

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

Questions And Answers Prior To The 1982 Ordination Course

Held at: Padmaloka

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Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Subhuti, Vessantara, Devamitra, Suvajra, Ratnaketu, Surata, Aryamitra, Ken Chandler, Mike Quaif, Tony Wall, Adrian Macro, Graham Steven, Robin Cooper, Alan Morrow, Robin Collett, Bernie Tisch, Greg Harman, Tony Bowall, Campbell McEwan, Kenny MacKay, Paul Holloway, Chris Harper, Bipin Patel, Darren Dewitt, Kennett Nolkrantz

Transcriber's note:

At times the tape quality is very poor and it is not possible to decipher what some of the participants are asking or saying. This is also the case, on far fewer occasions, with Sangharakshita himself.

Sangharakshita: Who are the 3 question masters?

Subhuti: Well there's Robin from our group.

S: Which Robin? And who else?

Devamitra: We don't actually have a question master from our group there are 4 different people all of whom will be giving questions.

Vessantara: My group's the same, 3 people.

S: These are all questions that you felt you hadn't fully sorted out yourselves. Unresolved questions.

Subhuti: Yes. Or ones we thought might provoke you. [Laughter]

S: Points of controversy [kappavattu]. So who's going to start? I'm not feeling easily provokable this morning by the way.[Laughter] but you can try if you wish.[Laughter]

_____: Shall we start?

S: Give me a little background first if you like, the ground covered and under which the question arises.

Vessantara: Most of these questions arise out of discussions of the precepts. There are a few exceptions. Robin has a number of questions about confession.

Robin Collet/Cittapala: Listening to your tape on the spiritual importance of confession and you said that on full moon days and new moon days traditionally the Sangha used to get together in pairs before the usual time and confess together and I was wondering since this seemed to be so important in the spiritual life regards confession was there not a case for that sort of thing to happen in the

Order?

S: Yes there was this tradition, there still is this tradition in many parts of the Buddhist world that the monks, because this occurs within the context of the Vinaya for Bhikkhus, that the monks gather together every full moon day and every new moon day. The purpose for which they originally gathered is the subject of some discussion. I've gone into the question, I think it was in the unpublished work on Buddhist literature, I think - this question of the [prosaddha?] the twice monthly observance. It seems that originally in the Buddha's day or at least early in the Buddha's day, it was a sort of what we would call Order Meeting. The Bhikkhus, the full time followers gathered together, they meditated and they seemed to recite verses of the Dharma. Perhaps it's in 'the Three Jewels' I have dealt with this does anyone remember? In the section on the Sangha. But anyway this seems to have been the original practice, that the Bhikkhus gathered together and recited those verses in which the Buddha's teaching has been codified almost for purposes of recitation and memorisation, and also meditated together. I mean there are a number of occasions on which we find the Bhikkhus gathered together and simply meditating on the full moon day.

We came across this a little while ago the other weekend when we studied the Samanaphala Sutta. It's a full moon or full moon night and the King Ajatasatru wants to go and visit a teacher and eventually decides to go and visit the Buddha on that full moon night and he finds the Buddha and all his disciples, of whom there were quite a large number, meditating in the forest. So this seems to have been the practice in those early days, that the monks gathered together, the Bhikkhus gathered together and recited the verses embodying the Dharma and meditated together.

It would seem that the practice of confession was introduced into this monthly or bimonthly meeting only somewhat later because the question of confession doesn't arise unless you've got something to confess. And in the very early days it seems that the Bhikkhus had nothing to confess for obvious reasons, because they were virtually Enlightened in most cases but things did change, people joined the Order who weren't quite so spiritually advanced and there were little things that they had to confess from time to time. So in the case of more serious offences they had to be confessed at the meeting itself and the Order as a whole then took any necessary action to deal with the matter but less serious matters could be dealt with as between two Bhikkhus, that is to say two members of the sangha. One who was conscious of an offence could confess to the other and, so to speak, purify himself, it was in fact called purification [parisudhi?], before the actual meeting.

And this is still very much the practice, except that in some parts of the Buddhist world there is in fact no public confession. There's no confession within the context of the actual order meeting. It's all sorted out, as it were, in private beforehand so that the order meets in harmony and in, so to speak, purity. So this is very important and then the question is whether this sort of practice, this sort of confession could not be introduced within the Order, the Western Buddhist Order.

I think in a way it is. Because what it means is that when you meet together as an Order you meet together as individuals you meet together as committed persons, so if prior to the meeting, you've done anything that detracts from your status, so to speak as an individual, which detracts from your Going for Refuge, clearly you must put that right before you can authentically participate in a meeting of the Order. Which means of course a meeting of committed individuals. You see what I mean? Take for instance an extreme example. Supposing before the meeting you have committed an offence with regard to another Order Member, supposing for instance that you hit him in anger intending to hurt him, well clearly there's been a breach between you and that other Order Member, so you cannot really genuinely, both of you, go along and attend that order meeting because you are

not in harmony with each other. You must put that right before you go along. Before you can validly or even genuinely join in the order meeting.

But this sort of thing does happen. Maybe in some cases it doesn't always happen but it should happen so that when you meet as an Order you really do meet as an Order. You meet as an Order of individuals who are in harmony with one another. Sometimes of course it may happen that differences are thrashed out at an Order meeting. It may not always be possible to thrash them out beforehand, especially if they involve a number of people, but so far as possible and especially personal breaches and maybe conflicts just between a couple of Order Members should be thrashed out, should be put right, before they go and actually participate in the meeting otherwise there can't be a genuine meeting. You've either got to sort things out beforehand or you've got to sort things out within the context of the meeting itself otherwise you've got only a pretence of an Order, a pretence of a Sangha to that extent. Do you see what I mean?

Robin Collett: Does once a month constitute a frequent enough practice?

S: That's difficult to say. It depends, I mean some Order Members might be living together in a community. They might see one another every day, they may meet every day so life becomes, as it were, one continuous Order Meeting which is the ideal. Sometimes you are working together, sometimes you are meditating together, sometimes you are studying together, sometimes you are just together but if one normally isn't in contact with other Order Members then I would say that once a month is the absolute minimum, but perhaps one should consider meeting, as it were, formally even more frequently than that. The principle of course being, rather than lay down a rule, the principle being, meet together as often as you can, as genuinely as you can, as effectively as you can. If possible be in continuous contact at least with some other Order Members.

Perhaps it should be a question of how often in the month it would be permissible for you not to be together.

Robin Collett: You said in the introduction to 'a case of dysentery' that you felt that the development of men's Order weekends was an important innovation in the Movement. Vessantara said that in another point in time you said that you felt that the Order was becoming unified in vision but not necessarily united in activity. Could you elaborate on that?

S: The second point. Does anyone remember where or when I said that and in what context?

Vessantara: The version I heard was you said that we were a unified Order but not united. You were talking in terms of more single sex developments within the Order.

S: Ah yes there is a difference between unity in spirit, inasmuch as everybody has the same spiritual commitment, and unification, as it were, organisationally. One doesn't necessarily have everybody doing everything together, especially in the case of men Order Members and women Order Members. It is a united Order inasmuch as all the people have gone for refuge but it is not a unified Order in the sense that men and women Order Members live together and work together etc.

Robin Collett: Do you see that trend developing in any particular direction?

S: When you say in any particular what do you mean? Because that trend is itself a direction.

Robin Collett: Well I mean would you see there being any greater divergence in activities between male and female Order Members?

S: I wonder about this. I was talking about it with some of the women mitras and women Order Members on the last women's study retreat. It does seem that there are some things that women are more suited to, or in a way, better at. It's rather difficult for instance, to imagine a women's building team. There was one, a very small one consisting I think of two women some years ago. They did a certain amount of light building work but they did rather quickly tire of it and it is rather difficult to imagine them working together in that sort of situation. But there might for instance be a situation in which they could work together such as caring for children or for old people.

So I think one needs to take that into consideration also. That one may have to take into account in this sort of way the different natural aptitudes of men and women. Some people would say that there is no difference in aptitude - it is entirely a matter of social culture and conditioning. After studying both men and women quite intensively for a number of years, not to say decades, I'd say I disagree with that even though there may be exceptions on both sides. There may be men who like caring for children and women who are good at building work, I'm sure there are some of them. In New Zealand I heard of women panel beaters and they were quite good at it.

But what was the earlier part of that question? There was an earlier part what was that?

Robin Collett: Well it was just that you'd said that you'd seen it as an important development and I wondered why you'd mentioned it.

S: Well I think if you look back at the history of the FWBO it does seem that the men have usually taken the lead in any new development. For instance the first single sex weekend retreat was a men's retreat, the first single sex communities were men's communities. So it does seem that so far the men have taken the lead and I think the fact that we were having on this occasion this men's Order weekend was important because I'm quite concerned that we intensify activities at all levels. I think there's still quite a bit of general slackness throughout the Movement.

So I think if one wants to introduce anything new, if one wants to introduce any new development to improve things in any way, one has to start with the men. They are in the majority in the Order anyway but experience has shown that if the men really go in and do something the women will follow suit sooner or later. So therefore one starts with the men or in this case the male Order Members. For instance we've had a Tuscany for men before we've had one for women. There weren't enough women for that particular type of thing. It is a question of whether that type of set-up is best suited for their needs and they themselves are not sure about that. In fact they're quite doubtful about it.

So the sexes don't necessarily do everything together nor do they necessarily do everything in the same way. Though basically what they are concerned with in the end is the same thing, especially in the case of those who are spiritually committed. The goal ultimately is the same.

What else?

Vessantara: We had our usual run through the third precept and one or two questions from Campbell.

Campbell: We were talking about ---

S: Third precept, which one is that, oh yes. [Laughter]

Campbell: We were talking about the dangers of having sexual relationships. Even though the ideal would be to practice celibacy I was wondering whether the practice of masturbation is actually a backward step from having sexual relationships.

S: Well there's a lot to be said on both sides of the question. I remember some years ago a friend of mine, a rather eccentric Englishman living in the South of India and following, well I don't know quite what he followed, he followed Ramana Maharshi at one time, he followed Krishnamurti at one time, he followed Navayana Guru at one time. His name was John Spears and he ran a little paper - I forget what it was called but it was very very interesting I used to say at the time it was the most interesting magazine I used to receive. 'Values' it was called, that's right 'Values' - he ran a whole series of articles on masturbation, masturbation in Indian spiritual tradition etc., etc. He showed people with a number of quotations that it was regarded in some spiritual circles in India by some sadhus as a healthy and helpful practice and according to him it was not to be unfavourably compared with the - what does one call it? - the other oriented form of sexual activity.

So its really very difficult to say. The main point about that particular form of sexual activity obviously is that it concerns the individual himself and not any other party. So one can say that its characteristic feature from that point of view is that the element of communication with another person is not present.

Obviously one regards communication with another person as a good thing, one regards communication as a positive thing, one regards it as a value, one regards it as something to be cultivated but of course the question arises does one need to be communicating with another person all the time, or on every occasion, or in every situation. You have solitary retreats, on the same principle why can't you have solitary sex? Do you see what I mean? Does one necessarily have to think in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives?

So I would say that even though the element of communication isn't present in that form of sexual activity it cannot therefore solely for that reason be ruled out. I mean obviously you can have a neurotic, other dependent, form of sexual activity, you can obviously have a neurotic auto-erotic form of sexual activity. So it's those sort of factors I think that one has to pay more attention to.

Campbell: Do you think that one of them is more likely to become neurotic than the other?

S: Well I would say that would depend on the individual person. That would depend on all sorts of variable factors. I mean some people have a problem communicating with other people. In their case perhaps auto-erotic activity is not to be recommended. Not because there's anything wrong specifically with auto-erotic activity but because that particular person needs to enter into communication with other people. I think here we have to be quite careful about our own sort of cultural conditioning in this area because most people have been brought up to believe that auto-erotic activity is harmful or that it is sinful etc., etc. So one has to be careful that such conditionings are not present. But I would say that even in the light of the importance of communication one can't say that auto-erotic activity is to be ruled out altogether.

One has to take the whole situation and the individual person into account but obviously any form of neurotic, addictive, sexual activity is undesirable.

You talk about relationships but you can have an unhealthy relationship with yourself too. I remember an instance from my own recollection; in the army. I remember in the same barrack room in which I was staying there was someone from Lancashire and he had a typical, what I call a music hall Lancashire accent. He was about the same age as I was, he was eighteen, I knew him for a couple of years. He was thin, weedy, pimply [Laughter] and as I say with this music hall Lancashire accent and he took himself very seriously indeed. His name was Tatlock if that's of interest! [Laughter]. He was usually called either 'Tatty' or 'Batty Tatty'[Laughter]. His most prized possession in life was a photograph album and this photograph album was filled with photographs of himself from the age of three months right down to last week. He had a photograph taken at the photographers nearly every week and he used to spend the whole of his evenings in the barrack room just turning over the pages of this album and just gazing at these pictures of himself, he spent every evening in this way, and he wasn't very other oriented. [Laughter] It soon became known to the other inmates of the barrack room that he was addicted to a certain form of sexual indulgence. So in the case of such a person that wasn't surprising because he was oriented so much towards himself so therefore one might say that for someone of that kind who was so self oriented, self absorbed even, auto-erotic activity would certainly not be recommended.

But it is difficult to lay down any general rule connected to the principles that are involved.

Vessantara: There's a follow on from that.

Suvajra: Something to do with fantasizing while masturbating. It draws on the question of masturbation, Campbell's question was is it a backward step to masturbate? If you're trying to develop a relationship would it be a healthy thing to do? I would say that perhaps it might not be because masturbation includes fantasizing which might actually push you back on yourself.

S: Well we seem to be getting into rather deep water here! I must confess going a little bit beyond my own experience! [Laughter] But I'll give you what help I can from my reading and observations.

Fantasizing. I think that fantasizing in connection with sex is probably quite unhealthy. This is the conclusion I have come to because sometimes it does happen that you are having a sexual experience with one particular person and you're fantasizing about somebody else. This is quite unskilful inasmuch as you're not fully aware of the person with whom you actually are, and obviously when you communicate with anybody in any way you should be as fully present with that other person as you possibly can be. But if you are with one person and fantasizing or even thinking of another, well clearly you're not really present with the person that you are present with. So that's the first point about fantasizing.

The second is fantasizing in connection with masturbation. Well this would suggest that you ought not to be masturbating at all because normally people speak of masturbation as a sort of relief for sexual tension but if you have to fantasize it would suggest that you're sort of driving yourself along more by will. You're dissatisfied or you're bored or you don't know quite what to do so you amuse yourself in that particular way. Do you see what I mean? Because if one has a genuine sexual need, one might say, one just doesn't need to fantasize. I think, on the whole, fantasizing in connection with sexual activity is unhealthy and it represents a sort of rather alienated self stimulation which shouldn't be necessary. If you have to fantasize well why bother!

You spoke about withdrawing from a relationship. What was that?

Suvajra: Well if you were withdrawing from a relationship and you're not having sexual activity with that other person but you're having it on your own masturbating. But if during the masturbation you are fantasizing about that person

S: I really don't know. I couldn't say. It would seem to be such a personal matter that one couldn't generalise. But perhaps when one is, say, trying to end a relationship it's always helpful to reflect on the words of the old proverb that there are as big fish in the sea as ever came out of it. [Laughter]
[Pause]

Maybe a good healthy open-air sporting activity would be better, karate or something like that which would take one's mind off unhealthy subjects! No, but seriously, if one finds for instance at any time one becomes aware that one has become unhealthily involved in a relationship and you feel that you ought to get out of it well there are always one's spiritual friends. The question also is how did one get into that sort of relationship to begin with. It must have been that you got out of contact with your spiritual friends because if you are enjoying a warm, positive, satisfying, creative relationship with your spiritual friends well why should you get involved in relationships in an unhealthy sort of way? So you need to retrace your steps, re-establish contact with your spiritual friends, spend more time with them. This sort of lifts the whole question to another level.

Robin Collett: I was wondering how far celibacy was an integral part of practising the Brahma Viharas?

S: How far?

Robin Collett: Well I've always understood, from my reading anyway, that you had to be celibate to practice the Brahma Viharas and wondering, when I brought that up in the study group.....

S: Well put it this way - what are the Brahma Viharas? The Brahma Viharas are mental states, they're spiritual states. So as spiritual states where do they belong so to speak? The Brahma Viharas correspond to the Rupaloka. You know there are these three Lokas of the Kamaloka, the Rupaloka and the Arupaloka. So the Brahma Viharas correspond to the Rupaloka which is of course above the Kamaloka. So sense experience of any kind is possible in the ordinary sense only on the Kamaloka. So when you rise through the Rupaloka then sensual experience, or rather let's say sense motivation or sense orientation is left behind. So one might say that sexual activity is sense oriented so to the extent that sexual activity is sense oriented as you pass from the Kamaloka to the Rupaloka and in this case into the Brahma Viharas that kind of activity is left behind at least for the time being.

It's not that unless you're celibate maybe for some length of time you can't enter upon the Brahma Viharas but to experience the Brahma Viharas and engage in sexual activity these two are contradictory, because the sexual activity in the ordinary sense is, as it were, sense oriented. Whereas in the Brahma Viharas there is no sense consciousness in that sort of way. So the two things cannot go on at the same time. Does that answer your question?

Robin Collett: Yes. But don't you have to build up a sort of head of steam so to speak to get from the Kamaloka to the Rupaloka?

S: Yes indeed you do.

Robin Collett: And wouldn't that imply being celibate?

S: It would imply being celibate but it would imply, as it were, a natural celibacy. Not that you could just switch off sexual activity and be technically celibate and in that way more easily deepen your meditation and experience the Brahma Viharas. That would not necessarily happen. I mean, how you got up that head of steam would depend very much on your own personal temperament, history and so on.

It's as though one needs to follow a middle way. Most people in this sort of an area need to follow a middle way. They, it seems, can't afford to let themselves get too much out of contact with the ordinary, even sense, experiences. If they do their energy dries up. On the other hand if they're too much absorbed in sense experiences then also energy is wasted. Do you see what I mean? You've got to follow a middle path, be sufficiently in touch with your, in a sense, cruder energies to be able to refine them but not so much immersed in them that refinement is out of the question. That would seem to be the important point for most people.

Kenny McKay: In the Tibetan Book of the Dead [unclear] 'oh son of noble family' and I was just wondering what [unclear]

S: The term is 'Kulaputra'. Kula actually means just family. The translation is not really noble family it is just family, son of a family. But the implication is not, yes there is an implication, not so much of noble family but well known family an established family. It's the son of people who are somebody. Do you see what I mean? Not just the son of a beggar or the son of very poor people but the son of people who are well established in society. This is what it means. You could regard it as a polite mode of address, you assume that everybody is, as it were, of good social background, until you discover otherwise. [Laughter]

Greg: How would you spell that 'kulaputta'?

S: Kula is KULA. Putta in Pali is PUTTA or in Sanskrit it's putra PUTRA.

This is a polite mode of address.

Campbell: It's to do with the sanskrit words. I kept doing a puja but I found when chanting the puja that each word suggests a definite colour. Well not all the words just some of them seem to suggest a particular colour. I was just wondering if you've ever come across any connection between a particular word and certain colour.

S: I can't say that I have. [Laughter] But that's not to say that there may not be some connection, it's something I haven't thought about.

Campbell: It occurs to me that it's a language. There must be a language of colours.

S: I mean there are some people who believe that there are correlations between certain vowel sounds and certain colours. There is a famous sonnet by Rimbaud. Does anyone remember that? Where he describes the different colours of the different vowels. 'O' for instance Omega I think he says is violet in colour. So some people have had these sort of ideas, with different sounds associated with different colours [unclear]

I couldn't say. Whether it's just a subjective association on their part.

In Tibetan Buddhism the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM is divided into syllables. The different syllables are differently coloured but it isn't as though there is a natural colour for that particular syllable because that in turn is correlated with the 5 or the 6 realms. The OM MANI PADME HUM has 6 syllables so each syllable is connected with one of the 6 realms because one sort of aspect of Tibetan teaching in this respect is that by reciting the OM MANI PADME HUM you're delivered from samsaric existence, that is to say you're delivered from the 6 realms, you will not be reborn in the 6 realms. So there are 6 realms and there are 6 syllables and one particular syllable is said to deliver you from one particular realm and that syllable takes on the colour of that realm. The realm of the gods is white, the realm of men is yellow. So the syllable corresponding to the realm of the gods is coloured white and the syllable corresponding to the realm of men is coloured yellow and so on. But here one arrives at the colour of the syllable via the colour associated with a particular realm, the asuras are green.

Campbell: It wasn't that I'd thought it out it was just that as I was chanting the words I had very definite colours in my mind.

S: Well perhaps you could write the precepts out with the colours that you associate with them and then see whether there is anything in tradition that you could correspond in the puja.

Campbell: The only colours are red, green, yellow, blue, magenta and gold.

S: Well perhaps you could just follow it up and see whether there's anything that corresponds with that or whether there seems to be any natural association of non-violence with a particular colour or not telling lies with a particular colour. Often blue is associated with truth, people say blue for true.

_____ : These are all questions that were raised (unclear). The first one is from the beginning of the Sangha section in the 'Mitrata Omnibus' where you are talking about the beginning of the sangha with the original five ascetics and how the Buddha raised them to a higher level of development. Then later on there were about fifty and these fifty were sent out to different parts of India

S: Sixty.

_____ : Sixty, and we were wondering why this sort of chain reaction didn't continue indefinitely, this chain reaction of humanity going out. It didn't continue with more and more people in the world gaining Stream Entry from that day.

S: Well that's quite an interesting point. One can answer in a word or rather two words - the gravitational pull. Because the gravitational pull is always at work. As I think I've said at some other time, it never sleeps, it never rests and you may rest from your spiritual effort but the gravitational pull it never rests, it's working all the time.

But what is the important point of transition? Supposing you've got, for let's say, for the sake of argument, people who are Stream Entrants. Why is it that every Stream Entrant doesn't, so to speak, produce two other Stream Entrants? This is really the question reduced to its simplest terms, isn't it. Because if each Stream Entrant, leave aside anyone who was enlightened, if each Stream Entrant produces or is responsible for producing two other Stream Entrants there will be that increasing multiplication of the sangha, the arya sangha even. What is that sort of growth called when you double each time, exponential growth. One would think it would be a very simple matter, it doesn't

seem to be asking very much for one Stream Entrant that all you've got to do in the course of your life is to produce two other Stream Entrants. But it seems not to happen. I remember talking in somewhat the same terms some years ago that if every Order member every two years were to produce, so to-speak, - not that you really can produce them - two other Order members then the Order would double every two years but it isn't doubling every two years. So clearly even that is not being done. Every Order member is not producing two Order members every two years. But why does it not happen, what is the principal reason do you think?

_____ : Difficulty in communicating their experience.

S: I think we want to go back a stage before that, before they can even begin to communicate their experience what must happen?

_____ : There must be some receptive person ready to listen.

S: Well put it in its simplest terms.

Vessantara: They've got to have the experience and want to communicate it.

S: Well if you're a Stream Entrant that's taken for granted surely.

_____ : They need to know people.

S: Need to know people. It's even simpler than that, its so simple that you're overlooking it.

_____ : One has to have the ability to communicate.

[End of side one, side two]

S: Well I think if you're a Stream Entrant you can communicate. I don't believe in the tongue tied Stream Entrant! [Laughter] What has got to happen first?

_____ : You've got to meet people.

S: To meet people, at least we're getting a bit closer. You've got to spend time with them. Do you see what I mean? You've got to spend time with them, the Stream Entrant has got to spend time with the non Stream Entrant. The Order member has got to spend time with the non Order member before anything at all can happen. Before communication can take place etc., etc. I personally think that the weak link in the chain must be there. Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: But why if you're a Stream Entrant would you not be spending time with people?

S: Well put it this way, why if you're an Order member would you not be spending time with people? Reducing it to simpler terms.

Devamitra: Yeah, but on the level of Stream Entry which is a bit more elevated, much more elevated, you would expect a certain kind of behaviour, you would expect to be influenced by compassion.

S: Yes indeed.

Devamitra: So it would be a bit less understandable at that level than at the level of the Order member.

S: Well one could say two things here. One could say when one is speaking in terms of Stream Entry, that is Stream Entry in the slightly narrow doctrinal sense pertains to the path of the Arahant. One could say from the Mahayana point of view that in the path of the Arahant compassion is not sufficiently emphasised. That's one point.

The other point is that people may not be willing to associate with the Stream Entrant. They may not be interested in what he has to say or what he has to tell them, so therefore they don't spend time together, not sufficient time for the Stream Entrant to influence the non Stream Entrant sufficiently for him to become a Stream Entrant. So this again perhaps from the Mahayana point of view comes back to the question of compassion because there is such a thing as skilful means. If you have compassion you have skilful means, if you have skilful means you will find some way of approaching other people. You won't necessarily approach them as a stream entrant or even as a bhikkhu or as anything else - you will approach them, so to speak, on their own terms and try to communicate with them in some way or other.

So if we again look at it not so much in terms of Stream Entry and non Stream Entry but in terms of Order members and non Order members I think it's a question first of all of really feeling that one wants to communicate. So that means some touch at least of compassion, some touch of the Bodhi-sattva ideal must be present otherwise why should you bother. And on the other hand you must be sufficiently skilled in your approach to people. It's not enough to hit them over the head with Buddhism, or even with the FWBO. You must be sufficiently skilled and tactful in your approach and really able to engage them in conversation and then communication and then really try to put something, I was going to say across but that isn't quite the right word, put something over. And it isn't something to be done just on one occasion, you've got to develop a definite friendship with that particular person, as it were for its own sake, you haven't got a sort of ulterior motive in communicating with them even the ulterior motive of helping them to develop. It isn't really such a separate thing as that. You've got to be concerned about them as an individual, them as a human being and want to communicate with them. In a sense one might as well even go on to say or perhaps one should say that one should like people. One should like the person with whom you are trying to communicate. You can't do it just out of an abstract sense of duty or just as a matter of principle without that individual liking or warmth, or some feeling. Do you see what I mean?

This all brings me back to something I was talking about the other day and it was one of the things I was reported as saying and which I actually did say! [Laughter]. This was with regard to Kalyana Mitras and their mitras I did say, I forget when I said it but maybe someone remembers and will tell me, that a Kalyana Mitra needed to spend at least two hours a day continuously with his mitra. I gave that as the norm. Does anyone remember when and where I said this?

_____ : Yes it was an Order meeting when I was at Sukhavati.

S: But do you think that those words have been seriously heeded?

_____ : [unclear reply]

S: Perhaps they did. I don't know. I didn't get any immediate feedback.

_____ : I get the impression that it was [unclear] but at the moment it's impracticable.

S: Well perhaps it is but if it is impracticable one should consider possibly the result which means that not much in the way of communication will be established and not much influence, to use that word, will be exerted, and not much growth and development will take place, or not very rapidly.

Bernie Tisch: So you're saying that the whole expansion, whether it expands or not relies on this factor.

S: Yes this is the crucial factor really. It does come down to individual contact, individual communication.

Vessantara: If this is followed through and given that some Order members may be (unclear) for a lot of the time and could be much more outward going [] if you take for granted the kind of depth they are putting into the dharma and into communicating with people. On the whole a lot of effort is going into spreading quite thinly, either being of administrative importance or working with people in situations where you have a lot of beginners and retreats moving from one person to another to another. If one were to really insist in this way one might (unclear) a few friends and you pick one or two of them and work really closely with them.

S: I think one might even consider this in some cases. What would be the most productive method of working. I did talk with an order member recently who said that as a result of a conversation with me sometime previously he had decided not to start up a class but he was just going to spend more time with people and as a result that particular centre, I think it was Manchester in fact, seems to be working really well.

But also I think this involves - two hours a day it's not really very much if you consider - it involves really seriously scrutinising how one passes one's time. What one does with it. I don't want to harp on a particular topic but some, even some Order members do spend quite a bit of time with their girlfriends, If they were to spend perhaps half of that time with a mitra well then my requirement I think would be met. But one has got to examine the way in which one spends one's time and it is a question of ordering ones priorities and if one really wants to do something one will always make time. I think this is very important, one will reorganise one's schedule, one will make time. One is only asking each individual, we are talking about Order members now, each individual order member to spend that amount of time with one other person, we're not asking him to do it with twenty people, with just one, only one. That doesn't seem to be a very big demand.

One of the things I found when I went down to London and I spent some time with people there that there were two points that quite a number of people made, especially mitras, one could say that they were complaints but they didn't put them as complaints, they were just making points. Quite a number of people said that they really wanted more dharma, not more fringe activities, more dharma and they wanted more contact, personal contact, with Order members. These were the two points that were made again and again. So it clearly means that some deficiency is felt in this area and something more really needs to be done.

So I'm saying all this now because in a way to some extent you are all in an intermediate position, you're a bit amphibious. You're like the tadpole that I saw in the lily pond the other day, your little

back legs have started sprouting [Laughter] but that big tail hasn't yet fallen off. So you can see it from both sides, you're mitras, some of you with Kalyana Mitras, but you are thinking very seriously in terms of ordination and hopefully perhaps soon you all will be ordained.

Bernie Tisch: So in operating in this way, having the desire to spend quite a lot of time with just one person every day...

S: I make the point very strongly because you feel it now that you are mitras but once you're Order members don't forget what its like to be a mitra, and not to be getting enough time and attention from Order members, don't forget that. Though of course there is a level of Kalyana Mitrata within the Order itself. One keeps up that too, one keeps up one's relations with as many people as one possibly can. You are limited only by time and others in our community. But it does seem to me to be more and more important. I think we need to be very very careful what we actually sacrifice to this, or in what we sacrifice this to. Maybe sometimes it does have to be sacrificed but be very careful what you sacrifice it to. It would have to be something very very important.

Tony Wall: Bhante when you say two hours do you mean apart from working, Order members and mitras working together in co-ops.

S: Not necessarily. Because you can have a good working contact and communication. But it must be a really good one. Not - you could be working on the same building site but you never speak to each other - well that doesn't count. Or you may be in the same wholefood shop but you're so busy packing things you don't even have time to look up to the other person - that doesn't count. But if in a work situation there's an actual interaction between you, real communication going on, whether about the work itself or something else, well that can count as the two hours or part of it.

_____ : [Unclear question/comment]

S: Not necessarily. There should be plenty of people coming along within the structure of the FWBO for you to look around and find someone that you'd like to be friends with and spend time with. But certainly looking for people outside the FWBO isn't excluded by any means. If you've got a job outside you may get to know someone that you really like and you feel you could communicate with, you might spend time with that person. When I speak of spending two hours a day minimum I'm talking more specifically in terms of an Order member spending time with a mitra whose Kalyana Mitra he is. But certainly that doesn't exclude other contacts and other situations.

But I do think somebody who's a mitra must be prepared to use that. To say by virtue of the fact that he's a mitra he says I want contact with Order members. So here you are people are wanting contact - you don't need to go looking for them they've already said that they want it. So it would be a great pity if they didn't get what they wanted and what they needed in this kind of way from you as an Order member. I mean they're swarming all around you. You don't need to go looking for them.

The element of personal likes and personal involvement does influence to some extent. You can't operate purely out of a sense of duty. But

[unclear]

_____ : In relation to that you initially were talking about the Stream Entrant and I always thought that they would have wisdom and compassion but did you say that in fact the compassion wasn't well developed?

S: Well I'm looking at the slightly narrow doctrinal form because I don't really accept that the real Stream Entrant would be narrow or lacking in compassion in the Hinayana way.

I can only conclude that if for instance there is a Stream Entrant around and he is compassionate to a very great extent. He wants to communicate his experience etc., etc. If he doesn't succeed in creating in the course of his life at least two other Stream Entrants I can only attribute that to the strength of the gravitational pull where other people are concerned. That just will not let him in and not allow him to establish contact with them.

Bernie Tisch: Not with the stream entrant. The gravitational pull is on the people.....

S: In the case of the Stream Entrant there is still some slight gravitational pull, it might prevent him getting further but it doesn't ever pull him back into the world. But I would put it down certainly to the lack of receptivity on the part of other people, perhaps the general state of the times. The Stream Entrant cannot but want to communicate his experience.

In a way you might think it's quite dreadful for one person to be a Stream Entrant and no other Stream Entrants at all, because there's no possibility of horizontal communication. I think there is a natural tendency to want both vertical and horizontal communication. So in a way it's in a Stream Entrant's own interests to create other Stream Entrants so that he can have a decent conversation with someone. [Laughter] When he talks about Stream Entry they'll know what he is talking about. Until then they really won't because there's no experience of that sort of thing. So it's in the Order member's interests you might say to create more Order members, to increase the possibility of contact and communication for himself and for everybody. So there should be this ever expanding circle of communication.

I think that in the case of Order members, returning to that somewhat lower level, there is a danger - I'm warning you about this in advance - of Order members becoming a bit involved in peripheral activities, and things that are of personal interest in the rather narrow sense. So a lot of time might be spent just in things which from a spiritual point of view are really rather trivial, even though you may feel they help you in your development. Well they may but really not very much. A bit of painting or a bit of pottery and spending your time in that sort of way. Or you think stamp collecting would be good for your spiritual development. You see what I mean. I think Order members have to beware of that, that they're being a bit precious about their personal development and their personal interests. Possibly their 'private life'. I won't go into that at the moment.

_____ : [unclear question]

S: I think if you devote yourself to it seriously as a discipline it certainly does have value. Especially if you devote yourself to it as a discipline in the sense that the Japanese DO is not just a discipline it's a way. So that requires a tremendous, one might say, commitment and the sort of thing I'm thinking of is not people really committing themselves wholeheartedly to some sort of major interest, but if they are just dabbling in this and dabbling in that and sort of whiling away their time but justifying it in the terms of 'well it's good for my spiritual development, I feel a need to get into this or I feel a need to get into that'. The arts taken seriously are very demanding.

_____ : [unclear]

S: I think it would depend upon his motivation. I have encouraged Order members, say, to involve themselves with karate with a view to eventually order members teaching this, which would mean you have a means of access to a whole new lot of people who normally wouldn't come along to a Buddhist centre. They have established this as a medium of communication with them, so I would certainly encourage it from that point of view, the same goes for yoga, the same goes for any of these martial arts. I don't know why no-one's taken up flower arranging yet. Maybe you should start getting into your feminine side. [Laughter]

: Our second question which arose rather incidental to the last question. We were wondering about the first dhyana. The Buddha experienced the first dhyana, whether he was able to operate continuously from the first dhyana or whether he had to come down to, as recorded in the text, the psychological level. In other words the kamaloka every time he needed to talk to people [unclear] And connected with that we were wondering about what a dilute dhyana state is.

S: I have discussed this somewhere or other on a number of occasions. There was a school of Buddhist thought in the very early days that maintained that the Buddha was always in a state of samadhi, that is in a state of highly developed dhyana. This was not generally accepted. One has the distinction between samatha and vipassana, that is to say between calm and insight. You are familiar with that distinction? The degree of the Buddha's samatha experience may vary from time to time, the Buddha may be absorbed in dhyana or he may not be, but the general view is that the Buddha is not always absorbed in dhyana. But the Buddha's insight never failed and his mindfulness never failed. So it is possible for the Buddha to operate within the sphere of sense consciousness as when he speaks to other people. So he will not then be in a state of dhyana but his insight of course will still be constant. His insight into the three laksanas for instance will be constant and his mindfulness will be constant. But he will not necessarily be in a dhyana state. He will be in a dhyana state only when he is, as it were, by himself or when he actually concentrates his mind, or wishes to be in a dhyana state. Because it is insight which makes up Buddhahood not just samatha, not just calm, not just dhyana, by itself.

_____ : We were also wondering what is the dilute dhyana state and is that something that he can occupy continuously?

S: Because even though the Buddha is functioning in the sense sphere there are no unskilful mental states present. So it's the absence of those unskilful mental states which constitutes what I have called that dilute dhyana state. You know this from your own experience that sometimes it may happen that you are not actually meditating but you do enjoy a very positive buoyant mental state, or emotional state, as you are just moving around doing ordinary things in the ordinary world. So it's something like that. But even though you are not actually in a dhyana state mindfulness is present and insight may be present and your overall mental state is very positive so much so that it is almost dhyanic but not quite, otherwise you wouldn't be able to continue functioning.

Bernie Tisch: The hindrances aren't in existence while you're in this state. Is that right?

S: Of course normally one needs to ensure that the hindrances subside before you can enter into the dhyana state. But if insight is present well the hindrances will be to that extent destroyed, for it is the absence of those hindrances, the absence of those unskilful mental states, that constitutes what I call the dilute dhyana state. I have said I think that it would be possible to do certain things in the first dhyana state because mental activity is still present. But very very difficult to function objectively in the world once one has entered second dhyana, where the vipakka viccara, the mental activity, is

suspended. You wouldn't for instance be able to answer a question because you wouldn't be able to think.

_____ : But would you be able to do that in the first dhyana?

S: You would be able to do that in the first dhyana, yes.

_____ : You could actually answer questions.

S: Yes.

_____ : How would one see that the vipassana (unclear) is only connected with the meditation itself?

S: Well it's connected with the meditation itself to the extent that that is what you are preoccupied with at that particular time. You're concerned with the actual meditation object, but even your preoccupation, your mental preoccupation, with the meditation object itself, even that goes in the second dhyana, what to speak of your mental preoccupations about other things, your mental activity about other things.

_____ : In the first dhyana the vipaka viccāra [unclear to the end of question]

S: Well even if you are not meditating your vipakaviccāra can as a result of previous meditative experience be more directed, less scattered, more sustained, more purposeful. But I think quite a few people have had the experience that you are in a sort of meditative state and maybe someone asks you a question and you can just about answer it, you can just about get your mind going to that extent. You might find this when you wake up in the morning, I don't know if anyone ever notices this, you can wake up in the morning and you can be absolutely clearly awake, wide awake, your mind is quite fresh and clear and bright but mental activity has not yet started up. You are just aware of the world and aware of your own awareness, aware of yourself, but mental activity with regard to the world has not yet started up. But when you wake up you are almost, for a few instants, in a sort of second dhyana state. I don't know if anybody's ever noticed this? Do you know what I'm talking about or can you conceive of it, or can you recall anything in your own experience like that? You wake up, you're completely awake, everything is fresh and bright and clear but mental activity, even mental activity of 'well here I am in such and such place' hasn't started up. Memory hasn't started up. In a sense you don't know where you are but in a quite positive sense because you haven't started thinking where you are so how can you know where you are? That all comes with thinking. You might be in India or you might be in England you don't know until you start thinking. All you've got is that consciousness of your surroundings and yourself without any mental activity.

Devamitra: I must say I've really been aware of that sort of experience while on solitary retreat.

Adrian Macro: I think I've experienced something like that but my sort of tendency is to almost drop off back to sleep again. [Laughter] What tends to happen is you can be in a street say and dreaming, you wake up and you experience what you've been talking about, and then before you can actually really be awake and [] in the world you have to go back to your dream state, to whatever conditions are in your dream state instead of doing it

S: It's a sort of instance of lucidity one might say. It's not the lucidity of insight but its the lucidity of

absence of mental functioning.

_____ : Our last question came up from the discussion of the third precept and it's about homosexuality. We wondered what you thought the origins of taboos in the west against homosexuality was.

S: Well it isn't only a taboo in the west its also a taboo, or was a taboo in India to a great extent. I think one can understand it almost entirely in biological cum cultural terms. One finds that in the case of all the ethnic religions there is this sort of taboo, one finds it in Judaism, one finds it in Hinduism. But why should that taboo come about, because taboos don't come about just for no reason at all?

It would seem that in those very early days it was important that the number of human beings should be increased. The strength of the tribe, the strength of the family, depended on the number of members, so therefore marriage is the norm, the production of the children was the norm, and anything which seemed to threaten that was taboo. This would seem to me to be the major factor in any such explanation.

_____ : We were also wondering what the attitudes in modern India and also in ancient India, say in the Buddha's time, was to homosexuality.

S: From all that one can gather from Buddhist texts homosexuality in the modern sense wasn't known or not understood in ancient India. They seem to have mixed it up with hermaphroditism, they seem to have the same words for both phenomena, as it were. They seem not to have understood it as a sort of psychological state and maybe it wasn't differentiated in that particular way. They seem to have equated it with hermaphroditism.

Hermaphroditism is a state in which a human being has either completely or in part the sexual organs of both sexes in juxtaposition. So the ancient Indians seem to have mixed this state up with the state of homosexuality as far as one can see from the literature. And in orthodox Hinduism among the Brahmins and among caste Hindus generally it was considered very very important that you had a son to perform your after death ritual, otherwise you wouldn't go to heaven. So all these sort of beliefs manipulated against anything which detracted from the actual reproduction of the species and clearly homosexuality points in that direction.

So one might say that in those early days homosexuality was regarded as anti-social because it was seen as representing a tendency to limit or even decrease the population. But now of course the situation has completely changed so it may be that fresh ethical norms arise because now our problem is that we've got too many people so you could even argue now, as some people have argued, that homosexuality far from being anti-social any longer is a highly responsible social activity [Laughter] contributing to the limitation or even decrease of the population or at least to its stabilisation at its present level.

_____ : Can you say why a man shouldn't have a relationship with another man rather than a woman?

S: I don't know whether its a matter of choice, I mean in some cases it may be but in others it does seem to be a question of natural instinct. It's questioned whether it's an instinct or not, but at least one might say a natural attraction in that they don't presumably pick or maybe its [] nowadays. But

you don't sit down ask yourself well 'with whom shall I now have a sexual relationship and of what kind?' Things sort of happen or you are just sort of naturally attracted or you tend to go in this direction or maybe sometimes in this direction, sometimes in that direction, because it's sometimes difficult to pin down human nature. But it does seem that even in early times that there were quite a few cases of people who defied the social norms despite everything that the tribal elders had said, were sexually attracted to members of the same sex and sometimes that was recognised. Sometimes such people became shamans. Shamans were used to (unclear) in ancient societies.

But one can understand the reason for these taboos, they did no doubt make sense at a certain stage in human evolution but perhaps they don't make that sort of sense any more.

And of course the newest taboo in this sense was taken over by Christianity. [unclear] it's very difficult to understand really why this came about but the Christians seem to have felt very strongly on this particular topic. In a sense almost out of proportion to the biological need to survive and all that sort of thing. I can't say that I understand fully why they should get so worked up about this particular matter but they undoubtedly were right down to the present day, and it's only quite recently that some Christians have begun to let up on this particular issue. It really seems very strange indeed.

_____ : [unclear question]

S: But it wasn't at the very beginning. [unclear]

_____ : Could it then be put down to alienation from their own [unclear].

S: There was also - I've just thought of another possible reason or part of a reason. Among the Greeks it is well known that what we would term homosexuality, although the Greek experience was rather different in that respect, was sort of institutionalised. So the early Christians were, in a way, quite afraid of Greek influence in general, it represented a pagan influence, so they obviously discouraged the worst of the pagan gods and banished and even censured pagan literature. So this aspect of Greek and Roman life was perhaps discouraged because it was part of that pagan culture. So that ran together with the Jewish tendency to frown upon any sexual relationships [unclear to end].

_____ : [Unclear]

S: But Christianity on the whole or individual Christians seems to have been quite hysterical on this particular subject. There's no other word for it. It does seem very strange indeed.

I would just add to that. In India, the modern Indian attitude seems to be, they don't get hysterical about homosexuality or anything like that. They certainly regard it as odd and they can't quite understand it mostly even though there are a few, very few Indians have this particular tendency. They just regard it as odd, if anything ;hey regard it as a bit of a joke but they certainly don't get hysterical over it.

Anyway we'll pass on to other questions.

Devamitra: First of all there were two questions which arose

out of discussions of the first precept. Mike has the first question.

Mike Quaiff: It was concerning violent sport, for instance a knockout in boxing, and the first precept. Where you are actually trying to knock the person down but its not done in anger more in...

S: Well I think there are two points here. Whether one can actually do that not in anger, I rather question this. Traditionally the abhidhamma questions this. The abhidhamma doesn't believe that an act of violence can actually be committed without at least a subtle sort of anger or hatred being present. But you mention boxing. There has been an inquiry into this recently. I was really quite surprised to read myself that since the end of the war, I think about 1950, there have been more than three hundred deaths in the boxing ring. Quite apart from deaths occurring subsequently due to injuries received in boxing, quite apart from very serious injuries including brain injuries, brain damage. And the BMA, the British Medical Association, has now recommended officially the total abolition of boxing. This was only the other week, and reading what they had to say at their conference I was inclined to go along with this. They pointed out that the purpose of the sport, of the match, was to inflict actual harm and damage on one's opponent. To knock them out, which could mean to kill them.

So it would seem to me that boxing in that sense would be certainly against the first precept. I don't know enough about karate but I would say that if your aim is to knock out your opponent then that would be an act of violence and therefore against the first precept.

If it was a real life situation - because these are sports - if it was a real life situation and someone is trying to kill you, well you could say that you are justified in trying to stop him even if it means you may kill him. You don't intend to kill him, you intend only to defend your own life but you accept that well that may actually result in you killing him. Well then it means there's a sort of moral decision here objectively, whether its better that he should be dead or you should be dead. You might consider that if you're an Order member you're of more use to the world than he is and quite objectively decide you're going to defend yourself even though it means that he may be killed, he's asked for it in a way you could say, he's brought it on himself. You haven't invited the attack, not knowingly. But it would still be the lesser of two evils it wouldn't be an act of good that you were choosing.

But after reading those reports about boxing I would agree ban boxing it seems really dreadful. And after all it's not really very good that people should enjoy these things. I remember I was telling someone not so long ago that when I was in Singapore, when I was in the army, I had a friend who was quite a good friend of mine. He was quite a bit older than I was then and he was an ex-miner and we used to go around quite a lot together and he was very into the all-in wrestling so I used to go with him to see the all-in wrestling. I was really quite surprised, I had never been to any such things in England and I didn't know anything about them. I was really surprised at the reactions of the audience, especially the women. That when blood was drawn they really loved it and I don't think that's really very positive or anything of that sort can be really positive. A real howl went up when blood was drawn or when someone's joint cracked. You could hear the crack so far away, and yes, people really loved this, they really enjoyed it, that's what they'd come for. Not the finer points of wrestling in most cases.

So develop your more heroic qualities by all means but I think one must draw the line at acts of violence.

Devamitra: Another question that was discussed on violence and non-violence.

[end of tape one tape two]

Tony Wall: Yes. Bhante, I would like your views on unilateral disarmament in general and also whether you think this country should adopt that position.

S: I would say I don't know because unilateral disarmament as a policy is a policy aiming at a certain result which is the abolition of nuclear weapons ultimately. Because it's no use one country just disarming in that respect and other countries not, so the aim seems to be that the use of nuclear weapons, even the production of nuclear weapons would ultimately be abandoned. Obviously one agrees with that. Whether unilateral nuclear disarmament is the way to that I think that is disputable. I think different people who quite honestly and sincerely would want to see the total abolition of nuclear weapons can disagree over that. But that is a disagreement over strategy, do you see what I mean?

Tony Wall: One of the things that I was concerned about is whether the whole thing about the arms race isn't just a mutual paranoia and the reasons that the Russians have the missiles trained on us is that we have missiles trained on them.

S: Mutual paranoia is certainly an element in the situation, but whether that could be resolved by unilateral disarmament which would have to be the whole of one side - it wouldn't be enough for just Britain to disarm without the Americans, I just can't say. So I can accept that very sincere people believe in unilateral disarmament, I can also accept that very sincere people don't believe that is the way to total nuclear disarmament and that therefore there can be genuine disagreement on this point.

Campbell: What would be an alternative?

S: To what?

Campbell: To disarmament?

S: There's no real alternative because as far as I can see, if nuclear weapons are produced, and produced to the extent that they are being produced and stockpiled, sooner or later they are going to be used. So therefore I think it is very very important, vital, that some way is found of halting the nuclear arms race, stopping the production of nuclear weapons and even destroying, if that is possible, those that already exist. But whether unilateral nuclear disarmament by a particular nuclear power will contribute to that, I think that is disputable, or at least arguable.

Campbell: I can't see how else it could come about.

S: Well it could for instance, come about by all the nuclear powers sitting together and all agreeing that on a certain date they're all going to stop the continued production of nuclear weapons. And then on another date they were going to destroy all the nuclear weapons that they already have and that there would be mutual inspections and so on.

But what I'm saying is that it's possible for someone to be not convinced that unilateral nuclear disarmament is the way to the abolition of nuclear weapons. If someone is not convinced that that is the way they should not be regarded as not sincerely devoted to the actual cause of world peace.

They can have genuine reservations on this particular thing. But in politics especially the tendency is that if someone doesn't agree with your way of doing things then you just assail his intentions and motivations and so on, and I think that is not helpful.

But there is an element of mutual paranoia, I'll agree with that. That has got to be broken through somehow. Russia feels that she's encircled by America and America feels encircled by Russia.

Anyway what other questions are there?

Greg Harman: Bhante. The end of the precis of the third precept you've got 'in the case of adulterers the violence is committed against the woman's husband inasmuch as his domestic life is deliberately disrupted.' And it seems that that is only one-side of the story. The question is, is that for a particular reason or is it just that it's presumed that it operates on both sides, you know, the violence?

S: Yes it applies *pari passu* to the, what would be the corresponding situation, to the woman who breaks up another woman's domestic life by committing adultery with that woman's husband. Of course in ancient India woman was regarded as being not very responsible. She was, well she still is to a great extent, looked after carefully, protected, shielded, so that if anything went wrong in this particular respect it would be as a result of the initiative taken by some man rather than as the initiative taken by some woman. But certainly of course the same thing applies to women. One does know that there are women who deliberately, almost out of mischief, set about breaking up some other woman's marriage and that would certainly bring about a breach of the third precept.

There is an interesting point here about what is the definition of wife. There are I believe there are at least a dozen different kinds of wife enumerated in the Pali scriptures. There is for instance the wife of a night. If you have contracted or agreed to spend the night with a particular woman and some other man interferes or brings about a breach of that relationship, even though it is for one night, he is also guilty of breaking the third precept in the sense that he commits adultery, though it is less serious than if there was a lifelong relationship. So one might say that to seduce somebody's girlfriend, even quite casual girlfriend is also a breach of the third precept though not such a serious one as if one seduced somebody's lawful wedded wife. You're interfering in other people's relationships. I'm using the word relationship here in a quite neutral sense. We're just making things more difficult and complicated. They're difficult enough as they are usually without third parties wandering in, even with the best of intentions. [Laughter] We know that matrimony is so heavy a burden that takes at least three people to carry it but [Laughter] that's another matter.

_____ : What-are the other kinds of wife then?

S: I'm sorry I didn't study this particular passage with any great attention [Laughter] but for instance there is the wife who is a concubine, there is the wife who is a servant girl in one's own house, there is the wife by purchase. Then also there is the wife by full legal marriage. I can look it up for you if you are especially interested.

_____ : [unclear]

S: I'll have to look that up. I haven't paid great attention to this matter. Perhaps I should have done. But some texts enumerate twenty different kinds of wife. But perhaps the word wife here is not quite correct. In Indian language it's a bit ambiguous. They use the same word for wife and for woman.

It's just like in French, ma femme is my wife and my woman both. Itti in Pali or Stri(?) in Sanskrit, if you say

it means my woman and it also means my wife.

So it's the twelve kinds of women or twelve kinds of wives, wife and woman are virtually interchangeable. A woman's function being traditionally regarded as to be a wife.

But the principal here is that you do not wantonly break up or just disrupt a relationship between two other people. In this case of course a sexual relationship.

Any other points?

Gerry Corr: Just one last question. At the centre, it's to do with the description of the Mettā Bhāvana practice. Two points came out of your description of it and [] description of Siddhiratna and there's been creeping in one or two small changes. The principal one was in the second stage, the person instead of saying 'of the same sex' saying 'someone who you don't feel sexually attracted to'.

S: Ah. That isn't sufficiently clear. It should be, if one is taking a class, if one is actually teaching the Mettā bhavana one should say that one should reflect, or one should think of someone of around the same age, someone who is living and not dead and someone of the same sex and explain then why that is. Someone may pop up and say 'well what about homosexuals' well you'll deal with that in whatever way you can. Then you may say when it comes to that time 'well think of someone of whom you are quite fond but with regard to whom you don't have an actual sexual feeling or with whom you don't have a sexual relationship. But initially you should explain in this way quite carefully.

There was an incident quite recently of that not being explained at a particular centre and serious confusion arising. Someone came to see me and said that he had learned Mettā Bhāvana at a certain centre and held only become aware later that he'd been, he said incorrectly, but perhaps incompletely taught. Because he was not told this, that one should place in the second stage someone of the same sex. He'd understood, well he'd been told that one should simply think of a near and dear friend and he said that he happened to have quite a number of near and dear women friends and used to think of one of them. He wasn't able to make any progress with the Mettā Bhāvana because sexual thoughts kept coming up and he practised for several weeks in this way before coming on another course somewhere else other than the actual centre and he discovered that there was this additional instruction that the near and dear friend should be of the same sex and he was quite, almost upset by that. Feeling that he'd almost been misled and that was what was wrong with his practice. And he put it right and he started getting on quite well with the Mettā Bhāvana. So this point needs to be made.

_____ : Shouldn't this point be included in the third and fourth stages as well?

S: The tradition does not say this with regard to the third and fourth stages. No doubt for obvious reasons. If a person is neutral well you don't have any feeling towards them at all either sexual or non-sexual.

So you could think of someone of the opposite sex in that second stage. If of course you found that you were in fact developing erotic feelings and not mettā, well you'd just have to drop them and concentrate on someone of the same sex and similarly in stage four. But it is significant that towards

the end of stage five one does direct one's mettā towards all living beings and one says 'all men and all women' because by the time one has reached that point, at least as regards one's experience at that particular time one should be able to feel genuine mettā towards people equally. At least during the meditation practice itself.

_____ : That makes you think about the whole point about how much one should follow the tradition.

S: I think here that it is quite important. The tradition does work here. I suspect, I haven't had a chance to discuss the matter, I suspect that where people don't make that point - that you should concentrate in the second stage of the mettā on someone of your own sex not of the opposite sex - one they are afraid perhaps of offending against these pseudo-egalitarian ideas that are around these days that you shouldn't make any distinction between men and women, or there may be almost an unconscious fear of homosexuality so they don't like to say 'well develop mettā towards someone of your own sex not someone of the opposite sex. But I think we should stick to what tradition says here and if other questions arise and someone says 'well I'm attracted to people of the same sex' well one can deal with that when it arises and simply say 'well think of a friend towards whom one doesn't have those sort of feelings'.

In the very early days someone, some clever person perhaps, said well what about bisexual people, 'well you'll just have to do it separately. [Laughter] If you're sexually attracted to everybody well you'll just have to try to find someone that you're not sexually attracted to, if there is anybody. Some people claim they're even sexually attracted by cabbages [laughter] In that case I suggest you take up the practice of the ten stages of decomposition [laughter] That's clearly called for in your case.

_____ : Are you being serious?

S: Well what else can they do? If everything is sexually stimulating, of course if they say 'well unfortunately I happen to be necrophilic' [laughter] then ask them to offer up prayers for a better rebirth! [Laughter]

Devamitra: Bhante, you say that it's not traditional to maintain someone of the same sex in the third and fourth stage but I'm under the impression from Tony's investigation of the Vissuddhi Magga that that is specified.

S: I'll check that out, I personally think that it does not matter.

And certainly at the end it does say, all men and all women, so at some point one needs to make the transition from confining ones mettā to one sex to extending it to both sexes. But just where one makes that transition would perhaps depend on your personal temperament, degree of inflammability etc. For instance if you think in the second stage of someone of the opposite sex, as your neutral person well you could make sure perhaps that no sexual feelings arise by thinking of some very elderly woman. Do you see what I mean? Then one would feel more like a son, one would see her as a mother figure.

_____ : Would that not be desirable too?

S: Yes, one could do that because mother is not necessarily a dirty word, so to speak, so you could see someone as like a mother in a quite positive kind of way.

Bernie Tisch: But I thought in the second stage that is not desirable. I may have been misled but in this stage ...

S: Sorry, third stage. I meant third stage, the neutral person. If you are thinking of a neutral person and you think it would be all right to think of someone of the opposite sex, well take the precaution that you at least think of someone who's much older in that stage. Do you see what I mean?

Bernie Tisch: That goes against what you are doing in the second stage because you don't take someone who's older than you in the second stage because of that reason.

S: Yes, but because you are trying to develop the mettā for a friend and a friend is a sort of equal person but in the case of the neutral person what you are trying to overcome is that feeling of neutrality and absence of emotion altogether. So you can overcome that by thinking of an older person it doesn't have to be someone of around the same age in that particular stage.

So was that the last question? All right then.

[End of session Next Session]

S: where the questions come from so to speak.

Surata: We were talking about samatha and vipassana and the fact that it does seem that if you are purely samatha practices you would take that almost to its limit you begin to lose, almost naturally, the vipassana. So I posed a question about Hindu people who are engaged on purely samatha practices whether it wasn't possible for them to slip into vipassana and even ultimate reality.

S: I think it is possible in principle providing there is not any inhibiting micchaditthi which is strongly held.

Surata: So is there any sort of vipassana tradition whatsoever in Hinduism.

S: I would say not officially. Not, as it were, codified. The codifications all seem to be of micchaditthis. But and it's quite a big but here, there's quite an interesting experience that Kevala related to me after his tour of Northern India. Kevala wasn't very much impressed by Hinduism in India but he said when he was in Gorakhpur he went to a Hindu temple and he found a completely different atmosphere there. It seemed, I gather from his description, more like a Buddhist temple not the usual Hindu atmosphere at all. So he felt as a result of that, that he had to modify his impressions or views about Hinduism. So he described the temple to me but it was clear that it was a Naste(?) temple. Technically they are Hindus but actually they are semi-Buddhists. They continue the sort of continuators of the tradition of the semi-Hindu, semi-Buddhist medieval tantric yogins who don't have the orthodox Hindu ideas about caste and god and so on and who, presumably, could flip from samatha to vipassana much more easily as a result of natural spiritual progression than could the orthodox Hindus who cling perhaps to micchaditthis. So even if they do have a quite strong and clear samatha type experience the micchaditthi prevents them going any further.

We find that sort of thing happening in the case of Christian mystics in the West. You can read accounts of the life of Christian mystics and it sometimes happens that they reach a certain stage in their mystical life and mystical experience when they become afraid that they are departing from

orthodoxy and intellectually speaking they genuinely believe in orthodoxy, they're afraid of heresy. They start thinking then that certain intuitions that come to them may be temptations coming from the devil tempting them to doubt the true faith and great conflict is set up in them in this way. And it's well known that some mystics on the basis of their mystical experience start making statements which seem to have a sort of heretical or not very fully orthodox tinge and they have been taken task by certain persons appointed by the church for that purpose. And sometimes subject even to correction - I mean the famous St John of the Cross in Spain was incarcerated for a number of years because he put doctrinal orthodoxy in question.

So in answer to your question, yes I am quite sure that in the case of some Hindus as a natural result of their spiritual progression they do manage to sort of pass from samatha to vipassana provided there is not that inhibiting micchaditthi present.

Sometimes of course even if a micchaditthi is present you can see through it, you can see that it is a micchaditthi. But if it is strongly reinforced by your environment, your teachers etc., you may not be able to see through it or at the very least doubt and conflict may be set up. But inasmuch as, from the Mahayana point of view, the Buddha nature is receptive in all human beings, one cannot refuse to recognise the possibility of anybody, at anytime, even in the most unfavourable conditions, being able to pass from samatha to vipassana. No doubt the Buddhist environment is the most favourable and Buddhist teachings are the most helpful, but in the last analysis the nature of the human spirit is such that they can be dispensed with, in the case of a very exceptional person.

_____ : [unclear question about stigmata]

S: Some Christian mystics experience stigmata. Some non-Christian non-mystics experience stigmata, some non-Christian mystics experience stigmata. Stigmata is a comparatively well known pathological phenomenon. I believe that in the Catholic church itself there are about 136 attested cases of stigmata, not all of which are recognised by the church as indicating sanctity - the church itself must decide that some mystics receive stigmata as completely pathological or psychological. I think they simply illustrate the extraordinary influence that the mind has over the body. What is passing in the mind can be reflected in the body, can be, as it were, echoed in the body and in the case of some Christian mystics who occupy themselves in prayer and meditation with the crucifixion and identify themselves emotionally with Christ it isn't surprising really that some of the symptoms, so to speak, of the crucifixion do appear. We don't do that in Buddhism. We do other things - we concentrate on other qualities and other aspects of the Buddha nature so that those aspects need to be developed.

There are many strange stories of bodily changes taking place as a result of mental and spiritual experience. For instance another kind of example, a more ordinary example. It does sometimes happen that a woman very much wants to have a child and she convinces herself that she's pregnant and she starts swelling up but she's not pregnant it is all induced by sort of auto hypnosis. So there's no doubt that some Christian mystics experience stigmata but if one is not a Christian one doesn't attach any extraordinary significance to that - that they are especially blessed by Christ or especially holy - no - the significance seems to be mainly psychological and the experience just seems to indicate that mind really does have a tremendous influence over the body. After all the body is sort of crystallised mind according to the law of karma and rebirth [mana dhamma] so the Dhammapada says, the mind is the first of things. You have a mind first. It's a certain phase of consciousness and then you have a body corresponding to that. So it isn't anything surprising that in this life itself mind should be able to modify body, even in these quite extraordinary ways. Some

Christian mystics have wounds in their side. But Buddhists of course would consider that this sort of preoccupation almost with death and crucifixion and wounds and bleeding is not altogether healthy. And why not instead try to reproduce the wrathful smile, if you meditated upon Padmasambhava sufficiently or identified yourself sufficiently with him you might acquire in the end at least a sort of reflection of a wrathful smile which is much better than wounds, bleeding wounds in the hands and feet.

_____ : We were discussing the term 'spiritual evolution of the individual' and we thought that the terms 'growth and development' were not very satisfactory because neither of them give any hint of the other regarding aspect. We wondered if you agreed and if you can suggest any better terms.

S: I do agree but I can't suggest any better terms though. Though I did some years ago when I was in India attempt to introduce the term 'normative'. I used it in a few articles but it didn't catch on because some translations from pali texts of the school so to speak of Mrs Rhys Davies translate 'dhamma' by 'norm'. You must have come across this in books like 'some sayings of the Buddha', norm for dhamma. So I thought well if you can translate dhamma as norm you can also make it an adjective so instead of saying dharmas well you couldn't say norm but I thought you could say normative, that is to say conforming to a norm, expressive of a norm, or manifesting a norm, or norm oriented. So normative would suggest, though it doesn't bring out growth and development perhaps quite so strongly. But I don't know how people feel about 'normative', do you feel that you're leading a normative life?

But yes that is a point. I think we really do need to balance this emphasis so to speak the subjective type of things - on growth and development of the individual - by some sort of reference, some sort of emphasis on the other regarding aspects of Buddhist life. You do take reality into consideration. That your preoccupation with your own spiritual development isn't just solipsistic. Subhuti will explain that point to you. []

But I mean, in the case of the Mahayana that double emphasis or that double orientation is very well summed up in the bodhisattva vow and perhaps we'd better start thinking more in those sort of terms. What is the bodhisattva vow, what does the bodhisattva vow? The bodhisattva vows to gain supreme Enlightenment, that is to say to gain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. So in the first part of the vow that I vow to gain supreme Enlightenment, I vow to gain Buddhahood, that is as it were the subjective vow. Anything with a certain limited and relative point of view that's the subjective vow, because Enlightenment represents growth and development carried to the nth degree, carried right up into and including the transcendental level. And the for the sake of all living beings brings into that the objective element, the world and the living beings who make up the world. The purpose of your spiritual development is not just for the sake of your spiritual development, it is for the sake of other beings, so there is that other orientation, that other regarding reference there. So perhaps we'd better start thinking - not trying to coin some new psychological [] necessarily, but fall back on the traditional things. Maybe some of the early Mahayana sutras felt that the arahant ideal or what the arahant ideal had become by that time was more what we would call just a matter of individual growth and development, that is what the arahant in a sense seems to be concerned with - his own individual growth and development. But the Mahayana introduced, or reintroduced or re-emphasised this emphasis on other people, on the other, the object. So one has the ideal of the highest conceivable spiritual development for the sake of all living beings. So I think there's a double reference here a double emphasis.

So perhaps we'd better start thinking more in terms of the bodhisattva ideal in order to keep view of

this double emphasis.

_____ : Do you think that as a person was completely self-orientated that this rules out the other regarding....

S: I don't think you can be completely self-oriented.

I think that's only a theoretical possibility because even if you want to think exclusively in terms of your own spiritual development, as the arahant allegedly does, or the would be arahant allegedly does, well you have to observe, for instance, the ethical precepts so each one of those includes some reference to the other even though you are observing them predominantly for your own sake, for the sake of your own growth and development. You cannot ever completely eliminate the object any more than you can ever completely eliminate the subject though you can try you won't succeed. In the end you do have to come back to a balanced middle position where you give equal weight to the subject and object, self and others and in the end see them as not contradictory, not mutually exclusive. Until you have integrated the one with the other as the Mahayana tries to do at the highest conceivable level.

Robin Cooper: We have another question, this one's about meditation.

We came across the passage, or I came across the passage in a 'Mitrata' written by Kamalasila where he was discussing discursive thought arising in meditation, and he said that at a certain stage it is possible for these discursive thoughts to have nothing to do with the hindrances. Could you go into that? How these thought arise if there are thoughts that are discursive thoughts, not on the subject of meditation, but that have nothing to do with any of the hindrances.

S: Well you could be reflecting on the dharma itself.

You could be reflecting on impermanence, for instance, or on death. That would be discursive mental activity from the standpoint of meditation or from the standpoint of samatha but that is the way in which vipassana arises or one of the ways in which vipassana arises.

Robin Cooper: I know but the example that he gives are thought popping into one's mind, of 'I must remember to do something.' Nothing to do with the meditation practice. A thought that is definitely irrelevant to the meditation but however it wouldn't according to the passage that I read it would have nothing to do with the hindrances. And basically you were just using the [and saying that it wouldn't have anything to do with the hindrances.

S: Well what are the hindrances? Let's just enumerate them.

Sloth and torpor

Restlessness and anxiety

Ill Will

Doubt

Desire for sensuous experience

I would say that even though the thought that sort of floats into the mind, the discursive thought just floats in at that moment does not seem to be very obviously or crudely connected with one or another of the five hindrances, I would say that it would be subtly connected I'm trying to think of a concrete example. For instance, you might think of an appointment that you have next week. Well there's no craving there, there's no hatred, maybe there's no sloth and torpor, restlessness or anything like that but that appointment sort of quietly floats in - but why does it float in? It suggests that there is a

slight, perhaps anxiety that you might forget that appointment or you might not make it or it might not go quite right. It could be that very slight, subtle anxiety but that would be a subtle form of a hindrance. Because hindrances can be not only crude they can be very subtle too and no doubt as you get deeper into meditation various mental impressions are uncovered and everybody experiences this. When you have got various things on your mind or in your mind, things you've got to do, things you've got to remember, things you've got to think about. Well as you get more deeply concentrated these things are uncovered. But I think, perhaps there's a risk of generalisation but I think they're always associated with some kind of hindrance, some sort of subtle hindrance.

For instance supposing you suddenly thought, supposing you were a father and you suddenly thought - 'I must remember next week I've got to take my son to the doctors'. So why would you have uncovered that particular thought, why would that thought be? Because of subtle attachment to the son, that subtle worry about him. Do you see what I mean, so this would be a subtle hindrance in a very subtle form. One couldn't claim that that discursive thought was hindrance free, that it was a pure thought without effective content.

The only sort of possibility might be from thoughts arising in connection with disturbances coming from outside. Supposing the wind suddenly started blowing and you had a discursive thought - 'it's going to be a windy night' well you might argue that that was hindrance free, but on the other hand why should you bother whether it's going to be a windy night or not. Even that thought, that reflection that it's going to be a windy night is effectively thinking to some extent, even though very slightly. So I think the most that could be said, though perhaps I need to think about it some more, but I think the most that could be said would be that you could have discursive thoughts arising which were not associated with any of the five hindrances in their cruder forms. But I think the question of whether they were not associated with quite subtle forms of the hindrances which of course are the most dangerous in the long run has to be left open.

Greg Harman: In the first dhyana all those discursive thoughts, when you contacted the first dhyana would be connected with the dharma in some way or another;

S: Yes. That is to say, in the case of those discursive thoughts which after a period, after a spell, of samatha you actively encourage so as to provide a basis for the development of Insight. Of course the human mind and our spiritual experience being such that it's not to say that even those sort of dharma connected, constructive, discursive thoughts are completely hindrance free, all that is said, the basic principle is that you do not get fully into the, even the first dhyana unless the five hindrances have subsided. But perhaps it should be made clear that the five hindrances are of various degrees of subtlety and grossness and that there are subtle hindrances even around your discursive thoughts with regard to the dharma itself. You may be thinking about impermanence, you may be thinking about developing insight quite genuinely, quite sincerely but at the same time there may be that subtle thought - 'well if I understand impermanence, if I develop insight well that'll be a definite attainment, a definite achievement on my part'. Do you see what I mean? That subtle hindrance of that sort may still be there in a very very subtle form.

But it isn't at all a cut and dried kind of business as one might think with reading the texts.

[End of side one side two]

But certainly there's no experience of the dhyanas unless the five hindrances in their cruder form are

eliminated from the consciousness mind itself.

_____ : You mean only in their cruder sense, are you saying in the first dhyana there could be hindrances in their subtler form?

S: No, I'm not saying that, not in the second dhyana per se. but I'm saying in effect that it's very very rarely that we experience the second dhyana as it is per se without any admixture or any hindrance, even in a subtle sense. I mean looking at the hindrances more comprehensively well if they are, as it were, cotinerminous and synonymous with ignorance cum craving themselves they're not fully eliminated until you have developed Insight. I mean when one says that the hindrances or the klesas are in abeyance in samatha states, what does one mean by 'in abeyance'? In a sense they are still present otherwise they would not be able, so to speak, to come back. They are latent but even their latency is a degree of actual existence.

Again beware of literal mindedness. This is one of the lessons we learnt last year in Tuscany. The literal mind is not a spiritual mind, literal mindedness is itself a hindrance.

Vessantara: A little bit of sorting out. We were talking about the god realms, and in Tuscany last year you gave a very positive interpretation of the god realms in the scale of evolution. Most people though seem to have a very different impression of the god realms. It seems that they're usually taught in Buddhist tradition, they're often talked of as a sort of evolutionary cul-de-sac. I think that I've even come across a bit in the lecture that you gave on this in common here. I mean is it just an erroneous impression or are there two different ways in which you can approach the god realms?

S: I think on the whole its a question of two different ways in which you can approach the god realms or what the god realms represent.

It's not a complete cul-de-sac because the non-returner is reborn in god realms sometimes, rather special kind of god realms of course, and progresses from there. So in that sense or to that extent some at least of the god realms or what appear to be god realms are part of the higher evolutionary process. But again perhaps we must beware of literal mindedness in distinguishing too sharply perhaps between the human and the god realm. There is a sort of intermingling of the human realm and the god realm and we mustn't forget that the god realms also correspond to samatha states so the god realms can be a cul-de-sac but so can samatha be a cul-de-sac. Maybe the image of the cul-de-sac is not quite right, because what is a cul-de-sac, it's a blind alley down which you cannot go any further. You have to retrace your steps, but that isn't really the case with the god realm. You can enjoy all the bliss and peace and tranquillity and content of the god realms but it isn't a question of withdrawing from that experience but of realising its limitations. It's simply the intensity of the god realm experience is such that it may be, in practice, very difficult for you to realise the limitations of that state.

For instance even in the course of ordinary human life if your enjoying something very very much, very intensely, it is very difficult for you to realise the limitations of that experience and really see that it is going to come to an end, and not become attached to it. So as a practical measure it may be that sometimes, depending on temperament, in order to be able to understand the limitations of a certain kind of positive mundane experience you have to withdraw from it a little because when you are totally absorbed in it, well you are just not able to see its limitations.

There is in a sense a practice, though here we go a bit beyond ordinary practice, to be able to be fully

absorbed in an intensely positive mundane experience but at the same time realise its limitations. That isn't easy. So the god realms are a cul-de-sac to the extent that the positive mundane experience is such, is of such a degree that practically speaking one is not able to realise the limitations of that kind of experience. You then have actually to withdraw from the experience either by natural progression with the experience itself changes conditions, or by being reborn in the human realm after experiencing birth in the god realm before you can see the limitations of that kind of experience. But it's not impossible if your spiritual motivation is strong that even when you are in the god realm enjoying positive blissful experiences you can still cultivate the insight, you can still see the limitations of that mundane experience however positive it may be. But it does depend on the strength of that motivation.

There are some people who the minute they begin to enjoy themselves just a little bit they forget all about the dharma. There are others who can recall the dharma and remember the dharma whatever they're doing, in the midst of experiences which perhaps for other people would be intensely distracting or absorbing. One of the objects, one might say of the Vajrayana certainly, is to enable one to experience the utmost intensity of mundane bliss at the same time that one experiences the fullest possible clarity of insight. The Vajrayana aims to bring these together which is by no means an easy task. One could say that Buddhism itself aims at bringing these together. So sometimes you have to withdraw from the bliss to experience the insight and sometimes you have to withdraw from the insight to experience the bliss. But eventually you achieve a sort of harmony between, but this is a very ticklish matter. [Laughter]

If your mind becomes overpowered by the bliss that is samsara, if your mind becomes overpowered by the insight that is nirvana in the one-sided Hinayanic sense as used as it is by the Mahayana. The bliss of course that is under consideration here is mainly meditative bliss.

_____ : We had a sort of follow up. We weren't quite clear, in fact we were very confused about the difference between the gods of the round and the gods of the path. Did that come into the ?

S: It doesn't but I'll make it clear, it doesn't really come in, not directly anyway. Everything comes in indirectly!

The Tibetans have the confusing practice of using the word 'lha' in a very general way. 'Lha' translates - god, 'lhasa' for instance is god earth, the place of the gods. But they also use 'lha' with regard to Buddhas and bodhisattvas, any object of worship is called a 'lha' so if one translates 'lha' as god you've got the gods of the round and what some translators call the deities of the path but one word 'lha' is translated both as god and as deity, to give expression to that double sense of 'lha'. So the gods of the round are the samsaric gods, the gods who occupy the kamaloka heavens, the rupaloka heavens and the arupaloka heavens but who are not on the transcendental path. The deities of the path are those 'gods', inverted commas, that embody the different stages of the path, that is to say mainly the great bodhisattvas and even the Buddhas. So gods of the round means the gods who are included in the Wheel of Life and the deities of the path are all those transcendental figures that stand on different stages, different rungs of the spiral.

But to make it a bit more confusing - deities of the path sometimes appear in the form of gods of the round. You sometimes find in Tibetan Buddhism that different prominent figures have got a Buddha form, a bodhisattva form, and a deva form. That is to say a Buddha form, an absolute form, a bodhisattva form as a sort of deity of the path, and a deva form as a god of the round because

bodhisattvas adopt these forms in order to contact people. That perhaps makes it a little more confusing.

You've got for instance the shinjay?, the god of the dead who is really the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Shinjay? the lord of the dead -

_____ : Is that the same a yama?

S: Yes its somewhat the same as yamaraja.

Because actually when we visualise a bodhisattva we visualise a bodhisattva according to the indo-Tibetan iconographic tradition and in that indo-Tibetan iconographic tradition a bodhisattva is represented as being like a deva isn't he? And a deva is represented as being like a prince but do bodhisattvas really look like devas, do devas really look like princes? Do you see what I mean? How do you differentiate visually between a deva and a bodhisattva? Those who have done visualisations should have considered these things. I mean has a bodhisattva simply a bigger tiara or more jewels or is there some other difference?

_____ : It's the lotus. The gods of the round don't sit on lotuses.

S: Some of them do, there are lotuses and lotuses. There are mundane lotuses and transcendental lotuses but both look like lotuses iconographically speaking. Lotus represents apparition or birth and in the higher god heavens of course birth is always apparitional birth so the gods of those realms sit upon lotuses, bodhisattvas sit upon lotuses, but not because they have come into existence by apparitional birth, here the lotus represents their spiritual, their transcendental birth, their freedom from the impurities of the round. But what is the difference between the lotus upon which the god sits and the lotus upon which the bodhisattva sits, does it look different, is it bigger, brighter? Do you see what I mean, how could you tell. How can you tell the difference between a deva and a bodhisattva if you saw one? If a deva was standing in front of you and a bodhisattva was standing in front of you dressed in identical jewels, both sixteen years of age and all the rest of it, how would you tell the difference? Could you tell the difference?

_____ : Not without insight.

S: Not without insight. It's the same as what the Diamond Sutra about the Chakravartiraja has all the marks of the Mahapurasa, so does the Buddha have all the marks of a Mahapurasa. Who can tell the difference? Not just anybody, in fact only by wisdom - so one can't go by appearances.

So a deity of the path may look like a god of the round but he isn't a god of the round and you know that or can experience that even only if you have a measure of insight. So you shouldn't think that just because you visualise what is in effect a god of the round that you are visualising a bodhisattva, something more is needed, some extra experience, some additional experience, to make it the experience of a bodhisattva. You can't see a bodhisattva the way that you see a god, you require a different sort of vision, a different sort of Imagination, capital I.

Gerry Corr: Is that maybe one of the dangers of Buddhist iconography being done in the west, that there's no level of insight in the person who's actually doing the painting?

S: But sometimes that happens even in Tibet, and it's obvious But yes one has seen some quite awful

examples of pseudo-iconography.

Bernie Tisch: Could you go as far as to say that one embodies the dharma and one doesn't, though they might look the same you can see.....

S: You could say that one represents the dharma but the other embodies the dharma.

Bernie Tisch: Would one be just like a mask and the other would be the real thing?

S: Right, yes. It is said that Mara himself can assume the form of a Buddha.

Bernie Tisch: But if you knew who the Buddha was really you'd be able to see that Mara was hollow, the Buddha wasn't in there.

S: Yes right. There are some strange stories about Mara appearing as the Buddha I won't go into them now.

Were all those questions from Subhuti's study group?

Devamitra: First of all Greg has a question about Stream Entrants.

Greg Harman: Bhante, the question's concerning the Stream Entrant and the fifth fetter of ill-will and it's got two parts.

The first part was I wasn't quite sure how ill-will would manifest in a Stream Entrant and whether that ill-will would manifest against obstacles to his further development or whether it could just manifest irrationally like anger usually just erupts.

S: Yes. It is ill-will. I think one has to understand what is meant by ill-will, it's more than anger. Ill-will involves the wish, and more than the wish, the actual effort to achieve the destruction, the elimination, the annihilation, of some object which is not agreeable to you. So when that sort of ill-will, when that sort of intention, that sort of activity is directed against another living being it's what we call ill-will. It's the extreme of non-acceptance of that other living being, the wish to eliminate him. It's not just that you are annoyed with him. But you just want to get rid of him. So inasmuch as ill-will is not fully eliminated by the path of Stream Entry a measure of subtle ill-will, yes, is present in the Stream Entrant, as ill will. That is to say it's not sublimated as a seeing through of michaditthis so as it were destruction of michaditthis, I mean that is highly positive it's not a fetter.

Of course in the case of the Stream Entrant he would not be capable of deliberately actually taking life, certainly not human life. But he might be careless about insect life, he may not bother and there may be in his mind just flashes of ill-will. It's not that he ever really acts upon the ill-will, it never becomes really settled into a sort of definite attitude towards somebody, but you know yourself you can sometimes feel just a little flash of ill-will, it doesn't lead to anything but it is there, even in connection with people you get on with quite well, something that they do or something that they may say may irritate you quite a lot so there's that flash of ill-will just for the instant you almost hate them. Do you see what I mean? So subtle flashes of ill-will of that nature are still present in the Stream Entrant but do not seriously affect his behaviour, will certainly not lead him to take human life. probably not even animal life but he might a bit unmindfully swat a fly or something of that sort.

According to the abhidhamma you can't swat a fly without a very small measure at least of very subtle dosha.

Devamitra: We have another question, Gerry wants to ask a question about Ananda.

Gerry Corr: Listening to your lecture it really put Ananda up in my estimation quite a lot. I'd just thought of him as a straight guy or fall guy for the Buddha but it seemed you were saying that there was a great friendship between the two of them. But I was just wondering, not that I wish to tie up on it, but if you could explore the point made in the Mahaparinibbana sutta that on three occasions the Buddha let it be known that he could hang around if Ananda was to ask him but he didn't ask him and consequently he said he was going to his parinirvana, and Ananda was censured by the fellows in the Sangha. Could you expand on that somewhat? because I think there was something in that?

S: That whole question is full of difficulties and full of obscurities. Perhaps we should start from two undisputed facts - that Ananda was very close to the Buddha for the last twenty years of the Buddha's life, and that also Ananda, I was going to say reading between the lines but not even reading between the lines, was quite unpopular with quite an influential section of the Sangha after the Buddha's death, after the Buddha's parinirvana. There's also the interesting fact that Ananda at the time of the parinirvana was only a Stream Entrant. I think probably that can't be fully explained except within the context of the Mahayana. It's almost as though Ananda wasn't interested in being an arahant, though tradition does represent him as becoming an arahant after the Buddha's death. It's almost as though Ananda represents a sort of proto-Mahayanic attitude.

One of the things that is said is that it was possible for Ananda to be with the Buddha and wait upon him and help him so much because he wasn't an arahant because had he been an arahant he would have been too detached to be able to look after the Buddha. But this does seem to reflect a very Hinayanistic attitude. So it's as though the Hinayana almost was saying 'well Ananda exhibited so much love and devotion and served the Buddha so faithfully, was such a good companion, well someone with that amount of love and devotion couldn't possibly have been enlightened' [Laughter] you see. But the Mahayana point of view is different. You could even say, though this is not so accepted that, accepting the Hinayana premises, that Ananda deliberately gave up the possibility of arahantship for himself during the Buddha's lifetime in order to be able to serve the Buddha. So in a way this suggests an even loftier conception of enlightenment than the Hinayanists, lets say, did have.

There's also this whole question about the finality of Arahantship, the finality of the enlightenment experience. It's clear that Ananda as a Stream Entrant as all agree he was at least, was on the spiral path, was on the transcendental path, which is all that really matters. So perhaps it does even reflect an earlier stage of tradition when the emphasis was very much on stream entry not so much on enlightenment as a sort of fixed point that you achieve after a certain time. Ananda was well known for his kindness, it was he who was responsible for women being admitted, I won't say to the Sangha, but being allowed to go forth and form a Sangha. He was blamed for that after the Buddha's death, he was blamed for all sorts of things and he was made to undergo penances almost.

There's an interesting book called 'Buddhism, a mystery religion?' where the figure of Ananda is taken as the sort of archetypal figure, archetypal initiatory figure, that is to say the archetypal initiate undergoing trials at the hands of members of the spiritual community before being finally accepted. That is one point of view. It seems to me that there were people around after the Buddha's parinirvana who didn't understand Ananda, didn't appreciate him. He certainly wasn't popular with a

lot of the Theras, the older monks. He had a great following, he was very very popular with a lot of other people but maybe less influential people.

Bernie Tisch: Well are you getting at that this might have been true, that Ananda could have kept the Buddha here indefinitely but it's all Ananda's fault.

S: To come back to that I am suggesting that the story, the legend, and we mustn't forget that the Mahaparinibbana Sutta is a mosaic of material of various dates, its a compilation, we can't regard it naively as just one continuous work belonging to the same date and faithfully reflecting everything that happened. There are various versions of it anyway surviving in different languages, so it is possible that the idea got around that 'well the Buddha could have lived, longer, well why didn't he live longer? Well nobody asked him to. Well who was always around the Buddha, who might be expected to ask the Buddha to live longer? Well only Ananda so maybe Ananda didn't ask him to live longer and that's why he didn't. It must have been Ananda's fault. So why did Ananda not ask him, well he must have been quite stupid.[Laughter] There must have been many occasions on which the Buddha and Ananda were together and the Buddha might even have given Ananda a hint and Ananda didn't take it' - in this way the legend grew you see. This is the way that legends grow. And bearing in mind the general unpopularity of Ananda in certain quarters.

But it does seem to me that Ananda's life exemplifies much more, to my way of thinking, a Mahayana lets say, attitude to Buddhism rather than a Hinayana attitude to Buddhism. It's as though Ananda, by virtue of his closeness to the Buddha, did see more deeply into the dharma. He wasn't a systematic teacher like Sariputra but he seems, judging by his life, to have had perhaps a deeper insight into Buddhism than some of the others who even at that stage had begun to see the ultimate spiritual ideal in a rather narrow terms, in terms of mainly self development. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Devamitra: There was one more question from our group but it didn't arise out of the text. Chris wanted to ask about gnosticism.

Chris Harper: In a way you've answered it already because the first question was related to other spiritual groups and to what degree of higher states of consciousness they might have attained. So this was a question about gnosticism. What you thought about Christian gnosticism if you know much about it and if you have any thoughts about it?

S: Well Christian gnosticism, well the term Christian gnosticism covers a wide variety of current beliefs, practices, traditions. Some of these early Christian gnostics, semi Christian gnostics, or Christian semi-gnostic groups were sort of ascetic. Others were very far from being ascetic and so on. It's difficult to generalise but they're certainly very interesting, some of them. They certainly give a very different picture of the personality of Christ whoever he was, the teaching of Christ again whoever he was, than do any of the orthodox churches. So the material that we have or the material that is being rediscovered about the gnostics in general and Christian gnostics in particular, is quite subversive so far as the church is concerned. It gives a very different picture of the origins of Christianity. For instance there is one gnostic work I remember where some of the disciples have a vision of Christ during his lifetime he sort of transfigured much as he is in the gospels. There is the account of the transfiguration before the crucifixion and the three disciples present and the figures of Moses and, who else is it?

_____: Elias.

S: Elias up there with Christ when he is transfigured on the mount. Well there is a sort of gnostic version of this. In this particular version, there are probably several, the disciples watching this transfigured Christ see something emerging from his side, a shining figure. And this figure is a female figure, and this figure emerges from his side and separates from him and Christ then has sexual intercourse with her and they are horrified and fall down flat on their faces and don't know what to make of it. [Laughter] So this is something quite different, isn't it, but this is in one of the gnostic texts. So you can imagine this sort of thing being read aloud in churches on Sunday mornings [Laughter] I mean what effect would it have on the church, what does it mean?

[break in tape until] a female Buddha in the yab-yum position. Perhaps the symbolism is of the same kind. You manifest different aspects of your own being including your own anima and you unite with them, you integrate them all with yourself.

Vessantara: My group has four questions. They're all sort of spin offs really rather than relating directly to the main text. Firstly Suvajra has one about karma.

Suvajra: This is one I've been struggling with for quite a few days now since we discussed this. It follows out of the question of eating food and something that Vessantara said. He said that it is quite amazing to think that this human body, is a result of this act of flesh, is a result of what you have eaten, is a result of your karma. So I questioned well

S: Is a result of your..?

Suvajra: Karma.

S: K.A.R.M.A. yes.

Suvajra: So I was questioning well is your body, your actual flesh body, the fact that it is six feet long, is that as a result of karma? And that led us on to a couple of other areas. Well to what extent is instinct karma and to what extent is animal action karmic? Can animals have karma? I'm not taking it in too fixed a sense but where does one begin to.....

S: Yes. I remember having a discussion on this sort of topic with a friend of mine in Calcutta years ago. He was a bhikkhu, a Buddhist monk from Ceylon, from Sri Lanka. And he was also a science student, so there were various occasions on which his scientific studies raised questions to which Buddhist tradition as he had studied it in Sri Lanka had no answer. Anyway we used to have some quite interesting discussions, in fact there were several of us who used to have quite interesting discussions down in Calcutta at that time. This was the very early 50's. One day he put this question to me, let me see if I can remember exactly how he put it. His question was does an amoeba have karma? Does an amoeba have karma, or does an amoeba create karma? So I put the counter question does an amoeba have chitta? So the point is really there. Chitta meaning individualised consciousness. To the extent that there is individualised consciousness there is karma. To the extent that there is self-consciousness there is karma, to the extent that there is responsibility there is karma. So animals do not have consciousness, do not have individualised consciousness, self-consciousness, do not have responsibility or a sense of responsibility in the same way that human beings have, therefore animals do not have karma. That answers your question partially.

But what about the human body itself? According to Buddhist tradition the human body itself is the

result of karma. The fact that you are born with a human body means that you have set up certain conditions, you've set up a certain state of consciousness which persists, which continues. You've set up a particular form of consciousness to which the human bodily form is appropriate and therefore you are born as a human being and not as a god and not as an animal. To what extent instincts are bound up with that human body, that particular kind of bodily form, is a very difficult question. The question is raised in traditional Buddhism, is raised in the Pali Canon, as to whether the life principle as it is called and the body are identical or whether they are different. And the Buddha maintains that it is inappropriate to say either that they are the same or different or both or neither. So it's much the same, I think, with the instincts. It's very difficult to think of the instincts separate from the body. It's difficult to think of them as the same as the body. Or both. Or neither. So where does that leave one?

Suvajra: It still leaves me with the question of are instincts....

S: But what are instincts? After all this doesn't correspond to any abhidharma term and I understand, I gather, that modern psychologists are quite suspicious of the term itself, regard it as a sort of illegitimate category. What does one mean by instincts? Can you give a specific example? Is hunger an instinct? What is an instinct? Is it a scientific term? What are we talking about when we talk about instincts?

There are old books on psychology which try to enumerate instincts, how many instincts there are, a bit like the abhidharma, but there was quite a lot of disagreement on this. I don't think that nowadays one learns about instincts when one studies psychology. Anyone studied psychology recently at university, can anyone say? It used to be thought that there was an instinct of self protection, that there was a reproductive instinct and various others. Also that there was a group instinct. But I think this is not generally accepted, or at least it's not accepted as a useful way of looking at things, these instincts.

Suvajra: Before you have individualised consciousness, perhaps when you are quite young, to what extent is eating a volition?

S: Well the process of eating has got different levels. For instance, when your stomach is empty it contracts and that gives rise to the sensation of hunger and then you start thinking in terms of food, and then you start desiring food and there of course the emotional element comes in, and then you start looking for food and there the volitional comes in. So there are these different stages in the process occurring, so to speak, on different levels. Starting with powerful contractions of the stomach and ending up with you tucking into a good meal. So the fact that the stomach muscles contract in a certain way, that the stomach contracts in a certain way, is because the stomach is so built. It is part of the human body which is built in a certain way. One doesn't necessarily see where instincts come in, is there an instinct that one is fulfilling when one eats? Is it necessary to bring in that as a principle of explanation? The body is built in such a way that that is how it functions.

Robin Cooper: Presumably an instinct at least to quote the old definitions, would be something like a pattern of behaviour that is genetically determined and it seems reasonable that such things could exist.

S: So perhaps it is better and clearer to speak of a pattern of behaviour that is genetically determined rather than instincts in a sort of quasi-mystical sort of sense.

But what are genes karmically speaking? There seems to be quite a bit of work to be done in this particular area and perhaps one shouldn't rush to any premature conclusions. But how does it arise practically? I mean all these questions ought to arise for some practical reason. They shouldn't be say of purely theoretical interest.

Suvajra: It wasn't purely theoretical.

S: So can you give an example of a practical question which needs to be explained, or a practical question which needs to be resolved by clarification of these particular theoretical issues?

Suvajra: Well it sort of had implications in practical areas because if you said that certain functions were instinctual, which you don't seem to have said, then that would indicate that you had to look very strongly at certain patterns of behaviour that go on in the lower evolution.

S: Well if one uses the term instincts you could use it very broadly for all those drives which we inherit, so to speak, from the process of the lower evolution because when you pass, so to speak, from the lower evolution to the higher evolution you don't make a sort of jump leaving behind the lower evolution completely. There's not a complete break. What happens is just a little bit of you passes that line dividing the lower evolution from the higher evolution. So all your energies, all your drives which you inherit from the lower evolution have to be redirected, their energies have to be fed into the spiral rather than into another turn of the wheel, another turn of the round.

But even if instincts are a sort of natural extension of the body or of bodily functions they are a manifestation of karma inasmuch as that body itself is a manifestation of karma. And you have those instincts now because you had them in the past, and you provided yourself under the law of karma, with the appropriate means of giving expression to them. But which came first it would be difficult to say, the chicken or the egg.

I mean sometimes the question arises, staying with the subject of food and eating in a practical way, in this way. Well is hunger and is the enjoyment of food something which is to be eliminated? Some time ago one of my friends maintained that, this was some years ago, maintained that if you were a bit spiritually developed, especially if you practised meditation, all food would taste alike to you.

[End of tape two tape three]

All food would actually, literally taste alike and you would not have therefore any preferences because you would have gone beyond that particular instinct. So what do you think of that, would you agree with that statement, if not why not?

_____ : Because there's discrimination amongst the senses.

S: Discrimination among tastes can be a form of awareness. That you are aware of the subtle differences between tastes and you can enjoy your food. Here we come back to this question of enjoyment, the pleasure principle so to speak. But that being consistent with the actual experience of insight provided you don't become absorbed in that pleasurable experience.

So the practical point here is that in the course of your spiritual life it need not be one of your objects to eliminate the enjoyment of food. The enjoyment of food for its own sake or for neurotic reasons, yes, that should be eliminated, but simply the enjoyment of food and the ability to discriminate

between different tastes and different flavours is not incompatible with the leading of a spiritual life.

Suvajra: So eating and the enjoyment of food doesn't create karma vipakas, but the attachments have to go.

S: Yes.

Of course it's very easy to say that. It's very easy to convince oneself that one isn't attached, one has to watch that very much too. But nonetheless it remains true that, yes, one can enjoy one's food, one can distinguish between tastes and flavours without being attached, without doing that or being motivated to do that for neurotic, compulsive reasons. So a spiritually minded person should enjoy his food, this is to put it in the simplest terms. And this is what that friend was really arguing about. He was saying that a spiritual person couldn't enjoy his food whereas I think he can. But if there is only a dry crust forthcoming he can enjoy that just as much, that's the test.

Prasannasiddhi: What about things like Milarepa who apparently reduced quite considerably his intake?

S: But why did he reduce?

Prasannasiddhi: To be able to meditate.

S: Yes. To be able to meditate, just to simplify his life. Not that he had anything against eating as such but he just didn't want to waste time gathering food, cooking, even eating. He wanted to concentrate on his meditation. One might even say, I mean we're told that Milarepa lived on nettle soup, but one might even say that Milarepa thoroughly enjoyed his nettle soup. That would not have been incompatible with his blissful meditative state. He enjoyed his nettle soup as much as anybody could enjoy any food.

Prasannasiddhi: But didn't he risk his body becoming.... well dying ...

S: Well yes, well he fell down in a state of collapse more than once, so what are you saying that Milarepa shouldn't have gone to extremes in that way?

Prasannasiddhi: Well I was just wondering is this way a necessary prerequisite of meditation.

S: So this raises the question of the place of extremism in spiritual life really doesn't it. Because we think of Buddhism as a middle way but sometimes we seem to understand the middle way as something a bit watered down, its a bit half of this and half of that and be careful, don't go to extremes, no don't take any risks. But the middle way is not really like that at all, you could say the middle way is a sort of razor's edge and you can very easily slip off a razor's edge. I think Milarepa is a very good example of extremism in the spiritual life in a very positive sense. Yes, common sense would say that Milarepa was quite foolish, he ran risks with his health but sometimes you have to do this because the obstacles you have to overcome are very powerful obstacles and sometimes they only yield to drastic treatment. Sometimes you do have to take, as it were, risks. Not spiritual risks, risks with your health, risks with your life, even risks with your sanity, or just not get any further. Don't take risks for the sake of taking risks but if you find you can't get any further in your spiritual life without taking risks, without going to extremes then you have to go to extremes. Other people may find that quite difficult to understand.

You may feel a profound spiritual compulsion say, not to speak for ten years. 'Well that's just going to extremes because a good Buddhist ought to follow the middle path and not speak too much, not speak too little, speak about the dharma, speak what is useful, most of the time just remain quiet, don't gossip, don't indulge in chit-chat, bible-babble and all the rest of it.' But on the other hand, nonetheless, sometimes you may feel that you just have to go to extremes that is what your spiritual life is. Maybe there is an existing tremendous imbalance in your whole life and to correct that you need to go to the other extreme for some time, that may happen. So that sort of spiritual extremism such as Milarepa exemplifies, cannot be entirely ruled out by any means.

Of course you can go to extremes in a wrong, silly, foolish way and you subsequently recognise that it was just stupid and you have just wasted your time but nonetheless sometimes it may happen in a highly positive way you may need to go to extremes, or seem to go to extremes. It may seem like that only to the onlooker who doesn't understand your spiritual constitution or what you are doing, or what you have to do. I mean if for instance you feel that you are much too attached to the world, you're much too fond of the good things of life, you're much too fond of parties and all that sort of thing, well you may decide the best thing for you is to go away to an island in the Outer Hebrides and live there alone like a hermit for a few years to counteract your very strong worldly tendencies. You wouldn't really be going to extremes in that case you would be supplying a necessary corrective. Some people even think, people outside the FWBO, that living in a men's community is really going to extremes, being a vegetarian is really going to extremes, meditating several hours a day is really going to extremes.

I was told when I first came back to England, by a very eminent authority, that I shouldn't take people for meditation for more than five minutes at a time because one shouldn't go to extremes and more than five minutes of meditation at a time might be dangerous. Perhaps it was for the sort of people who were coming along in those days [Laughter] but I'm sure there are people in the Buddhist movement nowadays who if they heard that people in the FWBO sometimes meditated for seven or eight hours a day on retreat may shrug their shoulders and laugh and say 'Oh well these young people are a bit over enthusiastic, always going to extremes.'

I was regarded as going to extremes during my wandering days because I didn't wear shoes, I didn't carry money and so on and so forth. Some bhikkhus I met thought that very much going to extremes but to me it just seemed necessary. I think someone who goes to extremes doesn't think in terms of going to extremes but just of doing the right and natural and necessary thing. I don't think that Milarepa had any consciousness that he was going to extremes. I'm sure that he felt that he was just doing the right thing that he needed to do.

Suvajra: This one arose because I'd heard Vessantara saying something that I'd never heard before. He mentioned the concept of something called 'intelligible concept'.

S: Intelligible concept?

Suvajra: And he's given a brief outline of what he was saying. [Laughter]

S: I don't remember about that at all. You'll have to play me back the tape.

Suvajra: It seems to be something like - when you develop insight, in order to fix it inside yourself, in order that you can maintain the sort of experience of what's going on you have to have something

called intelligible concept. Can you say something about this?

S: It's a tautological expression really because a concept is intelligible. It might have been a communicable concept or an illuminated concept.

Vessantara: It's an intelligible concept, You used it in three phrases in Tuscany.

S: What I'm thinking of is this. That when one has an insight experience it's something which is totally different, it's something which is totally other to one's ordinary experience. You can't reduce it to terms of your ordinary experience. So in a way, at least to begin with, a sort of gap opens between your ordinary experience and your insight experience and the question therefore arises, how are you to bridge that gap? When you're not actually having the insight, well how are you even to remember anything about it? Because it can happen that you have a sort of spiritual experience or insight experience let us say, but when it is over, when it is passed and sometimes it does pass, you can remember that you had an experience, even an insight experience, but you can't remember the nature of that experience, the nature of that insight, the content. Do you see what I mean? It's as though there's an absolute gap, a gulf, a hiatus, between your experience then and your experience now. Just as sometimes there is in the case of dreams when we wake up we can feel the dream slipping away from us, we can even see it slipping away from us, we have no means of retaining it. So there's a gap.

So one of the things that one has to do is to try when one is hovering on the fringes almost, of the insight experience is to try to fix it in some way with some intelligible concept which one can carry over then into the world of ordinary consciousness and use to remind one of the nature of that insight experience. To recreate even one's experience of the content of that insight experience. And also use as a means of communication to other people about one's insight, about the content of that experience. So it seems the Buddha succeeded in doing this. He not only had the transcendental experience but he was able to almost create a language, partly out of existing language, partly by using old terms in new ways, to communicate what he'd experienced, what he'd discovered. But it is a quite difficult task because it's a bit like what we were saying the other day about the deva of the round and the deity of the path because the one looks like the other. We might talk about growth and development but the pope is also talking about growth and development. Are we talking about the same thing? The pope was talking about openness and even creativity I believe and lots of other Christians are using all the terms that we use, commitment, they use that term too. So one has to be able to distinguish between the actual words and the contents of those words. And perhaps one can only do that by contact with, by communication with, the person using the word.

If you have got just the word dead or cold on a page there is no difference. If you read say, a report of a talk by the pope and you read perhaps, a transcript of a lecture by me you will see the same words appearing. So if you just encounter on the page 'creative', 'openness', 'commitment' you can't distinguish between them. Well you can take into account the context but most of all you have to take into account the person using them and that you can only do properly if you're in contact with, in communication with, the person using them so that your experience of the person gives you some clue to the way in which you are to take the meaning of the words.

I was thinking about this a bit recently because I'd been thinking about something I'm supposed to be writing at the request of Mr Christmas Humphries. Christmas Humphries has been very interested for a long time in what I actually teach and this is apparently a big question around the Buddhist Society, 'what does Sangharakshita teach?'. Apparently they are not satisfied with knowing that well

he teaches the eightfold path and all that sort of thing they want to know 'what does he really teach'. So Christmas Humphries wrote to me that he wanted a short statement from me of what I actually taught so that he could include some reference to it in a new edition of 'Buddhism in England' and maybe it would go into the 'Middle Way'.

But then I thought to myself that you can't really deal with it like that, you can't ask someone really to set forth on a printed page what he teaches. It isn't as simple as that. And it's interesting that people have this tendency to look at it in that sort of way because one would have thought, thinking along traditional lines, that if you wanted to know what somebody taught you went along to him and listened. Do you see what I mean? It seems really strange that you should want to know what he taught quite divorced from the teaching context.

It's as though you take a teaching out of the teaching context, you falsify it. So one might say that what Sangharakshita teaches depends on the people he's teaching. He might not say the same thing if Christmas Humphries was sitting here with us that he might if he was not sitting there. So it's not that teaching is a fixed something a fixed form of words which remains the same in all contexts and all situations and all circumstances. It can't be boiled down to that. The dharma can't be boiled down to that.

Anyway that's going off the track a little bit but it is perhaps illustrative and significant. So I'm not going to be able to write the little piece along those sort of lines. I'll have to try and do it in some other way, making my own points and giving gentle hints that one can't really know what someone teaches unless you go and listen to them in a receptive sort of way. He can't hand you a little sheet on which it's all printed. Anyway this is one of the, I'm not going to go into this but I'll just make the connection so you can follow it up for yourself, this is why it is said in the Vajrayana that the guru refuge is the esoteric form of the Buddha refuge. You can work out all the details for yourselves.

Suvajra: Just one last bit to go with that intelligible concept. Could it also be like a visual concept, could you fix the experience within yourself so you can communicate it in a visual way?

S: One can fix it in any way that one can, in any way that one pleases. I mean according to the Vimalakirti Sutra there is a Buddha world in which teaching is carried on by means of different kinds of perfumes. I was reading something in a book review the other day to this effect, I'm not sure if I can get it right - yes ... 'music stimulates memory. Someone had forgotten something that he'd written years ago and was trying to remember what he's written, but couldn't for years and then one day he heard a few bars of a certain piece of music and he at once remembered what he had written all those years ago. There was some sort of intangible connection between the two. So you could say that yes, it can be words with meaning, it can be visual symbols, it can be sounds, it can be perfumes. Though it does seem that words with meaning are the most flexible of these instruments of communication.

I mean if you wanted to convey impermanence to someone or give him an understanding or experience of impermanence well which piece of music would you select? So that once you'd played it this person could say that the experience which was created was that all mundane things have got to go. It's said of Ashvaghosha, the great Buddhist poet, that he was also a musician and when he played, presumably on the vina, he could imbue people with a sense of dukkha, anitya, anatta.

I don't know whether you could select a piece by Wagner to convey the experience of impermanence where after listening to that particular piece of Wagner people just went and sold their houses and

gave away their motor cars and left their wives and families because they just felt that everything was impermanent. That would be the test, whether it did have that sort of effect. It's said in the same way that the music of Mozart and Haydn has the capacity to lift you above your cares into another world. It isn't saying to you in so many words so to speak, well it's stupid to get depressed wallow in your negative emotions, come on be more positive, but this is the effect of the music. If you can bring yourself to listen to it. If you're not in such a negative state that you don't want even to hear Mozart but if you are sufficiently at least to will switch it on, well almost any piece of Mozart, any piece of music written by Mozart will just put you in a better, more positive mood. It's a great service to humanity that Mozart has performed. You can't help feeling better and healthier just for having listened to a bit of Mozart. If you can't tolerate Mozart I think you are in a pretty bad sort of way. [Laughter] If you can't tolerate Haydn you don't have a sense of humour [laughter]. Some people find Haydn trivial, I think that's a great misjudgment. I think he's got a great sense of humour and a very great awareness. Haydn is very aware of his audience. He's always playing little games with the audience, there's a subtle play going on between Haydn and the people who are listening to him. That's very interesting because a lot of musicians, most of them I think, don't have that, a lot of the great composers. They're not very aware of the audience, but Haydn seems to have been constantly aware of the audience. He must have had a very highly developed awareness I would have said.

Has anyone ever noticed this? He's always playing little jokes at the expense of the audience, he's always doing things which he knows you are not going to expect.

_____ : The Surprise Symphony.

S: Well that's a sort of obvious example but he's doing this all the time. Little surprises just to increase your awareness of his music. He doesn't want you to think because after all he was writing his music mostly for aristocratic patrons and he played aristocratic supper parties. He didn't want them to go on just chattering and not listening to his music and so he apparently was always doing little things to call back their attention to the music and get them to listen to it again. So that's quite interesting.

_____ : Would you say the same thing of Bach as you said of Mozart just now?

S: Well Bach is Bach and Mozart is Mozart. I don't think that Bach has quite that effect of uplifting the spirit in the way that Mozart, especially the youthful Mozart, some of the slightly lesser known earlier symphonies are very very good in this respect, they are so joyful. Some of which he wrote when he was sixteen, seventeen, very very beautiful especially no twenty two, I think, and twenty nine especially, they're very very joyous. Joyous even is hardly the word, they go even beyond that, they're so joyful. There's a sort of spring of joy just sort of welling up just like one would say in the second dhyana when it comes bubbling up from some deeper level. That is the sort of feeling one has. And very youthful, very unspoiled by the world. It's a song of innocence not a song of experience in Blake's terms. Mozart doesn't yet know the world, he doesn't yet know unhappiness. That comes later, that comes in the later symphonies but not in these early ones.

_____ : Are you talking about Mozart or Bach here?

S: Mozart.

Subhuti: There's a couple of other questions. Adrian has a question about the dhyanas.

Adrian Macro: It seems this sort of thing to follow on from what you were just saying about impermanence in a very general sense. We had a discussion this morning and yesterday about the nature of dhyana and the discussion arose from a quotation from 'Peace is a Fire'. The quotation is:

Dhyana is not a state in which we are but a way in which we reorganise our being.

In the Tiratana vandana seminar when you were talking about Enlightenment you stressed the fact that we shouldn't see it as a fixed state, a fixed point, but that the Buddha's experience of Enlightenment continued to develop as he carried on. So the question is - is the Buddha's dhyanic experience of the same order as our experience of dhyana or is it of a completely different order?

S: Well dhyana experience is not Buddha experience as such because Buddha experience as such is vipassana experience. But the fact that dhyana or samatha is experienced in conjunction with vipassana obviously transforms the nature of the samatha experience itself. In the case of the Buddha the two are almost inseparable. Though again, if one looks at some of the Pali texts, they speak of the Buddha not being in the samatha state all the time. There's a reference in the parinirvana sutta to that. So the Buddha's experience of samatha can change, it can vary, but the experience of insight never changes that never varies.

There's a lot more that can be said on this topic but I think we'd better leave it for Tuscany especially on that quote from 'Peace is a Fire. Maybe we should talk about that some time in Tuscany.

Graham Steven: We were discussing the activities of the bodhisattva and out of this arose the questions. Do you know why Dhardo has decided to work specifically with children as opposed to working with the more spiritually committed?

S: Well there's an assumption here. He didn't decide to work more with children. They were just there on his doorstep so he felt well he had to do something about them. It wasn't that he thought early on 'well I would like to work with children' or he was asking himself well what could I do, what would help me to develop? Well I guess if I worked with children that would help me to develop. No. He was just sitting there in Kalimpong getting on with his pujas and meditations and so on and he saw all these children around with no proper means of education, getting alienated from Tibetan culture and from Buddhism. So he felt something had to be done about it. That's how it arose. But as for working or not working with the more spiritually committed, he did that whenever he had the opportunity, but there weren't all that many opportunities, because committed people are pretty rare. But whenever he did encounter them he certainly did whatever he could for them.

I will tell you just a little story to conclude. There were other friends of mine in Kalimpong. There was one of them who was a Tibetologist as the breed is called, and another Tibetologist came to visit him and they were very interested in the tantra, Tibetan tantra. Especially sexual aspects it seems. [Laughter] Tantric sex yoga well they were really interested in that. So the resident Tibetologist suggested to the visiting Tibetologist they could just go along to Dhardo Rimpoche, him being a great Tibetan lama would surely be able to tell all about the tantra and all the sexo-yogic practices, he may even do a few demonstrations! [Laughter] So along they went to Dhardo Rimpoche and I heard about it also afterwards from him, so apparently they put various questions about the tantra and even about the sexo-yogic practices but all they got from Dhardo Rimpoche was a sort of Tibetan version of our saying 'you shouldn't throw pearls before swine'. [Laughter] So anyway they didn't get what they wanted from him so they went away and I heard that one of them had said to the other 'Ah well

I guess he doesn't know anything about the tantra anyway'!

So I told this back to Dhardo Rimpoche because when he told me what he had done I said well this is what they said afterwards and he was very very amused. But also he was a bit sad because they were not at all open to him. They didn't realise that you just can't ask about the tantra in that sort of way, you can't just go and ask Dhardo Rimpoche questions without any sort of spiritual preparation on your part. You can't just expect to have it all explained to you outside the context of a proper teacher/disciple relationship. It's an absolute presumption on your part to think that you are ready for tantric teachings when you haven't even gone for refuge, because neither of them were Buddhists or had any real interest in the spiritual life. But to think they could go along and ask about the tantra is the height of spiritual presumption. So all they got from Dhardo Rimpoche was as I said the Tibetan equivalent of 'don't cast your pearls before swine', the tantric teachings are not to be given to all and sundry who just ask for them without understanding really what they are all about. Or even with entirely the wrong motive.

So yes. He was willing to help the more committed when he met them but he didn't often meet them.

Bernie Tisch: I don't know if we've got much time but this sort of going looking for the more spiritually developed is quite as wrong view. It's not a very good way of approaching teaching the more spiritually developed. I mean you just come into contact with the spiritually developed wherever you are and if you do you teach them.

S: Well sometimes you need to go looking, sometimes you do. Some teachers do, they go out sort of talent spotting.

Bernie: But whether you have this desire in you or not it doesn't matter if you don't.

S: Some teachers it seems do have a strong desire to communicate whatever they have experienced or realised and go out looking for people to whom they can communicate it. There have been many stories about this sort of thing. It's not a compulsion in the ordinary psychological sense, it's definitely a sort of spiritual urge. They feel they really need to share what they've experienced. Or even one might say they feel that they haven't fully experienced it themselves unless and until they've shared it with others because there's still a limitation, there's still a sort of subject/object duality which they are trying to overcome. So it's almost as if they feel that they haven't fully experienced it themselves until they've passed it on to other people. Because it can't be just your experience, it's not your experience unless and until it's somebody else's experience too.

Bernie: It seems like Dhardo doesn't have this desire to go out, he's quite happy to ...

S: Well you might say he's quite happy that I've gone out. You can work as a team so to speak. He certainly is very happy that I've gone out. There's no doubt about that. It's not for me to say that he thinks that that is enough but perhaps he does. Perhaps he feels well 'Sangharakshita is doing it out there in darkest England, or darkest Europe' it's not necessary for him to do anything, he can stay there and look after the Tibetan children. [Laughter] Which is also necessary.

_____ : Do you ever wish to go and see him?

S: I can't say that I feel any need for that on the whole.

_____ : Or wish.

S: Yes you could say wish but I certainly feel quite in contact with him and he's quite aware of whatever I'm doing, or whatever we're doing. He's very happy with that. And he's always very happy to see any visitor from the FWBO, they are always very very welcome. He's always very pleased to hear further news of me and the FWBO, and of course he gets the newsletter.

_____ : Does somebody interpret it for him so he can understand what its contents are?

S: This I can't say definitely. He certainly looks at the pictures. [laughter] And I think probably that's enough. He's no fool. He picks something up very quickly. It may be that his young assistant does translate for him things of special interest, I don't know. Certainly I'm quite sure that whatever he needs to know he finds out in one way or another pretty quickly.

Is that all? It is more than lunch time.

End of tape.

*Transcribed by Siobhan Fitzpatrick
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