, they're starting out on something different.

Ananda: It does strike me on reflection, all the different opinions, that if we almost give way and compromise our devotional aspect by saying 'People will be put off by a robe or a spiritual garment', we are giving in to their ego projection.

S: No, I think we must be a bit careful here ...

___: No, you are just ... where people are. I'm not suggesting that people be allowed into the Order without being able to go through a Puja or things like that, or we have two separate Orders, one with Puja and one without! I wasn't suggesting that at all; obviously, by the time you get to being an Order member you just get going with what's going.

S: And you can't compromise on principles, but one must remember the skilful means of the Bodhisattva.

___: But you've got to start where people are.

Ananda: I'm not sure about that.

___: But of course you ...

S: If I became convinced that the vast majority of people were being put off by Pujas and robes, I'd quite cheerfully give them all up and have no shrines and no images and no puja and no robes and nothing, if I was quite convinced that the majority of people would respond more to that approach. But devotion would be there, but it wouldn't find that particular external expression.

Chintamani: Devotion can take many, many, many forms.

Ananda: That's not what I was really trying to say.

S: I think there might be an argument, eventually, for us having at least a short-term course or group somewhere, conducted by Order members, which was completely non-religious. You could have your mindfulness of breathing as a meditation, the metta bhavana; you could have communication exercises, you could have talks on Buddhism. But just try, as an experiment, a few Order members conducting this for a while, how they felt, what sort of effect it had on the people, whether those people got [129] really into Buddhism, and so on. It's sort of bare and almost Quaker-like, if you like.

Vangisa: You could do completely the opposite, as well, and give the effect almost of having a different religion.

S: Yes, you could. I also remind people, as regards, for instance, the image and all that, for the first two

or three hundred years of Buddhism there were no images. Tradition does go back, but it doesn't go back right to the beginning. And there is a sect of Buddhism in Korea, the Won sect, which has abolished the Buddha image. They have a circle instead; a circle, just drawn on the wall, over the shrine as it were; just a circle. And they point out that the image, though very ancient, does not go right back to the beginning. So I point out all this just - we must be very careful not to get conditioned in a particular way, even though it's a good, positive conditioning, and not think that's the only way. There may be other ways.

___: Did actual shrines, table shrines, develop when monks became settled? The first shrine, I suppose, was the stupa.

S: The first was the stupa, and the image gradually took over from the stupa, apparently under Graeco-Roman influence at several removes, through Gandhara. I was pointing out to someone the other day, where does the vajra come from? It comes from Greece. Some of the statues of Zeus have got a thunderbolt exactly like our vajra. So that came into India, apparently, as the way of representing the thunderbolt of the god of storm, Indra, and then that passed into the Vajrayana and into Buddhism. And the Japanese vajra retained that original shape, a bit elongated. The Tibetans have made it more compact. And also we have to start thinking a bit, if we are thinking about symbolism and ritual, about more indigenous symbols and myths and what use we can make of those. Someone suggested we ought to have a Centre at Glastonbury, and have something going on there, for people who are coming to Glastonbury, obviously into something or other - or sometimes not very developed or very definite, a bit formless; but perhaps they could become really interested in Buddhism, if there's a regular Centre there and information; maybe someone living there to answer questions; even without actual activities.

But I must say, on the whole, on this whole aspect, though I'm very happy about Puja and devotion and all that, personally, I feel less and less happy about our Movement being classified as another religious movement. I really feel less and less happy about that, because there's so much going on in the name of religion at present, and even in the past, that I don't feel in the least at home with, and I feel that we're just not into that kind of thing at all. But it looks, from all these outward appurtenances, as though there's not all that much difference between us and them, in this particular case. I don't feel happy about that.

Ananda: It seems to me the general feeling of the meeting at the moment is just not to wear a robe, at least for a while, and see if we can manage without. And you think that's skilful means.

S: I'm sure we can manage without. I was thinking of it, if at all, as just something extra, and as a greater enhancement of the shrine and the ritual and so on. But it's certainly something we can manage without; I think there's no question of that.

Ananda: It seems to me the feeling in general is that a robe would tend on the whole to get in the way of real communication between the teacher and the follower. (Voices.)

Gotami: Not necessarily. It depends on the situation, why not? [130] In some cases I put my robe on on purpose because it seems that that is called for in the situation.

Ananda: So it would be appropriate, one would take it on the individual case, like the type of person who was present, the type of situation, the type of function that ...

Gotami: I mean I'm very glad to have something which is robe-like and so on, because it seems useful in the circumstances. But certainly not as a specific uniform for the Order which is to be used on all Puja occasions. This is the thing which I feel for me I would find would create more problems than not.

___: I have the feeling that there is a kind of trend in the clothing that people wear - that Order members wear, and it would be a good idea to see where this develops naturally. It could be a quite important thing.

S: I think on the whole Order members are a bit colourful compared with most other people.

___: I think they are trending towards some colours, either of the maroon-purple type or the yellowy type.

S: Oh, are they? (Laughter.) Well, according to Buddhist tradition green is the feminine colour.

Devaraja: It's also the colour of Amoghasiddhi. (Wolf whistle. Voices.)

S: Anyway, it seems that the robe is one of those things we keep hanging up in the cupboard until a future occasion.

___: Did you have any particular fabric in mind? ...

S: Just something that hung in beautiful folds, mainly that.

___: I mean not too thick.

S: Not too thick, not too thin, and a little bit heavy, and a bit of a sheen. (laughter)

___: A satin?

S: Just what I was thinking! [Laughter] My personal green robe!

___: Sounds very nice. (Voices.)

S: I think there's a bit of a dilemma here, in a way. I see that what I call archetypal things like robes and beads and flowers and lights do produce a tremendous effect, and I think we can't afford to ignore that possible resource on certain occasions, and make use of it. On the other hand, I do not like to be lined up with the Catholics and the Lutherans and some kinds of Hindu and so on and so forth.

___: Would it be worth considering what sort of robe we would use, so that if people, say, during the next year wanted to do small experiments here and there they could use that particular style robe? And then when we came to discuss it at a later date it wouldn't mean that we'd got 20 different kinds of robe...

S: I'm not personally sure about the style. I don't know. Something simple, effective, graceful.

Mangala: Perhaps those people who feel they'd maybe like to wear a robe could just come up with something themselves and wear it and see how that feels.

[131]

___: This is why I'm saying that in a year's time there may be 28 different colours and styles. (Voices.)

___: On the other hand it may in fact evolve through that, it may evolve naturally.

S: Then we could parade them and see which one gets the vote, ...

___: ... off the shoulder - [Laughter]

S: We could offer a prize.

___: People will maybe have worked out the sort of robes which are suitable, ...

S: The colour I favour is a sort of not quite this colour but something rather deep in a sort of orange-russet colour; this is what I personally favour. So that there is a nice contrast with the white kesa worn over it.

Mangala: You'd still keep the kesa?

S: Yes.

Ananada: I like the idea of all white - upasaka white.

S: No, I think all white looks a bit, what shall I say, precious? (Voices.)

Subhuti: Bhante, when you say that you don't want to be lumped with certain people, who do you feel does this classifying?

S: Oh, I think the public. For instance, just an example. After I came back in 1964, all sorts of little things struck me, which probably don't strike you all that much. After some months, someone took me to the cinema. I forget what we went to see; I think it was a historical film. But there was a little cartoon or something before that, and I was watching this, loving it, you know; and then a picture of a clergyman came on the screen, and as soon as that came everybody started laughing. You know? He wore his dog collar, and a slightly foolish grin, and - people hardly looked at it; as soon as they knew it was a clergyman they started laughing. So this really meant quite a lot to me; this was people's reaction.

Padmaraja: Surely, this whole point of ritual, it's for us to bring it back to life by being authentic, by us living it; not by shutting it away and ignoring it. When I was walking around Florence, the beautiful cathedrals, you know, which are so much alive; if only the priests and the church - if the priests were interpreters, if they could bring these things back to life, reintroduce people to them, if they realized the significance.

S: I don't think they're interested, most of them.

Padmaraja: No. But I mean in a sense that's what we should be doing with Buddhist iconography, with symbols.

S: If we really feel that.

Padmaraja: Ya. And I really don't approve of shutting it away. Let's have the courage of our convictions and say, right, let's bring them to life ...

S: No, but there are two things: that's all right for us, but we have to consider when we are presenting Buddhism whether something does not, at least initially, really put people off. [132] Because we are trying to communicate with them.

Padmaraja: I realize that, I appreciate that. But if we really believe in these things, then I feel that authenticity will communicate.

S: I think this is the question that every individual has to ask himself: do I believe in this? Do I believe in myself when I'm going through these motions? Or do I just feel insincere, as though I'm just conforming and just performing something that doesn't really mean anything to me? This is what we have to ask ourselves.

Devaraja: We have our beginners' class here, and we have Puja and meditation and discussion period and Puja, and sometimes quite an elaborate Puja. And it goes down a treat! Everybody really seems to enjoy it. When it comes to a lot of the classes, ...

Padmaraja: There's a real atmosphere generated. It's not just a pretty ceremony. People are affected.

Devaraja: They come up to us sometimes, they sit on for a long time afterwards.

Vangisa: I think we tend to explain things too much during a Puja: why we're doing this, what the offerings mean ... I do feel that it detracts from the immediacy of ...

S: Well, you could even go so far as to say that ritual that has to be explained is not ritual. It's like giving someone a big hug and saying, this is a hug, and it means I'm very fond of you and I'm communicating affection. [Laughter]

Vajradaka: But there is a difference between ritual and ceremony.

S: Sure, yes.

Vajradaka: And Puja is ceremony and not ritual.

S: Er, just a minute. Some Puja, yes. If you are chanting and bowing down and you're doing the Tiratana Vandana, this is ceremony, this is not ritual. Ritual is an action which has a sort of mystical potency of its own, irrespective of understanding. Of course, if you perform even what is usually

considered a ceremony with sufficient depth of feeling, this can become like a ritual.

___: So even a hug can be a ritual?

S: Er, yes, except that a ritual suggests something which is done regularly - (laughter). You can have a ritual hug, yes! every time you part, yes. But when we say a ritual hug in that way, we tend to suggest ...

[End of Tape 6 Tape 7]

- something that has become a bit stereotyped and formal, and we obviously don't mean that.

___: A ritual hug would be the sort of thing that was beginning to develop after people got ordained, and all the other ordained people would go along and hug everybody. This would be the kind of thing where you use it.

S: It's all right if it's spontaneous, but not thinking oh, I ought to hug him now because he's ordained, I suppose I'd better go and [133] do it, kind of thing.

Chanda: Has it got to be long, the robe? because - I ...

S: We're still tripping over it. (?)

Chanda: Tripping over it. Anybody consider this type of uniform? All right, now in the air, now in the women, you see these air hostesses, they've got really neat uniforms.

S: Air hostesses.

Chanda: Yes, I mean it's a thing that would - with people going on official visits, they would look neat. And then if we go - well, I mean you've got Salvation Army, a real modern religion, ...

S: I think in a way the Salvation Army is a good example, because if you just explained it; you'd say 'Impossible, ridiculous, it wouldn't work, people would laugh.' But the strange thing is that, despite the bizarre religious beliefs and fairly hideous uniform, people respect the Salvation Army and take them very seriously. (Voices.) ... for their social work, and for their genuineness ...

___: The fact that they have these peculiar things and wear these peculiar clothes, they're laughed at.

S: But it seems to work, they've got position.

___: People respect them despite that, not because of it.

S: Well, I'm not so sure of that.

Chanda: Is it worth giving it thought; a form of civil dress, that is, uniform?

S: I don't know.

Chanda: What do people think of it, at the moment? (Deprecating murmurs.) ... say you're going on prison service, you would look something.

Asvjit: Wear your kesa.

S: ... because under those circumstances, even many Christian clergy just don't wear any kind of recognizable insignia. Many clergymen feel uncomfortable in their dog collars.

Chanda: A thought came to me that perhaps we could consider a uniform in preference to a robe, seeing that we're supposed to be in a modern kind of a context.

___: For seven years I used to wear uniform, Chanda, I don't want to put it on again thank you very much!

Chanda: Well, I ...

S: No, every suggestion must be considered on its own merits. If we are unwilling to consider it, we should ask ourselves why we are unwilling to consider it. Are we against the idea of a uniform for quite definite, considered, aware reasons, or are we just reacting against it?

Gotami: Practical reasons. Uniform is difficult because it's much more difficult to get one made; a robe is fairly simple and isn't adjusted too finely to people's measurements. But a uniform is a much more tailored sort of thing. It would be more expensive.

[134]

___: You could have something like - oh, I think a lot of the fellows were getting into wearing these, what do you call them? - trousers that are wide at the bottom that they got from the Army & Navy or something, with a white shirt.

S: Sailors' trousers.

___: Yes. That would be rather like a choir, all wearing either black - you know, black at the bottom and white at the top. It wouldn't necessarily need to be expensive and tailored.

___: That's all right if they can be bought reasonably well, even sizes ... It's not so easy...

S: In the army your uniform never fitted you.

Nagabodhi: I think that a uniform has connotations of a group mentality.

S: Right, yes! Here you get on to a more reasonable objection, yes. A group mentality...

Nagabodhi: Uniformity - the word ...

S: I think this is the basic objection, really. It suggests an obliteration of the individual, really.

Chanda: I'm going to have a cup of tea now.

S: So are we, in a few minutes.

Chanda: I'll make the tea for the house anyway.

S: All right. I'm not surprised at there being quite a lengthy discussion about robes and strong feelings aroused, because this is exactly what I found in my Hampstead days, in a slightly - or very much more - negative form. I have noticed this over quite a long period of time, in India as well as here. It's the apparently little things that people get most worked up over. Now if we'd proposed whether the anatman doctrine is official FWBO doctrine or not, you'd have discussed it and no one would have got very upset either way. (Laughter.) It's absolutely basic Buddhist doctrine. [Laughter] But a robe, people get very strong feelings about the robe.

Marichi: I disagree that there were strong feelings. I think it's more like there were a lot of particular strong feelings, and argument goes on longer.

S: Do you?

Marichi: That's how it felt to me - one or two people.

S: I felt there was more feeling stirred up about the robe discussion this afternoon than any of the other topics. People were more lively and more interested in it, even; more involved with it.

___: Why do you think that is?

S: I'm still wondering.

___: I think it's something to which we respond at a very deep level, in a way.

S: I think, yes ...

___: I'll tell you why: because when I first heard the [135] proposal, which was some time ago, I was immediately attracted to it, and since then I've always been suspicious of immediate attractions. It wasn't a sensible decision but something which I hadn't really found out why I was attracted to it, so I'm rather suspicious of it.

S: But I think it is important to try to see why we have these definite feelings - where we do have them - and just what level the response is coming from, whether positive or negative. Because something is sparked off; I don't know whether it's because a robe is a sort of archetypal thing, that even talking about it sparks you off one way or the other. It may be something like that. But I've noticed this many many a time.

___: I know personally that it is pleasant to wear robes. I like wearing robes.

Asvajit: I think that my immediate response to your robe and to all robes is to raise my critical faculties to their highest pitch.

S: Ah!

Asvajit: - to really bring out my awareness to its fullest extent, and I think that that's the most positive thing, effect, that it can have. It puts a very heavy responsibility, perhaps, on the people who wear it, but that's only to the good.

S: Right. I believe, in the case of the Centre in Helsinki, you had a bit of a discussion, because Vajrabodhi wrote to me about it, and as a result of that discussion he felt that at the Centre that you should be uncompromisingly Buddhist, with a full complement of Puja and everything regardless, and I wonder which is really the more skilful attitude to adopt; and I think in the Friends as a whole reference has been made to this: whether one should say, 'Here's the Buddhist tradition and we have to really stick to that, and whoever likes it can come; if people don't like it they can stay away', as it were. Or whether you should try to adapt to people's mentality without changing your own basic principles.

___: But the whole Buddhist tradition is to evolve as it goes from country to country.

___: We have to be British Buddhists, don't we? We're not Tibetan or Japanese or Chinese.

S: Well, no, we have to be British and Finnish and New Zealand and probably Dutch and probably American too.

___: Each place has different circumstances and different attitudes to people who come along.

Padmaraja: I think ultimately the crux of this is by any of us being really deeply and totally dedicated to our practice. We can't help but draw people into our orbits and then when that happens we try to respond appropriately. And we learn by trial and error.

S: I think that's true. And even if you had a quite bizarre observance of a really weird practice, if you are really thoroughly and sincerely into it you draw some people, I'm sure of that. And you might have even a most beautiful and satisfying practice and observance, but if you were into it in a halfhearted way nothing much would happen, and no one would be drawn.

Padmaraja: I guess this thing of Buddhism - what Keith said, that you really have to affirm the truth of imagination, the truth of our own psychic life, spiritual life. We have to be living examples of that, and show it at all times in every action, every situation. [136] But I think you can legislate too much about that, I think that will only come out of our practice.

S: Well, we have in fact gone over time; but is there anything left over undecided from the whole Convention?

Chintamani: Something I thought was going to be brought up, but it wasn't, and that was a purely practical matter of a Tuesday study group, I believe at the Centre.

S: Yes, but I think this is being dealt with in the Council meeting, so I understood.

Asvajit: It was held over, actually, in the belief that it was going to be touched upon here.

S: Oh. It doesn't particularly concern the Order.

Subhuti: And it can really be dealt with in the Council.

Asvajit: Well, in connection with the {kalyana mitra} system, and feeling that the Tuesday session would be an appropriate one for the more dedicated people to come along and participate in that, and that we were going to have sutra study, or three groups of sutra study.

S: Well, first of all a meditation period, then a little break, then a period of study with different groups with people to lead the study, I think; and then, after perhaps another little break, a concluding quite lengthy Puja.

Mangala: Who's going to be in the groups?

S: So the idea is that the Tuesday - I thought I'd written about this somewhere to someone? - the Tuesday is going to be the evening for everybody except the absolute beginners, who are just into beginners' classes entirely. So this will be a sort of meeting point for all other sections of the Movement: a full meditation session, and then a period of study of a particular text, breaking up into two or more likely three groups of, say, at least seven or eight people; even more if more people come along, more groups. And then concluding, after a decent interval, with a full-length Puja.

Mangala: A bit like the way the ordination classes used to be, in three groups.

S: Yes.

Mangala: You'd be selecting the texts?

S: I don't know. I haven't thought about that. But if people have definitely got something that they would like to study, yes, otherwise I can think of some texts.

Devaraja: It would be very good if you gave guidelines for sutra study, because I find it very difficult, and I can see this vast selection of sutras - I've been up to the Centre and done it once, and I thought, oh, I might try that; and then, no - you know?

S: Well, I feel nowadays that there's too much literature. I feel we could get along almost without literature; literature is all right just for giving people a general idea about things and leading them towards a real spiritual group and spiritual tradition, but I don't think books play a very effective part in our Movement at the moment. They don't seem to matter very much. But if someone wanted to study, I'd certainly encourage him to study, especially sutras and things. We are, of course, having these study [137] retreats or seminars now, and I shall be calling them every now and then. And my hope is to get round to all Order members so that every Order member has attended at least one of these; this is my intention. Not exclusively Order members, but mainly for Order members, plus one or two others on each occasion. We have had one, as you probably know, and we're going to have a second one on the Platform Scripture; then one on the Udana and Ittivuttaka, which are Pali texts, then one on the founder of the Tendai school's Dhyana for Beginners. So these are texts which I personally feel are very important. I hope we can get through Vimalakirti; I hope we can get through the Digha Nikaya, for instance. I think this is the way to do it more than just by miscellaneous reading.

Devaraja: This is much more within the tradition.

S: It is indeed, it is, yes. In the tradition there's no such thing as miscellaneous reading. There was at the beginning no reading at all.

___: Would you prepare a list for general study?

S: I have been asked to do that from time to time, but I find it really very difficult. There are a few books I always recommend: for instance, Suzuki's Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism, and then, for instance, for the Pali Canon, that selection Some Sayings of the Buddha. These are things I always recommend. And I recommend now Entering the Path to Enlightenment, the new translation - that is

very good; that's the one we studied at the last study retreat, and that was quite an experience.

So this is something that I - here again, this comes back to the Order very much - this is something that I feel personally at the moment is very useful, and which I feel very happy to do. I don't feel happy about taking regular classes at the Centre, and I don't intend to do that. I might not ever do it again, probably. But I feel very happy about taking small study groups and so on, mainly for Order members. I feel not only ready to do that but very happy to do that. And I hope that every Order member will be included eventually and that there will be a whole series of texts which at least some Order members have gone into pretty thoroughly, and which they themselves can conduct a study group in, sooner or later. But I want to keep these groups small. I think eight is about the maximum, I would say. And I may be having some little groups for just three or four people; just three or four people just get together with me at the new Centre just for a weekend, and spend the whole weekend going through a particular subject or particular texts. I calculated that on that 10-day study retreat we did four-hour sessions every day; we had 40 hours of study and discussion, and had we had one meeting of an hour every week it would have taken us nearly a year to get through that material. It was really concentrated, and I think, therefore, more effective. We did the greater part of the Bodhicaryavatara, leaving only the chapter on Wisdom, which is very difficult; with, of course, the introductory matter about that. And we hope to do that on some separate occasion, the same people.

But I feel that these study retreats or seminars fill in a gap in the total life of the Order, and this is one of the reasons why I feel very much into doing this at the moment; so I'm hoping to do it all through the summer, off and on.

: I remember in *The Essence of Zen* you said about how important you felt people should read - have knowledge of the basic texts. The example you used was something like 'after all, a pig breeder knows - reads about pig breeding.

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S: Yes. When, of course, I gave those talks to people who were reading about - reading all the time - so my point there is more that if you are going to read, read Buddhist texts. I mean texts, translations of scriptures. I am quite in favour of that - mindful reading of scriptures, either by oneself or with other people. But as a real study and spiritual practice, not just reading in the usual desultory fashion, just skimming rapidly through the book; really reading it carefully and mindfully, and studying it. But you can do that just with a few things. So I am in favour of that, but not of miscellaneous Buddhist reading much. Though I myself have done much reading in the past, until fairly recently - well, even now I probably do more than most people - but it's not very much by my previous standards.

But I don't think, in terms of one's spiritual development, reading is very helpful. And a little concentrated traditional-type study is really good, but much miscellaneous reading, no: I'd say you'd be much better occupied if you even mindfully performed practical tasks. I think we are too much book-oriented, on the whole. I know we have known some excellent Buddhists who haven't read any books about Buddhism at all, practically; and lots of other people who have not only read books about Buddhism but written them, without getting anywhere near the spirit of Buddhism - writing book after book, in some cases.

Anyway, any final point, because we are winding up now? What about that record of decisions taken? Have you got any record? - that we know what we've decided over the last two days?

Ananda: Probably between us Marichi has probably got ...

S: There was a tape - of course, it's turning round all the time. Right. (Voices) So I suggest, therefore, that those who have been acting as reporters write up their summary of the discussion, and especially the decisions, as soon as they can, and give them to Suvratta for circulation with the next issue of *Shabda*, and that will be an aide-memoire to all.

(Chat.)

END

Transcribed by Joyce Mumford
Checked, contented and laid out by Silabhadra
Printed and distributed by Margie Perla-Zeef

20th August 1993

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira
September 1998